Міністерство освіти і науки України

Луцький національний технічний університет

CREATIVE COMMUNICATION AND WRITING

Методичні вказівки до практичних занять та самостійної роботи
для здобувачів
першого (бакалаврського) рівня вищої освіти
денної та заочної форми навчання

ОСВІТНЯ ПРОГРАМА – Медіакомунікації та PR
ГАЛУЗЬ ЗНАНЬ – 06 Журналістика
СПЕЦІАЛЬНІСТЬ – 061 Журналістика

Луцьк 2025

УДК 811.111 (07): 378.147

С 88

До друку

Голова вченої ради факультету цифрових, освітніх та соціальних технологій _____ Г.А. Герасимчук

Затверджено вченою радою факультету цифрових, освітніх та соціальних технологій ЛНТУ, протокол № _____ від «_____»_____2025 р.

Електронна копія друкованого видання передана для внесення в репозиторій ЛНТУ

Директор бібліотеки _____ Н. Поліщук

Рекомендовано до видання на засіданні кафедри іноземної та української філології ЛНТУ, протокол № _____ від «_____»_____2025 р.

Завідувача кафедри іноземної та української філології ЛНТУ

_____А.П. Мартинюк

Укладачі: _____А.І. Яновець, кандидат філологічних наук, доцент, доцент кафедри іноземної та української філології ЛНТУ;

Рецензент: _____ Ю.В. Літкович, кандидат філологічних наук, доцент, доцент кафедри іноземної та української філології ЛНТУ.

Відповідальний за випуск: _____А.П. Мартинюк, кандидат педагогічних наук, доцент, завідувач кафедри іноземної та української філології ЛНТУ

С 88 **CREATIVE COMMUNICATION AND WRITING.** Методичні вказівки до практичних занять та самостійної роботи для здобувачів першого (бакалаврського) рівня вищої освіти денної та заочної форми навчання. ОСВІТНЯ ПРОГРАМА – Медіакомунікації та PR ГАЛУЗЬ ЗНАНЬ – 06 Журналістика СПЕЦІАЛЬНІСТЬ – 061 Журналістика / уклад. А.І. Яновець, Луцьк. ЛНТУ, 2025. 70 с.

Методичні вказівки до практичних занять та самостійної роботи укладені як допоміжний ресурс у процесі вивчення дисципліни «Creative Communication and Writing». Матеріал охоплює ключові граматичні теми, необхідні для вдосконалення навичок усного та письмового мовлення, з акцентом на практичне застосування в контексті креативної комунікації. Довідник сприяє формуванню грамотного та виразного мовлення, що є важливою складовою професійної підготовки сучасного журналіста.

INTRODUCTION

The ability to express ideas clearly, persuasively, and accurately lies at the heart of journalism and creative communication. In the rapidly evolving world of media, where professionals must adapt to various formats - from print articles and online blogs to podcasts and public speeches - strong grammar skills are essential. This grammar reference guide is specifically tailored to support students of journalism and related fields as they develop their written and spoken communication.

The material is integrated into the broader context of the course *Creative Communication and Writing*, which aims to cultivate students' creative expression, linguistic awareness, and communicative competence in both professional and public spheres. By mastering the grammatical structures presented in this guide, learners will be better equipped to write coherent narratives, conduct effective interviews, craft compelling editorials, and deliver impactful presentations.

Covering key grammatical areas such as sentence structure, tense usage, modal verbs, active and passive constructions, punctuation, and stylistic nuances, this guide provides clear explanations, examples from journalistic practice, and exercises to consolidate learning. It serves not only as a self-study tool, but also as an essential component of classroom instruction throughout the course.

Ultimately, this handbook empowers journalism students to use language with precision and confidence - a core requirement for credible, creative, and ethical communication in today's media landscape.

CONTENT

CHAPTER 1: THE USE OF ENGLISH

ENGLISH IS ONE OF THE MOST EXPRESSIVE AND flexible languages in the world. Its immense vocabulary provides for the persuasive and precise communication of ideas. It is a language of subtle verbal inflections, which enable the writer to project mood and emotion, to formulate thought and principle with clarity and impact, and to range fluently through a wide variety of styles from the lyrical to the prosaic.

Few other languages can rival the scope of English, whether the subject is an abstruse concept, a poetic aspiration, an evocative piece of word painting or straightforward reporting in simple prose. But, above all, English is a language which communicates thought processes with precision and logic. It is the bridge between one mind and another: the means of sharing ideas; of keeping an individual, his or her family and the whole community informed.

We are in the communications business with the specific aim of building that bridge between writer and reader, so that we can inform, influence and, at times, entertain. But we must remember that communication begins only when the reader understands what he or she is reading. In building this communications bridge, therefore, we must do as the engineer does, starting from both sides of the gap simultaneously and meeting half-way.

The writer meets the reader half-way by using language which the reader understands, by drawing on material within an individual range of experience and by stimulating enough interest so that he or she wishes to read on. The writer builds the bridge, but it is the reader who must cross it if there is to be any communication. For communication is understanding and is accomplished only by the percipient.

All too often, however, the reader never gets across the bridge, not because of any lack of desire, but because, quite simply, the bridge has fallen away! This happens when the bridge is badly designed; when shoddy materials are used; when the very nuts and bolts don’t fit or are in the wrong place.

If language is a communications bridge, then words and phrases are the nuts and bolts of that bridge, and they must fit, they must be used in the right way and they must not be worn out through over-exposure. These nuts and bolts are the materials of our craft: words are our business. And these words must be fitted together with the skill and precision of a craftsman.

The reader must always come first. However much pride we take in our verbal skill and our sense of style, we must remember that we are not building a bridge for the writer to cross, but for the reader.

We write for a readership whose interest needs to be stimulated. This does not mean that we need to "write down" to the reader, but it does mean using English as the incisive instrument it is. Well chosen words can expose, can penetrate, can clarify. They can create a ready understanding of complicated ideas and can accurately and vividly evoke the pace and mood of any action they are recalling.

The good reporter is the one who is in the right place at the right time and who has the right word ready. Within the rich vocabulary of the English language, he or she has an abundant stock from which to choose. But the reporter must choose carefully; flair is no substitute for care.

Clarity, accuracy and simplicity

OUR primary aim in presenting news must be clarity and accuracy; and a simplicity of style which conveys meaning quickly and with an impact which compels the reader's attention. And this can be achieved only when words do the work for which they were designed; when the writer resists the temptation to distort and misuse language for the sake of immediate effect. Glibness is not enough.

However, this is not to say that a sophisticated use of words has no place in our writing. Clearly the style will vary with the subject and treatment of it. Some news stories may be written in a light vein; others demand a hard, factual, no-nonsense approach. The same is true of features or comment pieces. The style will vary according to the material but in all these vehicles directness, clarity and accuracy are essential. And brevity remains a virtue: do not fall into the trap of thinking that "in depth" means "at length".

There is no such thing as newspaper English; there is good English and bad English, and there is a variety of styles which may be suitable in different contexts.

Suitability is the key word. The journalist should be able to make the style match the mood of the subject. This means developing a professional polish in order that the gifts of a writer are placed firmly at the service of the reader.

CHAPTER 2: THE ESSENCE OF STYLE

STYLE DIFFERS FROM SENTENCE CONSTRUCTION (SYNTAX) in that it cannot be quantified; it has no precise rules. This is inevitable because style is concerned not so much with the mechanics of English as with the manner in which the writer uses language to play on the sensations of the reader. Style is concerned with the shape and sound of language. It adds impact to writing, strengthens the contact with the reader and heightens awareness. Even though the reader may be oblivious of what is happening and unable to analyse the techniques that are being used, the sense of enjoyment is enhanced.

However, while style does not have precise rules of its own, it must be based on those rules of syntax which give shape and design to our use of English. And, the more elaborate the style, the greater are the demands made on the writer's grasp of good grammatical construction.

For example, the novelist Francis Brett Young was a lover of the long sentence. A sentence of his might run to well over 100 words and in some cases exceed 150. But the reader never gets lost, because the balance and shape of the sentence is so carefully constructed that it offends none of the rules of syntax. And that, after all, is the purpose of syntax: to enable the writer to communicate with his reader. Syntax, therefore, is the foundation on which good style is built. Some of the more common pitfalls will be discussed later. Meanwhile, there are some considerations about style which may usefully be examined.

To be effective as a communicator, a writer must develop an ability to select a style which has four principal attributes: **suitability**, **simplicity**, **precision** and **poise**.

Suitability

THE MANNER of writing must be appropriate to the nature of the subject, to the mood and pace of the events that are being recalled and to *the needs of the reader*. The style must arouse the interest of the reader and maintain that interest throughout. It must also present the facts or arguments in a manner that enables the reader to understand them quickly and easily.

The Roman statesman and lawyer Cicero, who did so much to shape the style of his own language, and consequently those languages which are derived from Latin, was one of the most compelling communicators of all time. He perfected a style which could scarcely fail to captivate his audiences, so skilfully did he combine clarity, flexibility and euphony.

This is what he had to say about style:

"Whatever his theme he will speak as becomes it; neither meagrely where it is copious, nor meanly where it is ample, nor in *this* way where it demands *that*; but keeping his speech level with the actual subject and adequate to it."

Cicero was discussing the spoken word but the import of his message is just as germane to the written word. And it is as precise a definition as one can achieve of such an abstract idea. The key phrases are *level with the actual subject and adequate to it*.

However, while **suitability** is an abstract concept, there are a few pointers that can be expressed :

1. If the subject is grave, it must not be treated with anything that suggests levity.

2. If the subject is amusing, it may be treated lightly, or with mock severity (e.g. where the punch-line produces an amusing climax or anti-climax, said to be the "delayed drop" story).

3. Whatever the subject, the writer should not needlessly offend the reader's susceptibilities. This means avoiding any note of cynicism or facetiousness where the story deals with sincerely-held beliefs, however bizarre those beliefs may appear to the writer.

4. Where a story recalls events which have action and movement, the style should suggest pace. This calls for terse expression, the avoidance of too many adjectives, the use of direct and active verbs, and crisp, taut, sentence construction.

5. Where a story deals with a sequence of events, a straightforward narrative style is often the best. However, there are two points that require attention. If one episode is taken out of context to create impact in the intro, make sure that it is briefly repeated in its proper time context. Secondly, make sure there is a consistent use of tenses in reporting events chronologically.

6. If the events recalled in a story are stark and horrific, resist the temptation to over-write. The events themselves will make sufficient impact. Any attempt to add to the horror may lead to banalities or cliches; e.g. the phrase *like a battlefield* to describe a multiple crash does nothing to heighten awareness.

7. Whatever the story, don't rhapsodise. Whenever a story plays on the emotions-whether those emotions be joy or sorrow, humour or pathos-understatement is more effective than overstatement.

8. Where the story requires some scene-setting, there is scope for thoughtful word-painting. Consider this example by Arthur Hopcraft writing in UK national newspaper The Guardian. The piece is from a bygone era but evocative enough to still resonate.

"They moved Sorensen's cross at dusk, when the streets were still, lifting the darling immensity of it, all of a piece, over Sorensen's hedge and laying it with care fit for a corpse on the two flat trailers behind the tractor. They trundled it up the short, steep hills and huffed it and swore it round the short, tight turns. They stopped at Carr's Hill, which has always been called Carr's Hole, and there they stood it upright among the clods and tufts and mushy hollows that mark the graves of old Ireland's anguish."

That style certainly plays on the sensations. It captures scene and mood and has a marvellous impact. It screams: "Read on".

Simplicity

THE HALLMARK of any great prose is its simplicity. If you look back at the extract from THE GUARDIAN and study it, you will see that this quite sophisticated

piece of writing is in reality a piece of simple prose. Apart from the name *Sorensen* and the one word *immensity*, there is no word with more than two syllables in a passage of almost 100 words.

The sentences are not short; indeed, the opening sentence has over 40 words. Yet, they are easy to read, because they are nowhere convoluted with clumsily contrived subordinate clauses.

Moreover, the language, although figurative in places, has a directness about it which ensures that the whole piece moves at an energetic pace. This is achieved by the use of direct, active verbs.

Directness is, in fact, one of the fundamental ingredients of simple prose. Brevity, on the other hand, is not the same thing as simplicity, but it does contribute towards it.

From this one example certain useful guidelines emerge and others may be added:

1. Prefer the short word to the long one.

2. Prefer the concrete statement to the abstract.

3. Prefer the direct statement to any form of circumlocution.

4. Be firm in avoiding words or phrases simply because they sound good, if they do not develop the theme.

5. Avoid pomposity at all costs.

6. Remember that a sentence must have at least one finite verb, and that this is the most important word in the sentence.

7. As a general rule, choose transitive verbs and use them in the active voice. The passive voice slows down the pace and clutters the sentence with prepositions and a lot of little *is* and *was* auxiliaries.

N.B.- It is particularly important to avoid the passive voice in intros and headlines although there are exceptions. (Eg. *Kennedy shot* is better than *Assassin shoots Kennedy* because *Kennedy* is the strongest word for the subject.)

However, there are occasions where the headline is inverted simply to fit the count, when it would be better to change the size of type, or the shape of the headline.

E.g. *JONES IS JEERED BY STRIKERS*

would be better recast as the more direct:

STRIKERS JEER JONES

thus obviating the use of the auxiliary *is* and the preposition *by*.

8. Choose adjectives with great care and be economical in their use. Avoid tautology (e.g. a *new* innovation).

9. Prefer the short sentence to the long one, particularly in the intro. Apart from having the virtue of directness, the short sentence also has typographical advantages.

As a general rule, aim for a sentence of 20-25 words as a maximum. On the other hand, don't make a fetish of short sentences. Eight sentences of 12-15 words may be all right in a short news story, but to stick to sentences of such brevity in an article of 1,000 words would not help the reader at all. Such a staccato style lacks fluency and could impede understanding. The ideal in long articles is to strike a balance between short and medium length sentences.

10. Avoid complex statements where too many subordinate clauses, or descriptive phrases, prevent the flow of language.

The most common pitfalls in sentence construction occur in compound sentences, where participles are misrelated, or non-sequiturs are inadvertently created.

Ensure, therefore, that whenever an idea or situation requires explanation by resort to a compound construction, each subordinate phrase or clause is clearly related to the principal statement.

Precision

ENGLISH is a language of richness and variety. But indiscriminate use of words, simply because so many exist, inhibits precision. And precision is paramount in reporting, for clarity and accuracy both depend upon it.

In order to be precise in writing it is necessary to know the exact meaning of words. Words must fit easily into the sense and context of both the sentence and the story as a whole. It is no use choosing a dramatic, highly evocative word, which sounds fine in isolation, if it is over-emphatic or ill-attuned to the story.

Approximation is the antithesis of precision. If the writer is content with being nearly right about the odd word or phrase, the results will always fall below the best standard.

So, primarily, the journalist needs a good and comprehensive vocabulary. Without such a vocabulary the writer should not be in journalism where the very business is all about words.

Study words and their meanings, for a knowledge of derivation helps a writer to be exact in his word usage.

Avoid gimmicky language and be careful about the use of colloquialisms. These may have a place in a direct quotation (provided that they do not make the speaker look foolish) but they should be used with care in general reporting.

The spoken word has accepted speech patterns that are out of place in written prose. “Estuary English” may be all right on radio and television, but it has no place in our newspapers.

Precision also depends on accurate sentence construction, for faulty syntax can invert a meaning or, at least, make the meaning ambiguous.

Do not leave it to the sub-editor or proof reader to spot inaccuracy or ambiguity. Read your own copy and ask: “ Do I mean what I say and have I said what I mean?” Often the honest answer will be “No”. And, if you pass that self-imposed test, ask: “So what?” Often you will find that the story does not go far enough in saying what happens next. Remember the reader wants to know *precisely* what is happening.

The headline writer should also think carefully before deciding on the most suitable choice of words. A synonym may be required because the obvious first choice of words does not fit the designated space. Two, or even three words may need to be changed before the headline fits. However, unless the synonyms are exact they may change the precise meaning of the headline. So, finally, ask yourself:

“Does the headline tell the story?” Sometimes the answer will be “No”, and the headline will need re-writing.

Be particularly careful with headline words where the active and passive voice take the same form.

E.g. *LANDLORD OWED £50,000*

This is dangerously ambiguous. Was the landlord owed £50,000 or did he owe £50,000?

Poise

POISE is the absolute essence of style, for it is this which transforms a piece of writing from something which may be dull and pedestrian into prose which has a sheen of its own.

By definition poise is concerned with equilibrium and in this context is related to the design and shape of language. It involves the creation of perfectly balanced, rhythmical, sentences to give perspective to the pattern of writing. It relies on the unusual word or phrase used exactly in context to add sparkle to the picture that is created. In this way it heightens the reader's insight by appealing to his or senses through images which have an extraordinarily vivid appeal.

Often this imagery involves using literary tricks, known as figures of speech, to add lustre to the prose. Not all figures of speech have a place in newspaper journalism but there is a place for some, provided that they are used with care and restraint. The secret is that the imagery should not obtrude. In the best prose, the reader remains unconscious of technique; he simply enjoys reading the passage.

The worn-out simile (e.g. *like a battlefield*) sticks out *like a sore thum*b (another cliche simile). The apt simile, however, adds savour, which the reader relishes.

The metaphor can also border on the banal. And there is always the danger of mixing them, like the politician *who smelt a rat* and sought *to nip it in the bud*.

But, for all that, both the simile and the metaphor have a use in painting word-pictures. Turn back to Hopcraft's piece and you will find that there are two hidden metaphors hidden because they are metaphorical verbs rather than the more common noun-metaphor. The two verbs are *huffed* and *swore*. These are intransitive verbs. One cannot *huff* anything, any more than *smile* anything; one can swear an oath, but normally *swear* is used intransitively.

Hopcraft has used these verbs metaphorically in a transitive manner. And the effect is so much more direct than it would have been if he had written: "they huffed

and swore as they pushed it round the short, tight turns “. The appeal is in the unusual use of words which are exactly right in context.

There are figures of speech which change the shape of a sentence, such as: *Rome is no mean city*. (The figure of speech is **litotes**) instead of *Rome is a great city*. But like the double negative and the inverted sentence these forms should be used very sparingly and only when they add to the effectiveness of the sentence.

Such figures of speech are primarily a means of evoking word pictures; they are related to the pattern and design of sentence construction. But above all, poise is concerned with the sound of language, for even when we are reading silently we “hear” the words and phrases that appear before our eyes.

So poise is as much a matter of aural sensation as it is of visual perspective. And, as such, it relies on the inter-play of sounds to give a melodic balance to the whole composition. That is why beautiful writing is mellifluous as much as it is perfectly proportioned.

The figures of speech that assist most in creating melodic lines are:

1. **Assonance**: the interplay of rhyming vowel sounds: E.g. “0 my son Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, 0 Absalom, my son, my son.” (2 SAMUEL 18: 33.)

Notice the interplay of the vowels *O* and *I*. This creates a melody and a rhythm which suggest poetry, but it is pure prose and very beautiful.

2. **Alliteration**: the use of words beginning with or containing the same consonant.

There is no better example than W. S. Gilbert’s:

“To sit in solemn silence,
In a dull, dark dock
In a pestilential prison
With a life-long lock,
Awaiting the sensation
Of a short, sharp shock
From a cheap and chippy chopper

On a big, black block."

(THE MIKADO.)

3. **Onomatopoeia**: the formation of words whose sounds evoke the sound of the action or object named.

E.g. *" The moan of doves in immemorial elms*

And murmuring of innumerable bees."

(THE PRINCESS, Tennyson.)

It may be thought that these are devices which have no place in a newspaper. But we use them all the time. Consider the phrase " splash-down ". This is an onomatopoeic description of a space capsule making a " soft landing " in the sea.

Alliteration and assonance also have their place but should be used with restraint. Re-read Hopcraft's piece and you will see there is an interplay of vowel sounds; there are onomatopoeic words such as *trundled*, *clods*, *mushy* hollows; and the whole passage is rich in restrained alliteration:

"They moved Sorensen's cross at dusk when the streets were still . . . .

… care fit for a corpse on the two flat trailers behind the tractor

… trundled it up the short, steep hills

. and swore it round the short, tight turns."

The whole piece is full of imagery, and this helps to make it the fine writing which it is.

Notice also the repetition of the word *short* which gives the sentence a sense of equilibrium. This is an excellent example of a writer choosing the right word and sticking to it.

There is a convention that one should not repeat a word in the same paragraph or sentence. The use of an alternative is known as **elegant variation**.

As a general rule, this is a good practice for it prevents boring repetition, but the synonyms must be exact. If there is no exact synonym, stick to the original word. Call a spade *a spade* and stick to it. Do not call it *a horticultural implement*. That is an inelegant variation. And remember that, occasionally, deliberate repetition can be most effective.

In this essay on style, Hopcraft's three sentences from THE GUARDIAN have been painstakingly analysed to illustrate several points concerning technique. But let us be quite clear that the good writer achieves these results because of a good feel for language and does not start with a determination to include a couple of apt similes, sprinkle in a few alliterative words and add a bit of assonance.

These things are all weapons which should be kept sharpened. They are part of an armoury acquired by wide reading and much practice in writing. They are then used instinctively and incisively to polish a phrase here, searches for the exact word there. They are successful because they are used without strain.

The results in the hands of the unskilled practitioner are that analogy is forced, allusion is less than apt and figurative language gilds the lily so lavishly as to obscure the meaning or to jar on the reader's sensitivity.

So beware the blunt instrument and the bluntest of all is the **Pun**. It is overworked and much abused. There is a place for this sort of play on words, but a very small place.

If the former England and Yorkshire cricketer Brian Close took a few wickets in any one match, the headline *A Close haul* would have been a very obvious and not very clever pun.

On the other hand, suppose Yorkshire had been fighting against the clock in a big match. Suppose the opposition needed only 40 runs in the last hour with seven wickets in hand. Suppose Close then went on to bowl and took all seven wickets with just two runs and four balls to spare. Then *A Close haul* would have been a valid headline, because it would be justified even if the bowler's name were Smith. The fact that it was Close is what makes it a **Pun**.

Play on words clearly has a place in headline writing and those other arts — assonance, alliteration and onomatopoeia — can also be used to effect. But the watchword is restraint. A headline which strings together six words beginning with S will be less effective than one with a mixed pattern, such as S—S—T—S—S—T. This arrangement is asymmetrical; it is better balanced; it has more poise.

If you are in doubt about a headline, try it on a colleague. If you have to argue about it, then it is not so brilliant; if it is a masterpiece there will be no argument-only instant acclamation.

Finally, remember that poise is not an embellishment, a garnishing to add flavour. It is an integral part of composition, giving shape, balance and fluency to the whole construction, and adding impact by the skilful use of imagery.

Poise is elegance harmoniously achieved by the avoidance of excess.

Conclusion

STYLE has four attributes :

SUITABILITY SIMPLICITY PRECISION POISE

Each of these attributes helps the reader to understand and enjoy what is written.

If the style in any way inhibits direct communication with the reader, it diminishes the quality of the story and points to the failings of the writer.

We said earlier: “The journalist should be able to make the style match the mood of his subject. This means developing a professional polish in order that that the gifts of the writer are placed firmly at the service of the reader.” It bears repetition, for this is what journalism is all about. Words are our business and writing our way of life.

CHAPTER 3: WORD POWER

PRECISION IN WRITING DEPENDS ON WORD POWER, without this, communication is impaired. Words and phrases are the nuts and bolts which hold the communications bridge together. The writer must, therefore, learn to recognise the exact words and phrases needed to convey meaning to the reader. And the writer must also be ruthless in rejecting any word or phrase which shows signs of fatigue through over-use.

The development of word power comes only with practice. It requires an inquiring mind and a careful attitude. Carefulness means more than simply trying to avoid careless mistakes. It also involves being concerned about quality, about taking a professional pride in one’s craftsmanship as a writer.

This is an attitude of mind that cannot be taught; it can only be caught. However, it may be helpful to point out common pitfalls.

Exaggeration

MANY errors occur because the writer overstates the case in an effort to achieve impact, and this, perhaps, is the most common occupational hazard which the journalist faces. It is this striving for effect which makes every Good Samaritan into a *hero*, every accident into a *horror*, every disturbance into a *fracas*, every confusion into *chaos* and every blaze into an *inferno* (in fact, a synonym for hell). It is this which leads the reporter to write of a 'flu outbreak *decimating* the school population (the word means to select by lot and put to death one in ten), or of a noisy meeting being a *shambles* (the word means slaughterhouse).

A knowledge of word derivation helps in selecting the right word, so if you find yourself using these strong words, look them up in the dictionary and discover what they really mean.

Missed metaphors

JUST as irritating to the reader are those words used metaphorically where more direct speech would be better.

E.g. *BANK RATE HITS NEW CEILING*

Here the word *ceiling* is used to mean a limit, which it does not. The word *hits* suggests something solid and immovable whereas events in recent years have demonstrated that the Bank Rate is far from fixed. This sort of over-statement should be avoided.

Over-worked words and phrases

THE SEARCH for the short word for a headline has created a specialised subs' vocabulary which makes every inquiry into a *quiz*, every debate into a *row* and every investigation into a *probe*. Fortunately, the trend towards the lower case headline has eased the demands of the count and there is no more scope for words that are not quite so threadbare as these.

But, whereas the headline writer is always searching for the short word. the writer often uses compound words or prepositional phrases where the short word would be better.

E.g.

adjacent to for *near*

at this point in time for *now*

in consequence of for *because*

These are just as unnecessary as those adverbial phrases such as: *with regard to, by and large.*

Try to avoid vague abstract words such as: *case, instance, character, nature, condition*, etc. There will be occasions when these words have to be used, but prefer the concrete word whenever possible.

2020 note by John Bottomley

Use of the following words or phrases usually adds nothing to the meaning of a sentence or phrase: Totally, and also, basically, actually, literally, essentially, in terms of.

Similarly, unattractive phrases are in common use when there is a simpler, shorter alternative: Due to the fact (because), previous (earlier), kind of (somewhat), on account of (because), plus (and), lots of (many).

Never write the phrases 'and/or' or 'each and every', use one word or the other in both cases. Avoid the use of 'he/she' to meet conventions of gender, use the plural term or, if this not possible, use 'he or she.'

Misused words and phrases

LANGUAGE suffers when words and phrases are overworked, but it suffers more when words and phrases are altogether misused. Here are a few examples:

BULLET and CARTRIDGE are often confused. Cartridges contain explosives. but bullets generally do not. In the unfired state the bullet (normally a solid piece of metal) is part of the cartridge. Behind the bullet is the explosive charge which gives the bullet its velocity and behind the charge is a small detonator. When struck by the firing

pin of the weapon this ignites the charge. So don't refer to exploding bullets when you mean cartridges. (There are such things as explosive bullets, but these are rarely used.)

CALIBRE refers to the internal diameter of the barrel of a gun or small arms weapon. It is a unit of measurement – not weight. Hence, it is wrong to write of high-calibre bombs.

CHRONIC is a word that is frequently misused. It does not mean *severe* and is, in fact, the opposite of *acute*. Chronic means lingering. People suffering from an *acute* illness are normally treated in a general medical or surgical ward. The *chronic sick* are often incurable and are cared for in a *chronic sick ward*. Often these are old people and are geriatric patients. (*Geriatric* relates to that branch of medicine which deals with the diseases of old age. The opposite is *paediatric* – i.e. relating to the branch of medicine which deals with illnesses afflicting children.)

Nurses are *in charge* of patients. Patients are *in the charge* of nurses. Do not confuse the two phrases,

Another phrase that causes a lot of trouble is *under way*. A ship *weighs* anchor, but it is then *under way*.

Confusion also occurs in treating words as synonymous when they are not:

ALIBI is not a synonym for *excuse*; it means being in another place at the same time.

AGGRAVATE is not a synonym for *annoy*. *Aggravation* makes *things* worse (literally, to make things *heavy*); things that *annoy* irritate *people*.

FLAUNT does not mean the same as *flout*. " Dockers *flaunt* court order" means that the dockers are waving the order about in a proud or provocative manner. The word should be *flout* – i.e. to express contempt by word or act.

LAY is frequently confused with *lie*. Lay cannot be used intransitively; it must have an object (E.g. "*Lay* down your arms "). One cannot say: "Make the men *lay* down ". It must be: "Make the men *lie* down '. (The verb *lie* is intransitive, expressing a state of being.)

Confusion also arises in the use of the prepositions *between* and *among*. *Between* refers to two people; *among* to more than two. So don't share anything *between* three people.

2020 note by John Bottomley

Some common English words are in danger of losing their meaning through determined and lazy misuse. Slang words like 'cool' will come and go but the original meaning of these words will always remain in use.

The fact that 'amazing' and 'unbelievable' are now used as synonyms for 'good' or 'enjoyable' in common speech should not trouble the journalist, nor should the annoying use of 'like' as a filler or interjection (care should be taken however in its use in quotes).

Similar but different

THERE are many pairs of words in the English language, where spelling or pronunciation is very similar but where meanings are entirely different. The pitfall here is not that the words are mistakenly thought to be synonyms, but that the unwary writer uses one in mistake for the other and thus produces an entirely different meaning. Most books on style or grammar give fairly comprehensive lists of these. The 18 pairs that follow are among those which are most frequently confused.

ALTERNATIVE (adjective) = an available substitute

ALTERNATE (adjective) = In turns, every other one

(In 'American English' alternate is used to mean alternative)

COMPLEMENT (verb) = something that completes or enhances

COMPLIMENT (verb) = praise

CONTINUOUS (adjective) = without break

CONTINUAL (adjective) = recurring (with breaks)

CREDIBLE (adjective) = believable

CREDULOUS (adjective) = believing too easily

DEFICIENT (adjective) = short of, without

DEFECTIVE (adjective = in poor or damaged condition

DEPRECATE (verb) = express wish against or disapproval of

DEPRECIATE (verb) = lower in value (intransitive verb) or disparage (transitive verb)

DISINTERESTED (adjective) = impartial, with no financial interest, with no axe to grind

UNINTERESTED (adj) = without any concern for a particular thing

ENSURE (verb) = to secure that something will happen, to make safe or secure

INSURE (verb) of a thing or person = to make sure that damages are paid in the event of loss, injury or damage

EVERYONE (pronoun) of people = all, everybody

EVERY (adjective)

ONE (pronoun)

= one of a defined number group

= every single thing or person.

EVOLVE (verb) = work out or develop

DEVOLVE (verb-intransitive) = is handed down to

EXPLICIT (adjective) = stated in detail

IMPLICIT (adjective) = implied but not very firmly stated

FARTHER (adverb) refers to distance

FURTHER (adverb or adjective) refers to quantity or distance

FORGO (verb) = abstain from

FOREGO (verb) = precede

ILLUSIVE (adjective) = deceptive

ELUSIVE (adjective) = baffling, escaping from

INFER (verb) = deduce, conclude

IMPLY (verb) = Insinuate, hint

INGENIOUS (adjective) = cleverly contrived

INGENUOUS (adjective) = frank, open

ORDINANCE (noun) = a law or decree

ORDNANCE (noun) = military weapons of all kinds

STORY (noun) = account given of an incident

STOREY (noun) = horizontal division in a building

This list is not meant to be exhaustive. Watch for similar pairs and master their meanings. Only in this way will you achieve precision in the use of vocabulary.

Redundant words

MANY words that are used are superfluous. These may be adjectives (like *new* innovation or added bonus) or they may be prepositions.

E.g.

Tighten *up*

Clean *up*

Fill *up*

Never *fill a bottle half-full*. That is nonsense. *Half-fill* it.

Often the use of redundant words sterns from the fact that the writer does not know the meaning of the word he is using.

E.g. *comprise of* (comprise = consists of) or *raze to the ground* (raze = completely destroy, level with the ground)

2020 note by John Bottomley

The following words in brackets are also redundant in: (as to) whether, considered (to be), (so as) to, yellow etc (in colour).

Vogue words

IT IS difficult to explain how some words-such as *fabulous, empathy, charisma, escalation* – have become fashionable.

Perhaps a writer of prominence uses one to illustrate a point or an attitude. Then it is taken up and used with meaningless frequency by journalists and broadcasters who are anxious to be considered smart or who have become too idle to develop their own vocabulary.

E.g.

Ambience Ambivalent Archetypal Axiomatic Cachet Catalyst Charisma Conceptual Dichotomy Empathy Seminal

It has to be recognised, however, that language is constantly expanding and developing and it would be foolish to ignore what is both new and good in modern usage. But vogue words should represent a small part of the journalist's stock in trade.

Used sparingly such words can brighten a writer's style; used indiscriminately they tarnish it.

In deciding whether or not to use such words ask yourself:

I. Is it the exact word I need?

2. Is there an alternative which is just as valid?

3. If not, can it be understood from its context, or does it need some qualification to help the reader?

2020 note by John Bottomley

Vogue words should, by their very definition, fall in and out of fashion but the examples given above clearly were here to stay and their place in the lexicon of common use seems assured. Today there is an even longer list of trendy words which have crept into common use, often through the cliches of 'business speak.' They, too, may be here to stay but care should be taken not to fall into the trap of using these vogue words when a simpler alternative is available.

Consider the following words now used often enough to dilute their meaning or impact and note the preferable alternative: Feedback (response), iconic (long-established), utilise (use), viable (effective), artisan (homemade or rustic).

Foreign words

MANY foreign words and phrases have become an idiomatic and acceptable part of English usage. These words have achieved acceptance because they have become part of common speech and thought, despite their foreign origins They do a specific job in a way that English does not, and for that reason have become Anglicised.

For instance, where would we be without *rendezvous* and *communique*? They no longer sound strange and long ago passed into the style and tradition of our language

That we have made these words welcome alongside our own usage is another proof that English is flexible and sensible and can use the best of other languages. But

the writer's watchword must be discretion. Don't use words borrowed from other languages when there is an ample choice in English.

E.g. *Schmalz* in figurative German has come to mean over-sweet or sentimental. *Chic* in French means stylish, elegant, smart.

The English equivalents used here are in no way inferior re the French or the German. So, why not use them?

Americanisms tend to be even uglier. Consider the use in the United States of the participle *gifted* where what is meant is *given*. The verb is *to give*, not *to gift*. However, *gifted* may be used as an adjective.

E.g. A *gifted* child.

N.B.- Never use the Latin-based *donate* or *donated*. Use *give* or *given*. *Donation* is permissible where you must use it, but prefer the word gift or contribution when it can be properly substituted.

The good writer ought not to be so hidebound by rules that he cannot accept new usage, but he should respect well-established English tradition and aim for harmony without affectation.

However, where a foreign word has become idiomatic in English do not be afraid to use it. Just be sure that the word does the proper job, and remember that if you do not know what the word means it is wrong to use it. You are not entitled to ask the reader to understand more than you do yourself. Readers in any case are rarely impressed by pretentious use of words, English or otherwise. Indeed they are more often irritated and annoyed.

The following is a list of words and phrases which may be regarded as acceptable in the right context (the accents should be omitted):

aide-de-camp

aperitif

attache

avant garde

baton

blase

bourgeois

brochure

carafe

cliche

clientele

commissionaire

communique

corsage

cortege

coupe

debacle

debut

debris

double entendre

echelon

elite

entree

espionage

expose

fiance (fiancee)

facade

haute couture

impasse

largesse

laisser-faire

malaise

melee

nee

negligee

nuance

precis

premiere

protege

regime

rendezvous

risque

repertoire

soiree

venue

bona fide

ad lib

sine qua non

ad infinitum

persona non grata

per se

de jure

de facto

per annum

status quo

ad nauseam

non sequitur

ex gratia

ultra vires

However, you should be very wary of using any of the following:

Lese majeste

Bete noir

Bon mot

Demode

Belles lettres

Ingenue

De rigeur

Roue

Magnifique

Deja vu

C’est la vie

Schmalz

Wunderbar

Kaput

Dolce vita

Ciao

Arrivederci

Foreign plurals

DIFFICULTY sometimes arises in the use of plurals of foreign words. The fact that many of them have become common usage in English calls for a ruling on how to deal with their plurals, which occur in everyday use much less frequently than the singular.

Where there is no obvious confusion in the use or plurals in their original form. or where such use is not unharmonious or bizarre the original form is preferable.

Singular

Addendum

Alumnus

Cactus

Beau

Bureau

Criterion

Fungus

Graffito

Memorandum

Minimum

Phenomenon

Plateau

Referendum

Spectrum

Stadium

Virtuoso

Plural

Addenda

Alumni

Cacti

Beaux

Bureaux

Criteria

Fungi

Graffiti

Memoranda

Minima

Phenomena

Plateaux

Referenda

Stadia

Spectra

Virtuosi

There are however a number of such words which are commonly used both in speech and in writing, for which we have devised our own “anglicised” plurals. This has been done by consensus among writers of all classes, in order that confusion may be avoided, and ugly words excluded from our style.

It is not possible to classify such words, but the following list may be useful in helping to decide when to use the formally correct style, which may be less than clear and harmonious; and when to adopt a reasonable alternative.

Singular	Anglicised Plural
Appendix	Appendixes (medical, but *appendices* in books)
Aria	Arias
Formula	Formulas
Index	Indexes (but *indices* when using specialist scientific language)
Medium	Mediums (for spiritualist clairvoyants)
	Media (in specialist contexts such as advertising)
Prima donna	Prima Donnas
Sanatoriums	Sanatoriums
Syllabus	Syllabuses
Terminus	Terminuses
Ultimatum	Ultimatums

The specific context of a story or article will dictate whether or not the formal and correct spelling is demanded. In general writing, however, words such as those listed above are acceptable, and indeed, preferable to their Latin or other plurals.

The cliche

AT ALL times the writer has to make sure that words and phrases pay their way, but there is always the danger of over-working them. English is a resilient language but it can be worn out, and the most tired of all idioms is the cliche.

The cliche is the refuge of writers who are too weary to practise their craft with care and thought. And if, in searching for variety, they are too lazy to look further than the cliche, then there will be no variety in their prose at all.

The cliche is very difficult to root out. It slips into copy so easily. But writers will be on their guard if they have learnt to recognise a phrase that is already drooping with weariness.

The following are just a few examples:

A blast from the past

A game of two halves

A shot in the arm

A shot in the dark

Acid test

Any shape or form

Armed to the teeth

As good as gold

As light as a feather

At the end of the day.

Bated breath

Bitter end

Blot on the landscape

Bounce back

Bring to a head

Burning issue

Caught red-handed

Chip off the old block

Clash of the titans

Clean sweep

Clear as a bell

Cool as a cucumber

Cream of the crop

Crying need

Cross the line

David and Goliath

Dead as a dodo

Draw a blank

Dyed in the wool

Extra special

Fan the flames

Flash in the pan

Foregone conclusion

Goes without saying

Horns of a dilemma

Interesting to note

Last but not least

Leave no stone unturned

Like rats in a trap

Loose cannon

Luck of the draw

Monotonous regularity

Moving the goalposts

New lease of life

Pie in the sky

Playing the field

Pool of blood

Read between the lines

Red letter day

Skating on the thin ice

Start the ball rolling

Sour grapes

Take the bull by the horns

The blind leading the blind

The bottom line

The eleventh hour

This day and age

This point in time

True facts

Turn a blind eye

Unfinished business

Uphill battle

Some of these cliches contain redundant words, like "*true* facts", "*extra* special", but all are equally hackneyed and dreary by now. By avoiding them the writer will produce clearer and leaner language.

Strangely enough, moments of stress bring out trite remarks. Any reporter who has interviewed someone in a state of shock will have observed this.

But the reporter often makes the same mistake in drawing on dreary phrases just when he is trying to inject pace into bis copy. Consider the following hypothetical example (the over-worked words and phrases are italicised):

Firemen *burrowed* beneath the *tangled wreckage* of badly-damaged houses at Coventry today in search of residents several of whom it is feared may have been *entombed* when a crane toppled on to them from a multistorey building now *in the process of erection* on the Corporation's latest *high-density* housing site.

Flashing lights converged on the *affected* houses in King William Street, Hillfields, as police, firemen and ambulancemen *raced at breakneck speed to the scene of the disaster*.

Meanwhile workmen from the building tore at the *tortured metal* of the crane *with their bare hands* to free those *imprisoned* beneath *the twisted wreckage*.

Three people were *rushed to hospital* in *a waiting ambulance* as the rescue workers toiled on at their *grim task*. *Speculation was rife* as to how many remained buried.

A spokesman described the scene as "*like a battlefield*". It was an "*absolute shambles*", he added.

Why is it that wreckage is always *tangled*? How does one rush in a *waiting* ambulance?

It is difficult to avoid the cliche when searching for the evocative word or phrase to capture the sense of urgency. But remember over-statement will destroy the very mood you are seeking to create.

Jargon

AS THE nature of work and leisure changes, it becomes necessary to use severely limited words to express what we mean when dealing with difficult or specialist subjects.

If we do not have words within our range, which adequately express what we are trying to say, we have to invent new ones, or invest old ones with a further, and, perhaps, different meaning.

The only justification for the use of jargon in reporting is that the writer is unable to find a more suitable word. When dealing with the specialist subjects jargon cannot always be avoided. The danger is that once the writer has got to know a modest amount of gobbledygook, jargon will slip unnoticed into his style.

Jargon is most noticeable in scientific, government and legal handouts. It can often be excised painlessly, without changing the meaning. Where plain English can be substituted, this should be done. Indeed the reporter should " translate " jargon wherever he can do so without materially altering the sense of the original.

Far too many new and ugly words are creeping into English, words which do not add much to our understanding, or clear the lines of communication more readily.

The ugliest excrescences in our language are those growths which may be described as **officialese**; they really are malignant. E.g. *Hospitalisation*, meaning "sent to hospital".

There are also ugly words in industry, but you cannot always avoid them. Consider the word *containerisation*. This has come in for criticism from a highly regarded stylist who recommends *improved packing* as a substitute. But this will not do, for *containerisation* has a precise meaning and is related to the transport industry, not to the packing industry. So, in your eagerness to root out jargon, do not break the cardinal rule of accuracy.

The industrial and commercial fields pose special problems. Many newspapers deal in some depth with these areas and their articles are read by people who are most discerning. For these people it is annoying if the reporter confuses *packing* with *packaging* or *marketing* with *selling*. The terms are not synonymous.

Again, be very careful with stories affecting industrial relations. *Redundancy* may appear to be a euphemism for *sacking* but there is a big difference between the two meanings.

In the first case the job has left the man; in the second, the man has left the job. In the first case the man has received compensation. In the second case there are overtones of stigma, suggesting incompetence or worse.

The first objective must be to achieve precision, so before you reach out for any handy synonym find out what the word really means. And then, consider the same criteria thz; were suggested in deciding whether to use vogue words c: not:

1. Is it the exact word?
2. Is there an equally valid alternative?
3. If there is no alternative, does the term need any further explanation?

CHAPTER 4: SPELLING

NO ONE CAN DEVELOP WORD POWER without the ability to spell, for mis-spelling is the ultimate misuse of words.

Good spelling is primarily a matter of observing and remembering. Below are 80 words which are frequently misspelled. Test yourself on these.

Abhorrence, accommodation, acquiescence, adolescence, annihilate, Antarctic, asphyxiate, auxiliary, benefited, cemetery, chequered, connoisseur, convertible, corroborate, debatable, definitely, descendant, destructible, discreet, dissatisfaction.

Ecstasy, effervescence, eligibility, embarrassment, emissary, exaggerate, exhilaration,
fahrenheit, fallacious, fallible, forty, fuchsia, fulfilling, funereal, gauge, haemorrhage. handsomely, harassed, heinous, humorous, hygiene, hysterical.

Idiosyncrasy, immigration, incoherency, innocuous, innuendo, jeopardise, liaison, licentious, loquacious, maintenance, manoeuvre, mantelpiece, meanness, Mediterranean, miniature, miscellaneous, mischievous, nonchalant, noticeable.

Occurred, omitted, oscillate, paraphernalia, profession, privilege, pseudonym, recommend, reconnaissance, referred, resuscitate, separate, supersede, tendency, tranquillise, unnecessary, unparalleled, veterinary, vociferous.

Plurals

THE main problem occurs with words ending in Y. The rule is that if Y follows a vowel, the S is added to form the plural.

E.g. donkeys, moneys, storeys.

But if the Y follows a consonant, you must change the Y to I and add ES.

E.g. ladies, pennies, stories.

Some trouble arises over unusual plural forms and these have to be memorised.

E.g. Singular: series oasis

Plural: series oases

A good deal of confusion arises over plurals ending in OS or OES.

Here are a few guidelines:

1. Monosyllabic words take OES. E.g. goes, noes.

2. Words used frequently in the plural take OES. E.g. heroes, potatoes.

3. Long words take OS. E.g. archipelagos, generalissimos.

4. Proper nouns take OS. E.g. Romeos, Lotharios.

5. Alien words take OS. E.g. commandos, ghettos.

6. Words which have a vowel before the O take OS. E.g. cameos, folios.

7. Abbreviated words take OS. E.g. photos, pros.

The following examples confirm the above rules: dominoes. embargoes, mosquitoes, mottoes, tomatoes, tornadoes, curios, dynamos, magnetos, manifestos, mementos, provisos

Distinctive spelling

SOME words have a distinctive spelling according to the part of speech in which they are used. These must also be memorised.

Noun	Verb
Advice	Advise

Envelope	Envelop
Licence	License
Practice	Practise
Noun	**Adjective**
Dependant	Dependent

Suffixes

HOWEVER, while observation and memory are the keys to good spelling, there is additional guidance which can help. This was published on pages 131-133 of THE PRACTICE OF JOURNALISM, included within a chapter on Good English by Dr. Syntax.

The whole chapter is worth reading but one page is quoted here, for this is an area where even good spellers flounder.

“Many writers hesitate when they find they must write certain words about the spelling of which they feel unsure; and some words have an odd look when written. Benefit and its derivatives are an example. Should it be benefitting or benefiting? The rule about adding a suffix (-ing, -ed, -er) which begins with a vowel falls into two parts:

“1. When the suffix is added to a word of one syllable which ends with a consonant preceded by one vowel, the consonant is doubled before the suffix is added. E.g. bed, bedding; sob, sobbed; dig, digger; sun, sunny.

“2. When the word has more than one syllable, the final consonant is doubled before the suffix only if the last syllable of the word is stressed. E.g. befit, befitted; begin, beginning; occur, occurred; but gallop, galloping; parallel, paralleled; devil, devilish; benefit, benefiting.

“There are a few exceptions to each part of the rule and these must be memorised. E.g. bus, buses; travel, traveller; gas, gases; cavil, cavilling. If two vowels precede the final consonant of the word, the rule above does not apply; so we must write: bias, biased; peer, peering; proud, prouder; beat, beaten; bleed, bleeding.

"What happens when a word ends with a silent E and you want to add a suffix depends on another rule, which also has two parts. It all depends on what letter begins the suffix, and this is the rule:

"1. If the suffix begins with a consonant the mute E remains, e.g. safe, safety; same, sameness; exceptions include duty, truly, awful, width, judgment, acknowledgment.

"2. If the suffix begins with a vowel, the mute E is dropped, for example, bake, baking; sane, sanity; mile, milage; rate, ratable.

"But sometimes the mute E distinguishes between two words with different meanings, such as singeing (burning) and singing; lineage (family descent) and linage (payment by the line)."

2020 notes by John Bottomley

1. The spelling of some of the examples of suffixes given above may be subject to variation within the established house style of a newspaper or magazine publishing group, some of these established spellings may occasionally seem archaic but the important element in the use of such a style guide is guaranteeing consistency.

2. This guide was compiled long before the advent of social media and all its accompanying spelling and grammatical pitfalls. But it was also written before the increasing domination of American English in the worldwide web, particularly in the default setting of 'American English' rather than 'English' in computer spell checks. With an increasing over-reliance on the perceived infallibility of spell checks as a means of avoiding errors, the American spelling of such words as organize, realize etc (instead of the English organise, realise) and favor, honor, color (instead of the long-established accepted English favour, honour and colour) may well ultimately be the norm, particularly in rapidly developing countries or where learning spoken English is the priority.

The potential for spell checks to choose what traditionally may have been the wrong spelling will remain however. Four of the five examples given in the above list of Distinctive Spellings show differing spelling of nouns and adverbs. American

English does not replicate these rules and the words 'licence' and 'practice' are now regularly mis-used.

Spell checks have been embraced by publishing and newspaper companies as a way of cutting costs, both for printed and online work. Sub-editors and proof readers are becoming more rare. But when the spell check programme (program?) suggests there should be no hyphen in the word 're-form' then you may end up using a word which changes the whole sense of what you are writing.

Even worse are bad spelling habits online being transferred to the printed page, again not always picked up by spell checks. Don't write 'would of, should of, could of.' Yes, some journalists do this now. The word is 'have' not 'of'.

So not rely on spell checks alone, if there is nobody else checking your work, check it yourself with the use of a good dictionary.

CHAPTER 5: SYNTAX AND SENTENCE CONSTRUCTION

A GOOD VOCABULARY IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE journalist, because, as we have stressed, words are the raw materials of communication. But word power alone is not enough; we also need to master syntax, the craft of construction, before we can be effective writers.

If the construction is faulty, the communications bridge is weakened. It follows, therefore, that we must know not only the meaning of words but also their function in a particular context. Confusing the function leads to error in sentence construction and a consequent loss, or ambiguity, of meaning.

It is for this reason that we have stated that a knowledge of syntax is the foundation of a good style. We have also stated that the good reporter is the person who is in the right place at the right time and who has the right word ready. We have examined what constitutes the right word. We shall now consider how to put the right word in the right place.

It is assumed that every journalist should have a basic knowledge of English grammar, but this assumption is becoming more suspect each year. Grammar is no longer regarded as a vital ingredient of secondary education. There may be good ground for the educationists to state that grammar, as such, is no longer essential for everyday life. But where everyday life involves written communication, as it does for the journalist, then the premise is faulty.

It is no part of our purpose, however, to write a complete introduction to English grammar.

All that we can do in this comparatively brief consideration is to examine those areas where errors are frequently made; to give examples of these pitfalls and to state the rules for avoiding them. Some of the rules stated may seem very basic but all refer to errors that occur frequently. Indeed, this study has been prepared to answer a need exposed by analysis of common faults.

Sentence construction 1

A SENTENCE is a group of words expressing a complete thought.

Definition: A sentence must have a verb and a subject, either stated or understood.

Rule: The **verb** is the most important part of the sentence, for it is this which gives the sentence its meaning (verb is derived from the Latin word verbum which means word). The verb expresses action or a state of being. which is related to the **subject**.

Sentences come in four types:

E.g. The News Editor has been promoted – **statement** (called the **indicative** by the grammarian).

E.g. Promoted, you say! – **exclamation**.

E.g. Why hasn't the Deputy Editor been promoted? – **question**.

E.g. Give the Deputy Editor the job – **command** (traditionally called the **imperative**).

The subject is easy to find in the statement – *the News Editor* has been promoted

In the exclamation or question one has to invert the sentence to find the subject (i.e. convert each into a statement):

– *you* say promoted.

– *the Deputy Editor* hasn't been promoted, why not?

In the command the subject is understood:

– *you* give the Deputy Editor the job.

Pitfall:

The most common error (often, unhappily, a deliberate one is to write a "sentence" that is incomplete, by leaving out either subject or verb.

E.g. The story may read: "The new cruise liner sailed majestically down the river. She has been built with all the care that skilled craftsmen could give her. And the stamp of their reputation."

What about the *stamp of their reputation*? What is it doing? Remember, a sentence must have a verb.

E.g. Less objectionable is the omission of the subject. "The old man lay down. And died" In this example *he* is understood. The words *and died* could have been added to the first sentence. They are disjoined to give emphasis to the finality of it all.

However, this technique should be used very sparingly and in the right place. However, beware of the chatty columnist's " Met a man last week" type of construction.

Objects

ALL SENTENCES should have a subject (either expressed or understood) and a verb, but not all sentences have an object. Indeed some verbs cannot have an object.

Definition: The object is the person or thing which receives the action of the verb.

E.g. The journalist (subject), writes (verb), headlines (object).

Writes is thus a **transitive** verb for the action has crossed over to the object. But if nothing receives the action of the verb, the verb is **intransitive**.

E.g. The journalist (subject) smiles (verb)

This is a complete statement unless one adds the word *rarely* and that is an adverb telling us how often the journalist smiles. It is not an object.

Again **transitive** verbs can be used **intransitively** where no object is given.

E.g. The reporter (subject) writes (verb)

Objects may be either **direct** or **indirect**.

E.g. The reporter (subject) sent (verb) the story (object) to the Editor (indirect object)

The main (**direct**) object is *the story* for this received the action.

The secondary (**indirect**) object is *the Editor* who received, not the action, but the object itself.

The concept of 'case'

SUBJECTS, objects and indirect objects are the roles in which parts of speech may occur. However, the grammarian does not call them "roles". They are called **cases**.

The subject is in the **nominative** case.

The direct object is in the **accusative** case.

The indirect object is in the **dative** case.

However, as there is no distinction in form between the accusative and dative, we may use English terms and think simply of the **subjective** case and the **objective** case.

The complement

ONLY those verbs which express an action (active verbs) take an **object**. Inactive verbs express a state of being (or existing and take a **complement**, for each half of the sentence complements the other.

Inactive verbs may be described as linking verbs for they link two balancing halves of a sentence. The most common of these is the verb *to be* in its various forms – *am, is, are; was, were*, etc. But there are others such as *seem, appear, become,* and verbs like *taste, smell, feel, look*, but only when the verb is inactive.

E.g. He (subject) feels (verb) ill (complement) BUT He (subject) feels (verb) the cloth (object)

Summary

A sentence must have a verb and a subject (stated or understood). Active verbs take an object; inactive verbs take a complement. Both the subject and the complement

are in the **subjective** case; objects (either direct or indirect) may be described as being in the **objective** case.

It is also necessary to know that prepositions (*with, by, on,* etc.) are followed by nouns or pronouns in the objective case. The importance of this will be seen when we consider pitfalls affecting the use of pronouns and prepositions.

Sentence construction 2

THERE is one other very common pitfall area in sentence construction and that concerns the agreement of the subject and the verb.

The verb must agree with the subject in person and number.

E.g. (**Person**): I give *BUT* He gives.

E.g. (**Number**): Spelling is important, – *BUT* – Spelling and Syntax *are* important.

Agreement in person is an easy matter, for the verb changes only in the third person singular.

Agreement in number, however, has several complications, al! involving possible pitfalls. So several more rules must be stated.

Rules:

1. Double subjects require a plural verb form, but words joined to a single subject by a preposition do not affect the verb.

E.g. Spelling and syntax *are* important – BUT – Spelling, with syntax, *is* important.

2. If two subjects are linked by *either-or* or *neither-nor* the verb agrees with the subject nearer it.

E.g. *Neither* the News Editor, *nor* any of the reporters, have received the call.

3. If one subject is affirmative and the other negative the verb agrees with the affirmative.

E.g. *The Editor*, not the reporters, *was* having lunch.

4. Nouns, plural in form but singular in meaning, take a singular verb.

E.g. Mumps *is* unpleasant.

5. Plural subjects describing a unit of measurement are treated as singular.

E.g. Thirty folios *is* a lot of copy.

6. The word *number* is treated as singular when it refers to a mathematical figure, but as plural when it means a *few*.

E.g. A number *is* printed on each keyboard – BUT – A number of keyboards *are* required.

7. Singular pronouns and adjectives (e.g. *each, one, everyone, another*) take a singular verb form, BUT *None* can be either singular or plural.

E.g. Have you any bananas? No, there *are* none – BUT – Have you any beer? No, there *is* none.

Here and *there* cannot be subjects of sentences. They are adverbs.

E.g. Here *are* your tickets (subject – *tickets*).

There *is* your ticket (subject – ticket).

Note: These sentences are inverted.

Parts of speech

AS SOON as we discuss parts of a sentence (e.g. **subject, object, complement**) we become involved with parts of speech. There are eight of these: *noun, adjective, pronoun, verb, adverb, preposition, conjunction, interjection* (or exclamation). We can forget about the interjection; it should never appear except in a title (e.g. "*Oh*! Calcutta!").

However, the seven others all produce problems which we shall look at in turn, before considering further pitfalls in sentence construction.

Verbs 1

IN DISCUSSING sentence construction, we have stressed that the verb is the most important part of the sentence. Verbs are the words which provide the motive power for the sentence.

The engine can run at tick-over speed, in which case the verb is simply expressing a state of existence (i.e. ***I*** *smile*). Or the engine can give directions to the sentence. These verbs are transitive verbs and take an object.

We have seen that verbs can be **transitive** or **intransitive** and we have also seen that transitive verbs can be used intransitively.

E.g. I paint pictures (**transitive**). I paint (**intransitive**).

In addition, we have said that verbs can be linking verbs (e.g. the verb *to be*) in which case they take a **complement**.

It is also necessary to recognise three other attributes of the **verb-voice**, **tense** and **mood**.

Voice:

Verbs can be used **actively** or **passively**. This is called their voice.

Generally speaking the active voice makes for more effective prose and certainly should be used in headline writing, although there are exceptions to this rule (E.g. *Kennedy shot*).

Be on your guard against the **double passive** (E.g. *the point is sought to be evaded*) and such monstrosities.

Tense:

There are three basic times (present, past and future) and three basic actions (simple, completed and continuing) and these give nine different tenses as the following table shows:

Simple

Present: I see

Past: I saw

Future: I shall see

Continuing

Present: I am seeing

Past: I was seeing

Future: I shall be seeing

Completed

Present: I have seen

Past: I had seen

Future: I shall have seen

Traditionally the continuing tense is called the imperfect and the completed is called the past perfect, but the names are unimportant.

Three other tenses can be formed where there is a mixture of continuing and completed action:

Present: I have been seeing.

Past: I had been seeing

Future: I shall have been seeing.

Pitfalls:

There are two main pitfalls, which occur in the use of tenses:

1. Mixing past and present tenses in narrative reporting. (The present tense is often used for impact, as in captions.)

E.g. Armstrong *steps* on to the moon.

When this form is used it must be used consistently. One cannot then say:

He *hesitated* with one foot on the ladder.

2. The second main source of trouble is the failure to place tenses in their chronological order, particularly when using reported speech.

E.g. The speaker may say: "I *am* in favour of nuclear disarmament because I *have witnessed* the effects of radiation."

In reported speech the present simple and present completed tenses must become past simple and past completed: He *was* in favour …. because he *had witnessed*.

Mood:

Verbs can be used in several different ways. These are called **moods**. The three main forms are:

1. Indicative – statement, question or answer.

2. Imperative – command.

3. Subjunctive – supposition.

The verb forms in the tables of tenses on the previous page (to change to mentioned earlier) were all in the **indicative** mood.

The **imperative** mood produces just two forms – "see" and "be seen".

E.g. (You) *See* the cashier about your wages. (You) Stand up and be *seen*.

However, it is the **subjunctive** mood which produces the pitfalls.

Rules:

1. The verb-forms for the subjunctive mood are the same for all verbs (except *to be*) apart from a small change in the third person singular, present tense.

E.g. "She *has* faith" becomes "If she *have faith*."

"He *finds*" becomes "*Should he find*."

2. With the verb *to be* the following alterations occur:

Present		**Past**	
Indicative	**Subjunctive**	**Indicative**	**Subjunctive**
I am	(if) I *be*	I was	(if) I *were*
We are	(if) we *be*	We were	(if) we *were*
You are	(if) you *be*	You were	(if) you *were*
He is	(if) he *be*	He was	(if) he *were*
They are	(if) they *be*	They were	(if) they *were*
	ALL ARE DIFFERENT		1ST & 3RD PERSON SINGULAR ARE DIFFERENT

Pitfalls:

The confusion in recognising the subjunctive occurs in three ways:

1. The use of the verb *be* is not always a subjunctive. It is often a corruption of *should be*. (**Simple future tense**.) E.g. I move that the matter *be* discussed (*should be*).

2. Where the past subjunctive is not really past at all; but has to do with *supposing* not with *pastness*.

E.g. If that *were* my headline I would re-write it. (**Subjunctive**.) If that *was* your headline yesterday you perpetrated a libel. (**Indicative, simple past tense**.)

N.B.: Use *were* for the supposed, untrue or impossible situation. E.g. If 1 *were* you. If I *were* king.

3. The subjunctive need not be prefaced by *if*. It may be prefaced by such words as:

Imagine you were king.

As though you were on the board.

Just suppose you were the Editor.

Nouns

HALF the words in your dictionary are **common** nouns. They are the names given by man to places, things, emotions and states. Uncommon or **proper** nouns are the names given to persons or special places or things (e.g. *George, London, Tuesday*).

Common nouns are called **abstract** nouns when they refer to abstract things such as qualities (*beauty, honesty*), emotions (*anger, pity*), states (*friendship, childhood*) and processes (*day-dreaming, bird-watching*).

Collective nouns is the term given to collections of things/people (e.g. *forest, crew, flock*).

The most common pitfalls in use of nouns concern plurals, **possessives**, **collectives** and **gerunds** – which are not, in fact, nouns at all.

Possessives: These are discussed in notes on the Apostrophe in the section on Punctuation.

Collectives: Generally, a collective should be treated as singular, but if the result sounds silly make it into a plural and make sure the verb agrees.

E.g. The Cabinet *is* determined. – **Correct** for *Cabinet* is a single body.

The Cabinet *is* discussing. – **Incorrect**. A single entity cannot discuss.

The Cabinet *is* divided. – **Correct**. It must be unified (i.e. one) before it can be divided.

The Cabinet *are* agreed. – **Correct**. It takes more than one to agree (c.f. *Discussing*).

Rule: If both a single and a plural application occur in the same sentence, choose the most suitable and stick to it. Don't be pedantic; do be consistent.

Exception: Sport – a team is always treated as plural E.g. Chelsea were defeated.

Gerunds

Definition: GERUNDS are verbs in participle form used as nouns.

Pitfalls: Participles act as adjectives; **gerunds** act as nouns.

E.g. A *running* man (participle, adjective). *Running* is his hobby (gerund, noun).

N.B. Because gerunds are equivalent to nouns, they require a **possessive case** in certain instances.

E.g. I saw her running (objective because *running* is a participle describing *her*). She was keen on *her* running (possessive, because running is a gerund).

Adjectives

Definition: ADJECTIVES are used to describe or limit the meaning of a noun, pronoun or other adjective by indicating *which, how many* or *what kind*.

The most common adjectives are: the **definite article** (*the*) and the **indefinite article** (*a, an*).

Demonstrative adjectives identify the noun or pronoun (*this, that, these, those*). If these words are used without a noun they become pronouns (e.g. *Those* were the days).

Possessive adjectives show ownership (*my, your, our*, etc.), NOT to be confused with *mine, yours, ours* which are pronouns.

N.B.: In English adjectives do not change their ending in order to agree with the noun as to number or gender. Nor do we make them agree when we use nouns as adjectives. E.g. *Trade* unions NOT *Trades* unions.

Adjectives of number: The main problems, however, occur in the use of adjectives of number, adjectives of degree and absolute adjectives.

Rule: *Fewer* refers to **number**, *less* to **degree** or quantity.

E.g. *Fewer* strawberries in the fields results in *less* fruit in the shops.

Adjectives of degree: These adjectives are used to compare one noun with another. E.g. The curry is hot (*hot* is an adjective joined by a linking verb *is* to the noun *curry*).

In this sentence the adjective *hot* is a positive statement, but there are degrees of heat.

Definition: The degrees of comparison are **positive**, **comparative** and **superlative**.

E.g. The curry is *hot* (**positive**). The curry is *hotter* (**comparative**). The curry *is* hottest (**superlative**).

Pitfalls: The superlative is used only where three or more things are compared.

E.g. He is the *younger* of the two brothers. (**Comparative** degree because only two brothers are compared.)

She is the *eldest* of the three sisters. (**Superlative** degree because three sisters are compared)

N.B. *Elder, eldest* are used where there is a family relationship; otherwise *older* and *oldest* are used.

E.g. He is the *oldest* of the club members.

Pitfall: The form to be used in adjectives of degree also causes confusion.

Rules:

1. Where there is one syllable in the adjective add *ER, EST*. E.g. cold, colder, coldest.

2. Where there are three syllables, use the words *more, most* (*less, least*). E.g. Curious, *more* curious, *most* curious.

3. Where the adjective has two syllables follow idiomatic usage. E.g. Ugly, uglier, ugliest – BUT – hopeful, *more* hopeful, *most* hopeful.

Absolute adjectives: Some adjectives cannot be compared because the quality of the adjective is absolute.

E.g. A thing is either perfect or less than perfect. It cannot be *more* or *most* perfect. It is equally ludicrous to write *more fatal*.

The following are further examples of absolute adjectives:

Absolute,

Basic,

Complete,

Empty,

Essential,

Final,

Full,

Ideal,

Impossible,

Obvious,

Pure,

Unique,

Ultimate

Colours: Colours are also absolute when used as adjectives denoting **quality**. You should not write *less* red or *more* blue when you mean *lighter* red or *deeper* blue. However, *more* can be linked with a colour when referring to **quantity**.

E.g. I have *more* red paint than blue (**quantity** not **quality**).

Names and titles

WE may have been taught that names are nouns, but this is only partly true.

The Christian name is the noun (e.g. *John*). But the surname is adjectival in function for it describes which John. E.g. John Smith – John, the smith. John Robinson – John, the son of Robin. John Bottomley – John, who lives at the bottom of the meadow.

Pitfall: One should not write: *Rev. Smith*, for this is using an adjective to describe an adjective without any noun being present.

One must say

The (**definite article**) Rev. (**adjective**) John (**noun**) Smith (**adjective**)

The same applies to knights:

Sir (**adjective**) John (**noun**) Smith (**adjective**)

However, one cannot apply the same logic where *Lord* and *Lady* are used, because the use or omission of the Christian name denotes a different rank.

Indefinite article: The simplest adjective is the indefinite article *a* or *an*.

Rule: Use *an* where the noun begins with a vowel or silent *h*.

E.g. an hour, an honourable intention NOT an *h*otel because it is now acceptable to sound the ***H***.

Definite article: Do not write: Death occurred yesterday. Write: *The* death occurred yesterday.

Prepositions

THERE are two "rules" about the use of prepositions: one should be remembered; the other ignored, for it is not a rule at all.

Rule: Prepositions take an object. (The importance of this will be seen when we consider pitfalls in the use of pronouns.)

Non-rule: "Never use a preposition to end a sentence with."

This sentence, of course, breaks its own rule and in so doing makes its point; prepositions at the end of a sentence can make a sentence very ugly. However, contriving to avoid using a preposition at the end of a sentence can be just as clumsy.

E.g. Consider the Churchillian: " This is something up with which I shall not put".

The answer is to use some common sense, remembering the criteria that language should be easy to understand and should sound well. If your sentence does not meet those criteria, re-cast it. If the use of a preposition at the end of a sentence is unavoidable, it does not matter provided that the sentence reads easily. In any case, you will be in good company, for all the great English stylists have broken this so-called rule.

Idiomatic usage: The most common error in handling prepositions is to use the wrong one. This is not so much a matter of rule as of idiomatic usage.

The following is a list for your guidance:

abhorrence *of*

absolve *from*

accord *with*

acquiesce *in* (not *to*)

adapt *to* (purpose)

adapted *for* (by nature)

affinity *between* (not to)

agree *on* (a point)

agree *to* (a proposal)

agree *with* (a person or opinion)

aggravated *by*

alien *from* (not to)

amenable *to*

arise *from* (not *out of*)

averse *to*

bestow *upon*

(the mind) boggles *at* (not *with*)

change *for* (a thing)

change *with* (a person)

chary *of*

compare *with* (not *to*)

compatible *with*

confer *on* (but bestow *upon*)

conform *to* (but in conformity *with*)

connive *at*

consider (no preposition; do not use *as*)

convenient *for* (purpose)

convenient *to* (person)

comprise (no preposition; do not use *of*)

correspond *with* (person)

correspond *to* (thing)

consequent *upon*

deficient *in*

die *of* (not *from*)

derogatory (*to*)

different *from* (not *to*; nor *than* which is a conjunction)

differ *from* (things or persons, in a comparative sense)

differ *with* (a person when disagreeing)

dissent *from* (not *t*o)

distaste *for*

equal *to*

exception *to*

glad *at* (a piece of news)

glad *of* (a possession)

guiltless *of*

impatient *for* (things)

impatient *with* (persons)

inculcate *upon* someone (not inculcate someone *with*)

independent *of* (not *from*)

indicative *of*

ineligible *for*

inflict *upon*

infuse *into* (not *with*)

inspired *by*

instil *into*

irrespective *of*

martyr *for* (a cause)

martyr *to* (a disease)

oblivious *of*

part *from* (persons)

part *with* (things)

prefer *to*

prevail *against* (things)

prevail *on* (persons)

profuse *in*

pursuant *to*

reconcile *to* (thing)

reconcile *with* (person)

satisfied *with*

similar *to*

taste *of* (food)

taste *for* (arts)

thirst *for* or *after* (knowledge)

unconscious *of*

N.B.: Avoid compound prepositions. E.g. *in connection with, in regard to*

Some are worse than others; the worst constitute some of the greatest abominations in English usage.

Pronouns

MOST of the pitfalls in the use of personal pronouns arise from a failure to recognise in which **case** the pronoun is, although the problem is rarely seen or defined as such. Briefly, what is in doubt is the ending of the pronoun.

This difficulty arises because it is unfashionable to talk about **case** in relation to the English Language. But an understanding of **case** answers the difficulty.

Rule:

1. If a first person pronoun is the **subject** or **complement** of a sentence, it is in the subjective (**nominative**) case and the form ***I***.

2. If a first person pronoun is the **direct object**, it is in the objective (**accusative**) case and the form is ***Me***.

3. If a first person pronoun is the **indirect** object, it is in the objective (**dative**, this time) case and the form is ***Me***.

You and me: More often than not *you* and *me* is correct. But how do you recognise when it is right?

First of all, forget the *you*. This does not change its form and so it is no help; it only gets in the way of your thinking. Simply think about the *I* and *me*.

E.g. (You and) *I* are going for a walk. *I* = subject = subjective (nominative) case.

Will the ball hit (you or) me? *Me* = object = objective (accusative) case.

Will he give the ball to (you or) me? Me = Indirect object = objective (dative) case.

On the other hand modern usage has over-ruled the pedantic form:

It is *I*, I am *he*.

Because the verb *to be* takes a complement *I* and *He* are in the subjective (nominative) case, but everyone says “It’s me”. However, these forms are primarily used in speech not in writing.

Another source of confusion is found where two pronouns are linked. A common error is to construct a sentence like this:

The Editor gave *he* and *I* the afternoon off.

Consider these statements singly:

The Editor gave *him* the afternoon off. The Editor gave *me* the afternoon off.

Hence, the Editor gave *him* and *me* the afternoon off.

Pitfall:

Should we say *between you and me* or *between you and I*.

The answer is that *between* is a preposition and all prepositions (e.g. *with, by, in, from*) take an object. So this needs the objective (accusative) case and it must be *between you and me*. If in doubt, try another preposition. Would you say *with I*? No, it must be *with me*.

Who and whom: Now let us look at the pitfall that arises over the use of *who* and *whom*. Again the same rules apply.

E.g. *Who* will come with me? Who = he = subject = nominative case.

Whom did he kick? Whom = him = object = accusative case.

By *whom* was he kicked? Whom = him = of preposition *by* = accusative case

To *whom* shall I give it? Whom = him = Indirect object = dative case.

The simplest test is to substitute *he* for *him*. If *he* is right, it should be *who*. If *him* is right, it should be *whom*.

Conjunctions

A FREQUENT source of error is to confuse conjunctions with prepositions, particularly in such constructions as:

He is as tall *as* me. She is older *than* me.

Both these are incorrect. The correct form is :

He is as tall as I (am). She is older than I (am).

Verbs 2

Compound verbs: Verbs may be **simple** (I *saw*) or **compound** (I *was seeing*).

Compound verbs comprise auxiliary words (*was, would be, might*, etc.) and participles (*seen, seeing*).

Pitfalls:

1. to be afraid of splitting them.

E.g. "You *must* occasionally *use* conjunctions to link one idea with another."

This is idiomatic and more precise than the form: "You *must use* conjunctions occasionally."

2. On the other hand, avoid splitting compound verbs by whole phrases or clauses. This makes reading and understanding difficult.

E.g. "You *must*, if you are to write effective sentences which can be readily understood by the reader, whatever his intelligence, *use* conjunctions."

Shall and will: The rule is quite complex but the following is a rough and ready guide:

Shall is used with the first person verb form (singular and plural) and *will* with the second and third person (singular and plural) verb forms.

E.g. I shall, We shall – BUT – He will, You will, They will

These forms should be inverted only when extra emphasis is required.

1. You *shall* succeed. **2.** I *will* succeed.

Non-finite verbs:

Verbs can be **finite**.

E.g. I *walk*; I am *walking*

or **non-finite** (participles used as adjectives; gerunds and infinitives).

Gerunds and infinitives: We have seen how easily the gerund can be confused with the adjectival participle, but the gerund can also be confused with the infinitive.

E.g. We can write:

I am *able* to meet him.

I am *competent* to perform the operation.

It is *sufficient* to perform one task.

It is *adequate* to assume.

Each of these italicised words is followed by an **infinitive** but similar words require a **gerund**.

We can write:

"Sufficient *to perform* (**infinitive**) – BUT – We must write: "equal *to performing* (**gerund**).

This is largely a question of idiomatic use but it is possible to give a few examples of where a **gerund** may be needed:

E.g. after a noun or pronoun:

"with a view to his *performing*" (notice the **possessive**)

after an adjective:

"equal to *performing*" (note: to is a **preposition**; it is not part of the verb)

after a verb:

"The Chancellor is able *to introduce* a new tax" (**infinitive**) – BUT – "The Chancellor is committed to *introducing* a new tax" (**gerund**)

Pitfalls:

1. Failing to use the infinitive. E.g. Try *to get* – NOT – Try *and get*.

2. The infinitive is not always prefaced by *to*.

E.g. I taught him *to cook*.

I saw him *write*.

I wanted him to *sing*.

I heard him *shout*.

I asked him *to depart*.

I watched him *go*.

All are infinitives. There is no logical reason for this but certain verbs (e.g. *see, hear, need, know, observe, let, watch, feel*, etc.) do not require to in the infinitive form.

Split infinitive: There are occasions when the split infinitive can be the lesser of two evils. And the alternative evils are ambiguity and artificiality. Let us consider these separately.

1. Ambiguity:

Which of these is the lesser evil?

The object is *to* further *cement* trade relations (split infinitive)

OR

The object is *further to cement trade relations*. (In the latter we don't know if a *further object* or *further cementing* is implied.)

2. Artificiality, where the artificial avoidance of a split infinitive upsets the rhythm of the sentence.

Which of these do you prefer?

(a) "The modifications are intended *to* better *equip* candidates."

(b) "The modifications are intended *to equip* better candidates."

(c) "The modifications are intended better *to equip* candidates."

(a) is the split infinitive

(b) *better* has now become an adjective, we have now got *superior candidates*

(c) is obviously contrived and artificial.

So choose (a). It is the simplest, the sanest and it sounds most pleasant.

Adverbs

Definition: JUST as adjectives describe (or limit) nouns and pronouns, adverbs describe (or limit) verbs, adjectives and other adverbs.

Pitfalls: There are several pitfalls that can arise if they are positioned incorrectly.

1. To make them into adjectives, as in the example quoted above: "the modifications are intended to equip *better* candidates".

2. To make the adverb qualify the wrong verb.

E.g. **Correct:** You must *occasionally* use conjunctions to link one idea with another.

E.g. **Incorrect:** You must use conjunctions *occasionally* to link one idea with another.

(Here *occasionally* qualifies *to link* instead of *must use*. Hence we have occasionally *linking* instead of occasionally *using*.)

Often the best guide is to follow the idiomatic form where the meaning, by common usage, is clear.

3. Complements can be separated from the verb, but try to avoid a sentence where the adverb separates the object from its verb.

E.g. **Incorrect:** They have interpreted *rightly* the situation. **Correct:** They have interpreted the situation *rightly*.

N.B. Beware of irrelevant adverbs. Consider the cliche *leave severely alone* where *severely* has no meaning. You cannot be severe in this negative way.

Sentence construction 3

MOST of the pitfalls in sentence construction stem from a disorderly mind, for they are breaches of good order. Even simple sentences can make nonsense.

E.g. For the second time in a week a woman was drowned in her bath at Blanktown.

A sentence can also be silly because it is too orderly:

E.g. Injured fighting a fire at a Downtown fish shop last night Downtown fireman George Shaw, of Upper Street, Downtown, was treated at the Downtown General Hospital.

Quite clearly this did not happen in Blanktown but does one need all this repetition?

The main sources of error, however, occur in four main areas:

1. The non-sequitur (double sentences where the second statement has no logical relationship with the first half; hence, it does not follow sensibly).

2. The incorrect positioning of a phrase.

3. The incorrect positioning of a clause.

4. The misrelated or unrelated participle.

Let us have a look at them.

The non-sequitur:

E.g. A new pension scheme will be introduced next year and it is expected that by the year 2000 there will be twice as many octogenarian pensioners as there were in 1970.

This implies, quite wrongly. that the new pension scheme will lead to greater longevity. The ideas are unrelated and should be expressed as separate statements.

Misplaced phrase: E.g. Betty Blott was charged with stealing a purse at Downtown Magistrates' Court today.

Misplaced clause: E.g. After his car had crashed at Blanktown a fireman had to be called to release the driver.

Whose car? The fireman's?

Misrelated participle: E.g. Walking across the road, the car ran over him. (*Walking across the road* is a phrase which is intended to describe *him*; positioned as it is, it describes the subject – i.e. *the car*.)

The sentence should read: *Walking across the road*, he was run over by the car.

Rule: Participles used in this way are adjectives. Hence, participial phrases are adjectival in function and must be related to the correct noun or pronoun. They must not be left dangling. Consider the following:

1. Participial phrase (correct) – Having rested, the troops marched on.

2. Dangling or misrelated participle (incorrect) – Having rested, the march continued.

3. Absolute phrase (correct) – The troops having rested, the march continued.

Defining phrases and clauses

Another common pitfall is the wrong use of commas in defining phrases and clauses (see also Punctuation).

Consider the difference in meaning between these two sentences:

1. The reporters aware of the deadline worked fast.

2. The reporters, aware of the deadline, worked fast.

The first example means that only those reporters *aware of the deadline* worked fast. The second means that all the reporters were aware of the deadline and all worked fast.

In the first instance the phrase aware of the deadlines defines, limits and restricts.

In the second instance, the same phrase describes or comments in a non-restrictive way.

The same distinctions occur where clauses are used:

1. The reporters who were aware of the deadline worked fast and

2. The reporters, who were aware of the deadline, worked fast.

Rule:

If the phrase or clause defines, omit the commas. If the phrase simply extends the information by giving additional descriptions, include the commas. (The distinction is that commas enclose a phrase or clause which can be left out without changing the meaning.)

That and which: We have come to regard these two words as interchangeable, although grammatically they are not.

Rules:

1. *That* should be used with the defining clause (i.e. where the commas are omitted).

E.g. The house *that* Jack built.

2. *Which* should be used where the clause is non-defining (i.e. where the commas are used).

E.g. In the island of South Uist, *which* I have just visited, there is not one single tree.

N.B. – *That* can also replace *who* in a defining clause.

E.g. The reporters that were aware of the deadline worked fast.

(This substitution of *that* for *who* makes the defining function more apparent.)

Chapter 6: Punctuation

PUNCTUATION is designed to make reading easy. It is the written counterpart of those pauses and verbal inflections which make speech understandable. It also serves to separate sentences, phrases and words into orderly elements. Without correct punctuation written language becomes garbled.

The most important marks of punctuation are: The **comma**, the **semi-colon**, the **colon** and the **full stop**.

The comma

THIS marks short pauses. It is the most frequently used punctuation mark and also the most misused.

The comma is used:

1. In the place of *and* to separate a series of words of the same kind.

E.g. The reporter should always write clear, concise, accurate English.

(The words separated by commas are all adjectives defining *English*.)

The same rule applies to series of other words, provided they belong to the same part of speech.

E.g. She said the same to James, Michael, John and Alexander.

(The separations here are all between proper nouns in a series.)

2. Before and after :

(i) Words or phrases such as: *however, for instance, in fact*.

(ii) Alternatives.

E.g. His writing was more refined, more intellectual, than Smith's.

3. To mark off:

(i) words in the vocative. E.g. John, don't go yet.

(ii) words or phrases in apposition (i.e. a statement in parentheses). E.g. Elizabeth II, Queen of England, has four children.

(iii) Participial phrases.

E.g. Being unaware of the situation, he blundered on.

(iv) Absolute phrases. E.g. That being so, we shall go by train.

4. In double sentences:

(i) Where there are two subjects. E.g. He wanted to leave, but his friend detained him. He felt ill, and his friend had to help him.

(ii) Where there is only one subject, but two verbs, the inclusion of the comma is necessary to make the sentence easier to read. E.g. I visited Thomas and Perks and Marks and Spencers, and later went home.

5. In complex sentences to separate:

(i) qualifying phrases. E.g. In spite of your attempt at secrecy, I know what happened.

(ii) subordinate, non-defining clauses. E.g. The reporters, who were called in on their day off, worked quickly. BUT NOT in defining clauses. E.g. The house that Jack built.

The semi-colon

THE semi-colon marks a longer pause than that indicated by the comma, and it is used:

1. In double sentences, where there is no conjunction;

E.g. The rumour was that the king was dead; the people believed it.

2. In the same kind of sentence where the conjunction is expressed, but where the writer intends the reader to note a longer pause between statements than a comma would signify.

E.g. There will be an inquest, of course; but the matter will not end there.

3. To divide several parallel clauses.

E.g. The ship sank within minutes; all hands and passengers were lost; no wreckage was sighted.

The colon

THE difference between the semi-colon and the colon is that the latter is used when the writer wishes to indicate an even longer pause than that indicated by the semi-colon. It is used:

1. Always before opening quotes. E.g. The Mayor said: “I am glad to be here.”

2. Before listing articles, or people or ideas. E.g. He sold the lot: boat, tackle, mooring rights and fishing licences.

E.g. They rejected his views on all subjects: sex, love, literature, marriage, violence.

E.g. All of them were dead : Bill, Jack, Ted and Willie.

3. To distinguish between two co-ordinate clauses, where the second explains the first. E.g. Keep your language uncluttered: it reads more easily.

4. In a double sentence where the two ideas are in antithesis. E.g. Man proposes: God disposes.

The full stop

THE full stop denotes the end of a sentence. It is also used after initials and abbreviations, but check your HOUSE STYLE for newspaper practice varies.

Other marks

1. The exclamation mark.

Use this only when it forms part of a title (of a film, etc.) or after an exclamation. E.g. A beard, you say!

2. The question mark.

This should be used after a direct query. E.g. He asked: "Are you coming?"

(Note the question mark is inside the quotation marks because the whole question is quoted.)

If the question is not part of the quotation it comes outside the quotation.

E.g. Have you read "Pilgrim's Progress"?

3. Quotation marks (inverted commas).

Use these for titles of books, plays, etc., only where this is consistent with House Style.

Use these also for direct quotes. E.g. He asked: "Are you coming?"

Where a quote comes within a quote use single commas inside. E.g. He asked: "Have you read 'Pilgrim's Progress'?"

4. The parenthesis.

This can take the form of: (i) Brackets. E.g. If we believe (as we should) that syntax is important, we should master it.

(ii) The long dash. E.g. If we believe—as we should—that syntax is important, we should master it.

The long dash is to be preferred because it keeps the sentence more fluent.

5. The hyphen.

The hyphen, or short dash, is used:

(i) For compound nouns. E.g. mother-in-law.

(ii) For compound titles. E.g. Adjutant-general.

(iii) For compound nouns which are made up of verbs and prepositions. E.g. call-up, get-together.

(iv) To link a suffix with a proper noun. E.g. pre-Christian.

(v) For compound adjectives. E.g. a black-bearded beggar (the beggar has a black beard). NOT a black bearded beggar (this means the black beggar has a beard).

(vi) To link numbers. E.g. Ninety-nine.

(vii) To distinguish between meanings. E.g. Re-cover (cover again); recover (regain).

(viii) To avoid clumsy juxtapositions of vowels or consonants. E.g. co-operation, snail-like.

(ix) Where the word looks odd without the hyphen. E.g. NOT rerun BUT re-run.

6. The apostrophe.

This has two uses:

(i) To denote a missing letter (or letters). E.g. don't, can't fo'c's'le.

(ii) As a mark to denote the genitive or possessive case. E.g. Jacob's ladder.

Possessives

Rules:

1. Before the *S* if it is singular; after the *S* if it is plural (E.g. boy's and boys').

2. Where the plural changes the ending of the word and thus has no *S*, the apostrophe goes before the *S* which is added (E.g. man's, men's).

Following this rule can produce some clumsy possessives, but this is unavoidable.

You cannot write: Strauss' waltzes. It must be: Strauss's waltzes.

However, if two men named Strauss are involved, you don't write:

S*trauss's* waltzes or *Strausss'* waltzes; you simplify it to *Strauss'* waltzes, because the plural of Strauss is Strauss.

3. Avoid double apostrophes:

The Inkmakers' Society's conference (write: The conference of the Inkmakers' Society).

4. Avoid clumsy possessives:

The Vicar of Downtown, the Rev Owen Brown's book (again invert it: The book by the Rev Owen Brown, Vicar of Downtown).

5. Avoid confusion with quotation marks, particularly single quotes.

You cannot write: In 'The Times's' opinion.

It should be; In the opinion of 'The Times'.

N.B. Possessive of *WHO* is *WHOSE* not *WHO'S*. Possessive of *IT* is *ITS* not *IT'S*.

REFERENCES

1. Бондаренко, І. *Сучасна англійська граматика для філологів*. Київ : ВЦ Академія, 2021. 296 с. Режим доступу: https://academia.edu.ua

2. Василенко, І. В. *Граматика англійської мови з практичними вправами*. Львів : ЛНУ ім. І. Франка, 2022. 248 с. Режим доступу: http://repository.lnu.edu.ua/

3. Hewings, M. *Advanced Grammar in Use*. 3rd ed. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2013. 320 p. Режим доступу: https://www.cambridge.org/grammarinuse

4. Murphy, R. *English Grammar in Use*. 5th ed. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2019. 380 p. Режим доступу: https://www.cambridge.org/grammarinuse

5. Azar, B. S., Hagen, S. A. *Understanding and Using English Grammar*. 5th ed. Pearson Education, 2017. 480 p. Режим доступу: https://www.pearson.com/

ІНФОРМАЦІЙНІ ОНЛАЙН РЕСУРСИ

6. Communication [Електронний ресурс]. – Режим доступу: https://thesynonymseeker.com/communication

7. Alison – платформа безкоштовного онлайн-навчання [Електронний ресурс]. Режим доступу: https://alison.com

8. 6 Tips for Improving your Creative Writing. [Електронний ресурс]. Режим доступу: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7w2DQ0JaETk

9. 8 Tips for Getting Started with Creative Writing. [Електронний ресурс]. Режим доступу: MasterClass Articles Categories

10. Creative Writing: How to Get Started with Creative Writing. [Електронний ресурс]. Режим доступу: https://self-publishingschool.com/creative-writing/

11. How to Write a Blog Post? [Електронний ресурс]. Режим доступу: https://www.semrush.com/blog/how-to-write-a-blog-post/

12. How to Write a Blog Post? A Step-by-Step Guide. [Електронний ресурс]. Режим доступу: https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/how-to-start-a-blog

13. What is Academic Writing? [Електронний ресурс]. Режим доступу: https://grammarist.com/writing/academic-writing-types-examples/

14. What is Academic Writing? Common Types with Examples. [Електронний ресурс]. Режим доступу: https://grammarist.com/writing/academic-writing types-examples/

15. What is Academic Writing? Dos and Don'ts for Students. [Електронний ресурс]. Режим доступу: https://www.scribbr.com/category/academic-writing/

16. Media Helping Media. Free Training Resources for Journalists [Електронний ресурс]. – Режим доступу: **https://mediahelpingmedia.org/free-training-resources/**

С 88 **CREATIVE COMMUNICATION AND WRITING.** Методичні вказівки до практичних занять та самостійної роботи для здобувачів першого (бакалаврського) рівня вищої освіти денної та заочної форми навчання. ОСВІТНЯ ПРОГРАМА – Медіакомунікації та PR ГАЛУЗЬ ЗНАНЬ – 06 Журналістика СПЕЦІАЛЬНІСТЬ – 061 Журналістика / уклад. А.І. Яновець, Луцьк. ЛНТУ, 2025. 70 с.

Комп'ютерний набір та верстка: А.І. Яновець

Редактор: А.І. Яновець

Підп. до друку «__»_____2025 р. Формат 60х84/16. Папір офс.

Гарн. Таймс. Ум. друк. арк. 4,87.

Тираж 50 прим.

Інформаційно-видавничий відділ

Луцького національного технічного університету

43018, м. Луцьк, вул. Львівська, 75

Друк – ІВВ ЛНТУ