

The Finer Points of Usage

NCTC Webinar Series for ECS 3167
Critical Writers / Critical Thinkers

Make this Webinar Work for You

- Write your most common problems.
- Write any grammar or style questions you have.
- Post two tips from today's session prominently in your office.
- Practice them for 2 weeks to one month.
- Review the webinar for new tips.

Topics We Will Cover

Capitalization, hyphenation, and other typesetting relics
Commonly confused words
Comma rules (and suggestions)
This, that, and the other
Top five grammar myths
Current debates — or, what you will need to know next.

CAPS, ----, and other #*#@#\$*!

Always capitalize the first and the last word.
Capitalize all nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, and subordinate conjunctions ("as", "because", "although").
Lowercase all articles, coordinate conjunctions ("and", "or", "nor"), and prepositions regardless of length, when they are other than the first or last word.
Lowercase the "to" in an infinitive.

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Cap Rules Translated

Shift +F3

-

The Hyphen

Most commonly used to create adjectives out of other parts of speech.

That was a one-of-a-kind experience.

That experience was one of a kind.

-

The Hyphen

NOT used to separate adjectives from adverbs.

A brightly lit room can take a dark coat of paint.

-

The Hyphen

For a full set of rules, refer to:

<http://www.gramarbook.com/punctuation/hyphens.asp>



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"IS ANAL RETENTIVE HYPHENATED?"

--

En Dash

a) *in an all-inclusive numerical range*

5-7

b) *with a compound, hyphenated adjective*

Civil War-era dresses

(or *all-inclusive numerical range*)

—

Em Dash

To set off appositives with a comma.

My list — drop off the car, visit the laundromat, take the kids out to play — was growing longer and more tedious by the minute.

To set off parenthetical expressions.

While Congress was voting — a process infamous for its timeliness — the whips busily talked up their supporters.

Why?

In typesetting, the em was one of the many units of measurement (an Imperial inch), and its width is equal to the point size of the font.

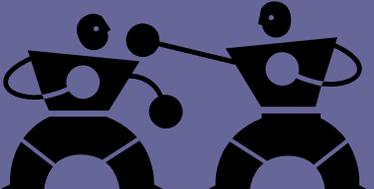
Ép	q1
----	----

The en is ½ of that distance and is also a unit of measurement.

Underlining

vs.

Italicizing



Commonly Confused Words

Who / whom
 It's / its
 Affect / Effect
 Infer / Imply



Who / Whom

Who is in the subjective case—it serves as a subject of the sentence or clause:

Who stole my bagel?
You'll never believe who it was.

Who / Whom

To whom can we turn in a time of crisis?
Whom can we turn to in a time of crisis?

Whom is in the objective case—it serves as the object of a verb or a preposition.

Who / Whom

Quick tip: if the verb has a subject, use WHOM.

Mrs. Dimwit consulted an astrologer whom she met in Seattle.
Joyce is the girl who got the job.

It's / Its

It is never okay to spell its with an apostrophe.

Affect / Effect

If you can say "an" use "e."

Readers Infer



Writers Imply

Comma Rules

✓	X	~
Non-Restrictive	Restrictive	Intro Phrase
Coord. Conj. serial or ind. clause	Subject-Verb- Object	Par Expression
Coordinate adjs	Cumulative adjs	Prevent confusion

Comma Rules Coordinating Conjunctions

I dedicate my life's work to my dogs, God
and Country.

Comma Rules Coordinating Conjunction

*Jim studied in the Sweet Shop for his chemistry quiz, **but** it was hard to concentrate because of the noise.*

NOT:

Jim studied in the Sweet Shop for his chemistry quiz but was unable to concentrate.

Comma Rules Subject-Verb-Object

X Registering for our fitness programs before September 15, will save you thirty percent of the membership cost.

X She travelled around the world with, a small backpack, a bedroll, a pup tent and a camera.

Comma Rules
Coordinate vs. Cumulative
Adjectives

- 1) Can you separate the adjectives with an "and"?
- 2) Can you reverse their order?

*Did you read about Macomber's short, happy
H&R?*

Comma Rules
Coordinate vs. Cumulative
Adjectives

- 1) Can you separate the adjectives with an "and"?
- 2) Can you reverse their order?

The dark red dress was her favorite.

Comma Rules
~

Heavy	Light	Moderate
CONSISTENCY		

Top Five Grammar Myths –
Busted!

- 1) Never split an infinitive.
- 2) Never end a sentence with a preposition.
- 3) Don't start a sentence with a conjunction.
- 4) A double negative cancels out.
- 5) The passive voice is unappealing.

Never split an infinitive:

*To go boldly where no man has gone
before?*

*To boldly go where no man has
gone before.*

Never split an infinitive:

How else would you say...

*The landlord claimed to flatly refuse
singing in his apartments.*

Never end a sentence with a preposition.

That is the sort of thing up with which I will not put!

There is no need to notify us about problems that we are already aware of.

There is no need to notify us about problems of which we are already aware.

Don't start a sentence with a conjunction.

And why not?

Coordinating (and correlative) Conjunctions	Conjunctive Adverb	Subordinating Conjunction
✓ FANBOYS If...then Not only...but also	✓ However, Therefore, Moreover,	✓ So long as sentence includes an independent clause

Don't start a sentence with a conjunction.

✓ Although we didn't see the need for the proposed change, we included it to mollify the commenter.

X While even we couldn't see the difference.

A double negative cancels out.

I didn't find the movie entirely unappealing.

It sucked!

The passive voice is unappealing.

In the less than two decades of their use, synthetic pesticides have been so thoroughly distributed throughout the animate and inanimate world that they occur virtually everywhere.



When To Eliminate This That

X	✓	✓
	<u>Pronoun</u>	
Conjunction	Relative	Demonstrative

That, as a Conjunction

She was so tired that she nearly fell asleep at the wheel.

That, as a Conjunction

She was so tired that she nearly fell asleep at the wheel.

She was so tired she nearly fell asleep at the wheel.

That, as a Conjunction

She was so tired that she nearly fell asleep at the wheel.

She was so tired she nearly fell asleep at the wheel.

I can't believe that he's capable of murder.

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I can't believe he's capable of murder.

That, as a Pronoun

Do you remember what you saw that night?

The change was one that we had learned to live with.

Conditional

If I were to say that the conditional was going out of style, I might be understating the situation; but if I were to say that the conditional were going out of style, I might be misunderstood.

Further Resources

www.Grammarphobia.com

Fogarty, Mignon. *The Grammar Devotional*.

www.Grammargirl.com

www.Webgrammar.com

www.AskOxford.com