

ms. grammar's

**Guide to
Professional
Communication**

by Marilyn Thomas, PhD

Ms. Grammar's Guide to Professional Communication
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1 • Communication Basics

Suggestions for Becoming a Better Writer

Ms. Grammar knows the most difficult part of the writing process is getting started. The following suggestions work for her. She hopes they work for you too.

Before You Start

- Establish your purpose. (Who is the audience? Write for it.)
- Consider your tone. (Remember that the best language is simple, unassuming language.)
- Think about evidence and examples you can use to support your points.

When You Start

- Don't sit and stare at an empty page.** Just start anywhere. You can always go back and rearrange or reorganize. Just get the words flowing.
- Don't try to write perfectly.** Just get your thoughts down. You can always improve them later. Do not edit or stop to critique.
- Be bold.** Be innovative in the way you write and in what you say. Stretch your horizons as a writer. Don't try to write the way everyone else does. Find your own style.
- Have fun.** Don't let yourself get bored when you write. If you're bored, the reader probably will be too.

After the First Draft

- Construct an outline to organize the text generated. If you don't like to outline, list the key points in the proper order.
- Write the second draft.
 - Move a summary sentence to the beginning. The idea is to let the reader know at the outset what to expect in the document. The summary sentence also gives you guidance for what must follow.
 - Avoid cliches and buzzwords.
 - In constructing paragraphs, remember that nouns and verbs have more impact than adjectives and adverbs.
 - Consider the style you are using. (Visual effects include bullet points, subheads, and italicizing—use these to enhance text where appropriate.)

Revise

- Cross out excessive words.
- Change passive voice to active, unless passive voice is intended.
- Split excessively long sentences into two shorter ones.
- Correct the grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
- Rewrite sentences that don't say what you mean. (Forget trying to fix them.)
- Create a strong ending that links the essay back to the opening.
- Reread the text out loud. Your ears may pick up awkward phrases or errors that your eyes may miss.

Achieving Clarity

The following paragraphs illustrate the difference between writing that is unclear and writing that is clear. Some hints are provided to illustrate how clarity is achieved.

Foggy: Many times when pursuing the solutions to ever-increasing numbers of ever more complex problems there is a propensity to lose sight of certain basic operating procedures such as the maintenance of safe work areas and the implementation of safe operating practices.

Hint: Try getting rid of unnecessary words, changing some nouns to verbs, simplifying words, and splitting sentences.

Clear: Pursuing solutions to increasingly complex problems requires that we continue to keep our work areas safe and follow safe operating procedures.

Foggy: The company is experiencing the loss of hundreds of thousands of cash dollars each and every year because of unchecked corrosion. The occurrence of this corrosion comes about as a direct or indirect result of improper preparation for the handling, shipping, and the storage of in-process and finished aluminum products. While we are cognizant of every fact that the accumulated loss is extremely expensive, it is very unlikely that any individual can confirm exactly how costly the total loss is or what it accumulates to in terms of delayed or unacceptable deliveries and the loss of quality customers who will not bother to investigate our record at a future date so never come back.

Hint: Be direct, specific, and concrete.

Clear: Unchecked corrosion is costing the company hundreds of thousands of dollars annually. This corrosion comes from a failure to handle, store, and ship aluminum properly.

Foggy: It is a reasonably simple task to demonstrate that nursing today is, in all respects, a profession. What is perhaps more difficult is to argue with decisive effectiveness that the people who actively pursue nursing as a vocation constitute a body of professionals, in every regard. It is not enough to say that simply because an individual is legally and duly conferred acceptance into a profession that he or she automatically becomes a professional.

Hint: Begin by getting rid of all the deadwood phrases.

Clear: Nursing today is a profession, but not all nurses are professionals. Acceptance into a profession does not automatically make one a professional.

Foggy: As Commission experience with the use of automated systems expands and matures, certain situations occur that require new expressions of policy in order to properly and consistently respond to them. What in the course of development and initial use can be handled informally often grows to dimensions that if handled casually can result in loss of control as similar situations reoccur.

Hint: Begin by dividing the first sentence into two main parts.

Clear: Sometimes new technologies require new policies. Informality may not work with more sophisticated systems.

Negative Versus Positive Tone

Negative Tone:

Do not expect an answer before May 30.

We guarantee you will never need a replacement.

None of our products has ever malfunctioned.

I do not have experience in word processing, but I can type 50 words per minute.

Positive Tone:

You can expect an answer after May 30.

This product will last indefinitely.

All of our products have functioned perfectly.

I have excellent typing skills at 50 words per minute.

Know Your Audience

False assumptions about the business audience:

- The person being addressed is the audience.
- The audience is familiar with your assignment.
- The audience is a group of specialists in the field.

- The audience is involved in daily discussions of the material.
- The report/letter/memo has a finite period of use.
- The author and the audience always will be available for reference.
- The audience awaits the report/letter/memo.
- The audience has time to read the communication.

Notes on Effective Communication

Effective communication has the following characteristics:

- It avoids sexist language.
Wrong: When you schedule a meeting with a businessman . . .
Right: When you schedule a meeting with business people . . .
- It avoids insulting by categorizing.
Wrong: People such as you like a good bargain.
Right: Some people like a good bargain.
- It avoids an accusatory tone.
Wrong: Perhaps you didn't follow the instruction manual.
Right: Please recheck the instruction manual.
- It avoids humor that is in bad taste.
- It is personal: A 'You' attitude puts the reader first.
Wrong: we mailed the check.
Right: You will receive your check in the mail.
Wrong: I want to express my appreciation.
Right: Thank you for . . .
- It uses the active voice to emphasize ideas; passive to de-emphasize them.
Active: The U.S. shipped arms.
Passive: Arm shipments were sent.
Active: You didn't send in your payment.
Passive: Your payment has not been received.
- It is limited to one idea per sentence.
- It avoids ambiguous reference: *it, this, that*. Be sure ideas are clearly tied together and easy to understand.

- It is clear: This refers to everything from careful word choice to sentence and paragraph structure to the overall organization.
- It gets attention. People pay attention to the following:
 - The unexpected
 - The reinforcing
 - The pleasing
 - The relevant
- It stimulates interest by appealing to emotion or logic.
- It arouses desire.
- It states a desired action.

Ethical Business Decisions

In business as in life, we are faced with ethical decisions on a daily basis. The following are questions a manager needs to answer in making such a decision.

- What is the problem for me/the company?
- How would I define the problem if I were the opposition?
- What caused this situation to occur in the first place?
- Where do my loyalties lie in this situation? Are they the same as the company's?
- What's my intention in making this decision?
- Who will be hurt by my decision?
- Are there other parties I should consult before making my decision?
- Could I disclose my decision without qualms to my supervisor? CEO? my family? society as a whole?
- What is the symbolic potential of my action/decision if understood? misunderstood?

2. Writing Applications

The Business Letter

In this section you will find two formatting styles and examples of several different kinds of business letters. Although the styles and examples are not exhaustive, they should give you a place to start when you have to write a business letter. It's important to keep in mind that many companies and organizations have their own preferences, and, of course, you should follow company or organization norms.

One case that will affect the format of your letters is company or organization stationery. It usually has the return address and a design that will affect the format and content of the heading.

Business letters are almost always used for external communication because, in modern organizations, memos and electronic mail are used internally for daily communication. Thus, letters are considered the most formal way to communicate, and must be perfect in every way. This includes spelling, punctuation, grammar, style, and content.

In writing the salutation, several things ought to be kept in mind. If you know the title the person prefers, use it. If it is a woman and you don't know her marital status (or her preference), use *Ms.* If you have no idea who the person is, and feel awkward using *Dear Sir or Madam*, you may use a job title (e.g., *Director of MIS*), or you may skip the salutation and use a subject heading instead (e.g., *Letter of Recommendation for Tilly Newhouse*, or *Request for Information*).

Remember, whether you type the letter yourself or trust a secretary to do it for you, your signature in the closing makes you responsible for all of it.

Block Format

The block format is the easiest to set up because it requires no indents or tabs.

Communication Associates
1000 El Camino Real
Atherton, CA 94027

May 24, 19__

Mr. James White
Hyteck Corporation
325 San Tomas Expressway
San Jose, California

Dear Mr. White:

I know that business letters are intended to convey messages in a clear, concise manner. The first sentence should get right to the point with a clearly planned topic sentence. The rest of the letter follows with necessary details, and ends on a positive note.

In a good news letter, good news is given immediately. In a bad news letter, the first sentence should be neutral in tone, followed by an explanation. The bad news is the third element. Close the letter on a positive note.

Sincerely,

I.M. Surely Right
Grammarian

IR:nuw (*reference initials, if appropriate, ORIGINATOR:typist*)
cc: Marilyn Faulkenburg (*carbon copy notation, if appropriate*)
Enclosure: (*name or list, if appropriate*)

The Indented or Modified Block Format

This format may give a page more interest. It is a little more difficult to create, however, because it requires tabs and indents.

Communication Associates
10001 Camino Real
Atherton, CA 94027

May 24, 19__

Mr. James White
Hytech Corporation
335 San Tomas Expressway
San Jose, California

Dear Mr. White:

I know that business letters are intended to convey messages in a clear, concise manner. The first sentence should get right to the point with a clearly planned topic sentence. The rest of the letter follows with necessary details, and ends on a positive note.

In a good news letter, good news is given immediately. In a bad news letter the first sentence should be neutral in tone, followed by an explanation. The bad news is the third element. Close the letter on a positive note.

Sincerely,

I.M. Surely Right
Grammarian

Persuasion

Instead of being an example of a letter of persuasion, the following letter describes its content. The acronym to remember is AIDA.

Communication Associates
1000 El Camino Real
Atherton, CA 94027

March 15, 19__

Mr. Al Simpson
Zydel Corporation
Palo Alto, CA 94306

Dear Mr. Simpson:

I know that I need to get your **ATTENTION** in the first sentence of this kind of letter. I can do that by appealing to one of the needs listed in Maslow's "hierarchy of needs" that I learned in psychology class. I might also get your attention by relating an anecdote appropriate to the situation. A quotation might also do the job if it's pertinent.

Once I have your attention, I need to spark your **INTEREST**. In this part of the letter I need to focus on the main point. It will help if I can name some benefit(s) that will come to you by responding to my message.

In the third part of the letter I must awaken a **DESIRE** in you to respond to my message. I need to write clearly and concisely. Here I need to provide proof of a claim, if a claim is made. Proof should be accurate, specific, and factual. If I am promoting a product, this is the part of the letter where I need to describe it.

The final part of a persuasive letter is the **ACTION** part. Here I must state what it is that I want you to do. I need to mention here any enclosure or separate mailing. If I can think of an incentive that will get an immediate response, I should state it here. A good way to remember the parts of a letter of persuasion is to think of the word **AIDA** (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action).

Sincerely,

I.M. Shirley Right
Grammarians

Appreciation

In a letter of appreciation, avoid platitudes. Be specific about what it is you appreciate. This category includes letters of thanks and congratulations. If appropriate, copy the person's superior.

Posh School of Creative Management
1000 El Camino Real
Atherton, CA 94027

May 24, 19__

Nifty Food Service
240 Wastral Way
Palo Alto, CA 94306

Dear Mr. Manderville:

I just want to thank you for catering the most delicious meals for the weekly speaker program. I felt proud to escort our guests to a table that was always tastefully decorated, and to a meal that was first class every single time. Since you didn't hear the compliments, I want you to know that every speaker remarked on the quality of the food and the service.

I know that I personally am a difficult person to please when it comes to food because I dislike both flesh and fowl. Congratulations on pleasing me as well. Your creative imagination found solutions to my finicky taste.

I also appreciate your helping us stay within our budget. I hope we can continue the program next fall.

Best regards,

Hortense Gardner
Coordinator, Thursday Speaker Program

cc: Dr. Claude Thornberry, Dean of Students

Complaint

In a letter of complaint, identify yourself, explain the problem briefly, make a specific request, and always be polite. It helps to show concern for their reputation and success. Express surprise or chagrin.

No. 10, Glenwood Drive, Atherton, CA 94027

Posh College

November 10, 19__

Ms. Ellen Bigbucks
Bigbucks' Stores Inc.
543 Eddington St.
Saint Louis, MO 98765

Dear Ms. Bigbucks:

I am a professor of Managerial Communications at the Posh College School of Business Administration. A few weeks ago the students asked me if I could give them a class on how to dress for success. Immediately I thought of Bigbucks' as the outside consultant to call upon. It's the store of choice for many of the students. For others it would be the store of choice if they knew about its existence. Some of them have never shopped in their whole lives, having had maids and servants for that purpose.

The store in the Peninsula Shopping Mall is just 2.4 miles from campus. Consequently I phoned a few days later, confident that the store would be happy for the compliment I was paying it. To my chagrin, I was informed that thirty-five students wasn't enough to make a trip for them worthwhile.

I explained that the clientele at Posh College is largely affluent, and asked if exceptions were ever made to that policy. The woman who took my call said that she didn't have the authority to make any exceptions. I asked if she knew who did have that authority. She was clearly upset with my asking to speak to someone else, but said she would have that person phone me. Three days later on a Saturday morning, I got that call. The manager was just as adamant as her subordinate. "No," she said, "the rule is fifty or more for someone to leave the store." At that, I thanked her and hung up.

These students really do need help. I personally shop at Bigbucks' and have always been happy with the service and the purchases I've made. Please confirm that Bigbucks' has no interest in cultivating these future customers.

Best regards,

Dr. Ivy Gardener
Professor, Managerial Communications

Rejection

A letter of rejection has four basic parts: a neutral opening, a reason for the rejection, the rejection itself, and a reason for hope at the end.

ZBQ Produce
2476 Hillsdale Blvd.
Neosho, Wisconsin 53050

January 15, 19__

Hildegarde Oshovisky
34 Ventura Way
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80910

Dear Ms. Oshovisky:

We read your resume with interest. Your volunteer work with United Way is commendable. It's gratifying to see that others have noticed as well.

We are also gratified to learn that you wish to be a member of our team here at ZBQ Produce. Unfortunately, the position for which you applied requires several years of experience in computer programming. Since you are still a student with no experience, we would like to recommend that you seek an internship with some produce company in your area and apply again after graduation. In a year we hope to have our operation up to speed, and might be able to use your services then. In the meantime, enjoy your years in school, and make the most of them.

Best regards,

Mr. Willibald Greer
Director of Finance

The Memorandum

A memo is an informal, written message directed internally. State the main idea in the first sentence. Brevity and clarity are essential characteristics of memo writing because of the large volume of routine messages most business organizations send and receive every day.

In addition to the standard parts given in the samples that follow, memos have optional items. They are as follows:

- Reference initials (*JDP/hw*, WRITER/typist)
- Enclosures
- Routing information
- The sender's department
- Telephone number
- Courtesy title before your reader's name

Omit the title before your name. Put your handwritten initials above or to the right of your name. Reference initials are more important for memos that will be filed than for casual memos in which abbreviations are permitted.

To: Class Members
From: I.M. Right
Subject: Memos
Date: May 2, 19__

Memos are brief messages sent internally in a company. To begin by writing "This memo is about . . ." is a waste of space. Instead put the heart of the message in the first sentence.

If you are answering a question, do so in the first sentence. If you are asking a question, do likewise in the first sentence. The rest of the memo should be devoted to background and detail. It may be important to keep a copy of your memo for your records.

Memos are usually initialed, not signed.

To: James Osgood
cc: Staff
From: I.M. Right
Subject: Grammar
Date: May 24, 19__

It's about time people stop making mistakes regarding the difference between *its* and *it's*. The former is a pronoun like *his*, *her*, *my*, *ours*. It shows ownership, i.e., *the dog was wagging its tail*.

The word *it's*, on the other hand, is a contraction like *can't* or *won't*. The apostrophe (') stands for the missing letter *i* (*it's = it is*).

If you are still confused, never use *it's*. Use *it is* instead and you will never go wrong.

Electronic Mail

E-Mail, as it is called, has largely replaced memos in many organizations. Format is dictated by the software, and thus need not concern us here. From a writer's perspective the important thing to know about electronic mail is that, as of this writing, E-Mail packages do not contain writing aids such as spell checkers and grammar checkers. However, you must keep in mind that good grammar, clear writing, and correct spelling are just as important as in other media. When you send a significant message or data to another person it may be forwarded to many more people than you had originally intended (forwarding an E-Mail message can be done with a few keystrokes).

The Proposal

Definition: A proposal is an analytical document prepared to justify a bid to perform work under a contract or to gain financial support for a project.

Purpose: To offer help for solving a perceived problem in the reader's organization, or to reach some specific goal. An accepted proposal benefits both the buyer and the seller.

Kinds:

- Solicited or Unsolicited
- Formal or Informal
- Long or Short

A proposal will include some, if not all, of the following topics:

A. Front matter

1. Title page
2. Letter of transmittal
3. Table of contents
4. List of tables/figures
5. Executive summary

B. Body of proposal

1. Introduction
 - a. Problem
 - b. Background
 - c. Objectives or purpose

2. Procedures

- a. Methods and sources
 - b. Sequence of activities
 - c. Equipment, facilities, products available
 - d. Personnel qualifications
3. Evaluation and benefits of project
 4. Budget or costs, prices, and total bid

C. Supplementary forms

1. Budget justification
2. References
3. Tables, maps, graphs

Statement of Problem: Includes mention of obstacles to be overcome and how you propose to overcome them.

Purpose: Includes a clear, concise statement of your objectives. Include statistics when applicable.

Procedure: Includes what you plan to do; methods you will use to carry out the project; names of personnel involved; a timeline for each activity; and the sequence of events of steps of the project.

Personnel Qualifications: Might include resumes. State your experience and past successes with similar projects, as well as the qualifications of the team members.

Note that the following sample proposal is not exhaustive. It is intended, however, to illustrate the contents of the different sections.

**Recommendation For using Instibit
As An Alternative to Brokerage Firms**

Submitted to
Ms. Hilda Higgins
Investment Counsellor
379 Center Street
Centerville, Wisconsin 53050

Prepared by
Marilyn Faulkenburg, Ph.D.
Consultant, Innovative Strategies
487 Matadero Ave.
Palo Alto, CA 94306

Innovative Strategies
487 Matadero Ave.
Palo Alto, CA 94306

March 10, 19__

Ms. Hilda Higgins
Investment Counsellor
379 Center Street
Centerville, Wisconsin 53050

Dear Ms. Higgins:

The following preliminary proposal on high tech opportunities for the private investor is presented for your consideration. We at Innovative Strategies believe you are on the cutting edge of some unique methods for gaining instant information at reduced costs.

As the lead story in the November 16 issue of The Wall Street Journal pointed out: "We are entering an age of computer Darwinism in which off-exchange systems match buyers and sellers electronically."

Specifically we are proposing to introduce you to high tech systems that are currently available and those which will soon be available. These systems will enable you to meet the following objectives:

1. To reduce transactions fees by 90%
2. To eliminate the need for stockbrokers and other middlemen
3. To execute trades instantly and from your personal computer
4. To reduce the transaction time by 50%

As requested, I have attached our standard Authorization Agreement for the Retainer Fee relationship. Please sign where indicated and return to me at your convenience. If you have further questions, please don't hesitate to call using our toll free number: 1-800-555-7628.

Best regards,

Marilyn Faulkenburg, Ph.D.

Introduction

Background/Authorization of the Study. At a luncheon meeting held at the Hyatt-Rickey, Palo Alto on November 16, 1991, Ms. Higgins authorized Dr. Marilyn Faulkenburg of Innovative Strategies to submit a preliminary proposal regarding the computer software options available to her for conducting securities transactions. It was also agreed that Marilyn Faulkenburg would recommend a system that she and her team think best-suited to Ms Higgins' business needs.

Statement of the Problem. In today's business world the only way to compete is in managing the waterfall of information that comes off a computer screen. Without the use of such computer technology, Ms. Higgins is unable to scan world headlines, decide which nations' economies are doing better or worse than expected, and thus make sound recommendations to her clients.

Technology, with its brutal efficiency, will continue to shave profits from Ms. Higgins' business until she is down to little or nothing unless she updates to software and perhaps a workstation that will supplement her knowledge of finance, trading, markets, and risk juggling techniques.

Purpose of Proposal. Up-to-the-second graphs or option prices and other statistical relationships are now available on the market and it is the purpose of this proposal to study the package best suited to Ms. Higgins' particular needs.

To that end, the Innovative Strategies Team, under the supervision of Marilyn Faulkenburg, will conduct two studies simultaneously:

1. An analysis of Ms. Higgins' current system to identify its strengths and weaknesses as a securities' trading instrument .
2. A recommendation regarding the most up-to-date system available if eliminating the current system with its middlemen proves feasible.

Procedures

Methods and Sources. Harry Simpleton, the computer software specialist on the team, will research all the software packages on the market and assess them against the particular needs of Ms. Higgins. He will also investigate the comparative cost of a workstation as opposed to the personal computer now in use. Finally, he will interview users and report his findings on their assessment of the tools under consideration. On the basis of Simpson's report, options will be discussed and recommendations made to the client.

Personnel Qualifications. *(Provide copies of team members' resumes or profile sheets.)*

Evaluation and Benefits of Project

No software will be installed and no equipment purchased without contractor approval. Benefits will include reduction in cost and savings in time. We hope to demonstrate that cost reduction will be 50% or better. Time savings will be at least 40%.

Budget and Costs/Total Bid

We are prepared to offer our services on a retainer fee basis to work through the preliminary stages. Then we can proceed to specific project contracts for the detailed design and implementation stages. The team available to you under the Retainer Fee Agreement would include Marilyn Faulkenburg as director, Harry Simpleton as software specialist, Timothy Electro as hardware specialist, and Paul Gredo as financial analyst (See attached resumes).

These four people would be available for a minimum of two days a month at a fee of \$10,000 a month, plus travel and related expenses. Additional staff resources would be made available as part of this Retainer Fee Agreement, at no additional cost during the first three months of the Retainer Fee Agreement. The minimum period for an agreement for this type of work should be three months. It is quite possible, however, that it will be mutually beneficial to move into specific project contracts sooner than that. In that event we would simply convert the Retainer Fee Agreement to the project contracts at that time.

Conclusion

I have attached our standard Authorization Agreement for the Retainer Fee relationship. We believe it will be beneficial for us to meet as a total team with you in the very near future. I will contact you next week to discuss this next step.

3. Meetings

Effective Meetings

Meetings comprise much of the time and group interaction in today's businesses and organizations. Ms. Grammar knows a lot of that time is wasted because the attendees are unprepared, and spend time squabbling over issues without resolving them. One way to avoid wasting time is to call meetings only when necessary. If a phone call, a memo, or electronic mail can do the job, don't call a meeting. This chapter contains three simple techniques that will help make you a more productive attendee.

The Agenda

The most important thing to say about an agenda is that there should always be one. Often, especially at regularly scheduled meetings, the person calling the meeting fails to have an agenda. Meetings without agendas are like horses without heads. They don't go anywhere, and they don't do anything. Probably the single most important thing that can be done to make meetings productive is to have an agenda. It need not be elaborate. A simple agenda will do.

The second thing to say about agendas is that they should be provided to the attendees in advance of the meeting. The attendees should know what to expect and have enough time to prepare for the agenda items. Otherwise, much, if not all, of the time spent on the agenda items will be wasted and those items will have to be revisited in the future.

An agenda is simply a list of topics to be covered at a meeting. Agendas may also include names of persons responsible for each topic, and, if appropriate, an estimation of time allocation for each topic.

The following agenda is for a formal meeting in which minutes are recorded.

**Agenda
for
Monthly Board Meeting**

Conference Room 7

Monday, June 3, 19__

9:00–Noon

Approval of minutes of May 4, 19__

Additions to the agenda

Old business

 Benefits package

 Conference planning

New business

 Marketing strategy for Zerzes

 Budget for advertising campaign

 Report on IPSOS—Bad Fargo Project

This agenda is for a work group or a project team meeting.

IPSOS Project Meeting

Spruce Room

Wednesday April 17, 19__
1:00pm-3:00pm

Farken register design status	Claus Den Fever
Production engineering	April Thomas
Support engineering	Dave Wilber
Marketing strategy	Peter Tripp
Manufacturing documentation	Granger Phillips
Customer documentation	Steve Hendry

Debating the Issues

Often meeting time is wasted in unproductive arguments that do not resolve anything. Here is an approach to effective discussion derived from the formal rules of debate. Following these rules will help you become an effective contributor at meetings.

As business professionals we engage in debate regularly, though we don't often call it by that name. Even in a casual conversation about events in the news, we engage in debate. In fact, any time we try to convince another person or group of the validity of our point of view, we are engaging in debate. Debate is any two-sided discussion of a controversial question. Most of the time the kind of debate we engage in is informal. The following guidelines are intended for use in business meetings.

What We Can Learn From Debate

- How to analyze
- How to distinguish between the vital and the unimportant
- How to think under pressure
- How to convince others through the use of reason and logic

Requirements of Good Meetings

- Know the important facts regarding agenda items.
- Organize your thinking on the issues. Be prepared to present your strongest arguments first.
- Support your point of view with examples, statistics, or some other form of proof.
- Learn to summarize the opposing contentions in a clear, fair manner, and then submit your responses to these contentions, properly supported with convincing evidence.
- Express yourself in good English. Good English is necessary to any type of speech and must be used to express your thoughts effectively.
- Talk directly to your listeners in an informal, conversational style, but with vigor of expression which compels attention.

Types of Evidence

- Examples or instances:
 - Use several that lead to the same conclusion.
 - Use examples that are already somewhat familiar to the audience.
- Statistics:
 - Percentages are a simpler, and sometimes better way, of expressing statistical relationships.
 - Avoid using too many sets of figures.
 - Usually present them in round numbers.
 - Avoid the tendency to avoid statistical data.
 - Use comparisons with things familiar to the audience.
- Statements by authorities:
 - Must be recognized by the listener as worthy of belief.
 - Must be in close touch with the subject.
 - Must be free of prejudice on the subject.
 - Must be clear and definite on the subject.
 - Use several rather than just one authority.
 - Never use authorities alone when other proof is available.
- Illustrations: If the picture is striking, it will be highly effective. Illustrations are often taken from a different field, a field closer to the everyday experience of the audience.
 - Make use of everyday experience.
 - Give enough details to make the picture complete.
 - Make it memorable.

Planning the Debate

- Analyze the issue.
- Choose the main points to be presented.
- Determine methods of proof to be used for each main point.
- Prepare a final working outline.
- Define necessary terms. (Nearly every question, no matter how carefully phrased, can be interpreted in several different ways.)

To Advocate A Change in Current Policy

Answer as many of the following questions as you can.

- Why do we need to change our present situation?
- Why will my proposal improve conditions?
- What other advantages will my proposal bring?
- Why are my opponents wrong in attacking my proposal?

To Advocate Keeping the Current Policy

Answer as many of the following questions as you can.

- Why is there no real need to change the present situation?
- Why will the proposed change bring no improvement in conditions?
- What new evils would be created by adopting the proposed change?
- What other plans can be offered which are more desirable than the proposed change?

Attacking the Evidence

- Show that the evidence is not sufficient.
- Show that the evidence does not support the conclusion.
- Show that the evidence is distorted or inaccurate.

- Show that the evidence comes from an unreliable source.
- Show that, in the case of the illustration or comparison, a different conclusion may be reached if the idea is carried further.
- Show that not all the possible alternatives have been considered.
- Uphold a discarded alternative.

Problem Solving

Problem-solving techniques have attracted a lot of attention in business and academic circles. This attention has engendered a plethora of formal approaches, many of them elaborate, proprietary, and jargon-ridden. Ms. Grammar has observed that they all tend to have a few things in common. These are to depersonalize the problem, to find the real cause of the problem, to examine all the possible causes/solutions, and to arrive at a consensus about the best solution.

The following approach to problem solving is fairly simple and indeed may not be adequate for large, complex problems. However, unless your organization or business has an approach that it prefers, this technique will help to avoid the inevitable floundering around that will occur if no structured technique is used. The completed outline could be used to generate a report.

- State the problem in the form of questions (list from 3-6).
- Bound the problem by answering questions like the following:
 - What is the history of the problem?
 - How serious is the problem?
 - What are other companies doing about the problem?
 - Are there terms that need defining?
 - What results do we expect from a solution?
- What criteria must a solution meet (at least 3)?
- Name some possible solutions (at least 3).
- State the merits and demerits of each given solution.
- State the best solution based on the merits and demerits listed.

The following outline illustrates the technique by applying it to a hypothetical situation.

Membership at HeMan Health Club

Submitted by Bruno Maxman

Problem Outline

Problem Questions:

- 1) Why is membership dropping at HeMan?
- 2) What can HeMan learn from studying other health clubs?
- 3) What can HeMan do now to bolster its membership without spending lots of money?
- 4) How can HeMan attract more members?

Problem Map:

History: In 1987 two new facilities opened in the area that stole our members.

How serious: Almost 30% of membership dropped enrollment since opening of new clubs. Continuing slump could lead to club closure.

What are other clubs doing? Adding services we don't provide.

Term that needs defining: health club

Results expected of a solution: Membership growth by 40% without membership fee increase.

Criteria A Solution Must Meet:

- 1) We must continue to meet the needs of current members.
- 2) It must be affordable
- 3) It must be done in two years or less
- 4) It must attract new members

Page 1 of 3

Problem Outline

Possible Solutions:

- 1) Cross-membership with other clubs in the area
- 2) Add a health food snack bar.
- 3) Strengthen the special programs already in place.
 - a) Weekly anti-smoking clinic
 - b) Weekly weight control class
 - c) Annual Environmental Day: Run the Streets for Trash Race
- 4) Include women in membership.

Merits/Demerits of Each Solution:

- 1) Cross-membership
 - a) Merits
 - i) Access to local ice rink for skaters
 - ii) Access to local olympic-size swimming pool
 - b) Demerits
 - i) It would take time and willingness to negotiate agreements.
 - ii) Members might transfer membership to partner club if its overall program is perceived as a better deal than HeMan's.
- 2) Add a health food snack bar.
 - a) Merits
 - i) People tend to eat and drink after working out.
 - ii) Demand for health food snack bars is on the rise.

Problem Outline

2) Add a health food snack bar (continued)

b) Demerits

- i) It might be cost-prohibitive.
- ii) We may not have the know-how to make it happen.

3) Strengthen special programs already in place.

a) Merits

- i) Little expense in time and money
- ii) Programs already tested and successful

b) Demerits

- i) No boost in membership
- ii) Employee support for current programs is weak.

4) Add women to membership.

- a) Merit: guaranteed increase in membership
- b) Demerit: need to build separate showers, steam rooms, lavatories, and massage rooms

Best Solution:

1) Cross-membership

- a) Merits: For the cost of a current membership, members could participate in a greater variety of activities. New members would be attracted by the all-inclusive nature of our program. Other clubs will benefit by added income, added use of their facilities, and the advertising we would provide.
- b) Demerits: Other clubs may not be willing to participate. Current membership dues might have to increase.

4 • Presentations

Planning the Presentation

Knowing who you will be speaking to is the most important information you need to have before planning a presentation. You need to know whether the audience is large or small, friendly or hostile, formal or informal.

- State your message in one sentence.
- Decide if you are going to:
 - Inform
 - Entertain
 - Persuade
 - Motivate, inspire

Giving the Presentation

- Start with an attention-getter (visual often works)
- Plan it carefully; deliver it verbatim if feasible.
- Best attention-getter is one that appeals to human nature: encourage audience to take the subject personally.
- Show them how they as individuals are or will be affected.
- Make sure that the introduction matches the tone of the entire presentation.
- Cute openings usually don't work with a serious business organization.

- Avoid funny anecdotes and jokes if the subject is a serious one.
- Be natural as opposed to artificially dramatic.
- Proceed according to some clear plan.
- Provide transitions for your audience.

Establish Credibility

- Tell them how long you've studied the project; why you're interested. You want the audience to respect your opinion.
- Give audience a quick preview of what you are going to say before you say it.

Holding the Audience's Attention

- Use concrete examples.
- Use clear, vivid language.
- Make sure your voice is loud enough and that you enunciate clearly.
- Use visual aids.

Closing

- Plan it; write it; and give it verbatim.
- Maybe summarize briefly.
- Announce that you are approaching the closing stretch. "In conclusion . . ."

General Guidelines for Visual Aids

- Keep them simple enough for the audience to absorb in a few seconds. Not many people can read and listen at the same time.
- Rule of thumb is no more than six lines with maximum of six words per line.
- Type should be large and clear. Use upper and lowercase, not all upper or all lower.
- Wording should be telegraphic without being cryptic (noun/verb).
- Items under a common heading should be in parallel format.
- Eliminate all that is not absolutely essential to the message.
- Allow the audience time to read before you speak about it.
- One idea per visual aid.
- Illustrate only main ideas, not entire presentation.
- Do not read a visual aid word for word. Paraphrase it.
- When finished referring to a visual aid, turn the projector off.

Specific Guidelines for Visual Aids

- Use a common border for a set of transparencies to give them a unified look. Place company logos in the same place on every transparency.
- Use vibrant colors to emphasize key ideas; but be careful not to use too many colors per foil.
- Use no more than two typefaces in a single presentation. Text characters should be at least 18 points (about 1/4" high) and printed in upper and lowercase for legibility.
- Use serif typefaces for display type like titles and headlines. Use a sans-serif typeface such as Helvetia for text you want to be more readable
- Generally bullet or place boxes around text you want to highlight.

- Use pie charts to show percentages and proportions. Put the slice you want to highlight in the upper right quarter.
- Use bar charts to make comparisons or show changes over time. Avoid visual clutter by using no more than twelve bars per chart.
- Use line graphs to make comparisons or show changes over time. Use no more than three lines per chart. Use a different color or line style for each line. Use no more than three lines per graph.
- Just as you use vibrant colors to illustrate key ideas, use the most flash on your most important graphs.
- Handouts:** They can be distracting if given out while talking. Alternative is to give them out at the end.
- TV and Videos as Aids:**
 - Excellent to give examples, to demonstrate, to show interviews and other events.
 - They should not substitute for the spoken word.
 - They should save time, create interest, add variety, make an impression, and illustrate points difficult to make otherwise.
- Timing:** rule of thumb is one paragraph per minute.

Mastering the Art of Delivery

- Unless you're a trained actor, avoid memorizing an entire speech.
- Read your presentation only if the speech is complex or technical or a policy statement, or in other cases in which the wording is critical. Even if you read, maintain eye contact with the whole audience (4 to 5 seconds on each person and cover the whole room).
- Use note cards.
- Prepare more material than is necessary. It will boost confidence.
- Think positively about your audience, about yourself, and what you have to say.
- Be realistic about stage fright. A little is good. Almost everyone gets it.
- Before you begin speaking, take a few deep breaths, make eye contact, then begin.
- Have your first sentence written down and read it if necessary. Memorize it if you can without it making you nervous.
- Use visual aids to maintain and revive audience interest.
- Keep going. Things usually get better as you go along.
- If you think you are losing the audience, don't panic. Do something or say something to involve them in the action.
- Tell yourself you're on and you're ready before you begin.

Be Prepared: Don't confuse thinking about a subject with being ready to deliver a subject. *Practice before a mirror.*

Remember: Your audience will come away from your presentation with some impression of you and maybe one or two points you made. Make sure you know what those points are. Covering too much ground or too scattered a field probably won't work.

5. Common Writing Errors

Commonly Confused Definitions

affect	v. to influence
effect	n. result or consequence; v. to bring about
all ready	prepared
already	previously
alumnus	male graduate
alumni	plural
alumna	female
alumnae	plural
being as	<i>incorrect</i>
being that	<i>incorrect</i>
biannually	twice a year
biennially	every two years
can	refers to ability or capacity
may	refers to permission
capital	a seat of government; money; a form of a letter
capitol	a government building
complement	that which completes or supplements
compliment	flattery or praise
decimate	to reduce by one tenth
devastate	to make desolate; ravage; destroy
either	requires <i>or</i> with a comparison
neither	requires <i>nor</i>
lose	to cease having
loose	not fastened or attached; to set free
stationary	not moving; fixed
stationery	writing paper

Common Abstractions And Preferable Usages

Abstract Usages

please advise me
at an early date
at such time as
due in large measure to
I am desirous of

acquaint me with
of the opinion that
enclosed herewith
hold in abeyance
if you so desire

not in a position to
the thought occurred to me
pursuant to your request
take the liberty to
afford an opportunity to

in an active manner
come into contact with
render assistance to
ascertain
this constitutes

we deem it
we shall endeavor
personnel
terminate
ameliorate

peruse
utilize
salience

center around

Concrete Preferences

please tell me
soon
when
due to (because)
I want

inform me
think (believe)
enclosed
postpone (delay)
if you wish (want)

cannot
I thought
as you request
may
allow

actively
meet
help (aid, assist)
learn
this is

we think
we will try
people (employees, staff)
end (fire)
lessen (improve)

read
use
importance

center upon
or revolve around

Some Common Word Confusions

Lay, Lie

Lay means to put or place something.

Present tense, *lay*: Lay down that gun, you varmint.

Present participle, *laying*: I am *laying* down the law here.

Past tense, *laid*: Ludwig *laid* his cigarette on the cake.

Past participle, (*have, has, had*) *laid*: Claud *has laid* down his gun.

Lie means to be in a flat or resting position; it also means to recline.

Present tense, *lie*: The reports *lie* on the desk.

Present participle, *lying*: The report is *lying* on the desk.

Past tense, *lay*: Yesterday it *lay* hidden under your lunch. (*Notice it's the same as the present tense for the word meaning to put.*)

Past participle, (*have, has had*) *lain*: The report *has lain* under that bed of moldy sandwiches for the past month.

LAY/LIE

	<u>Present</u>	<u>Past</u>	<u>Past Participle</u>
To rest:	lie (lying)	lay	has lain
To put:	lay (laying)	laid	has laid

Few, Less

Few is used for quantities, things that can be counted.

Example: I have *a few* grains of sand in my shoe.

Less is used for masses, things that can't be counted.

Example: The *less* sand in my shoe, the better.

A, An

A is used before words beginning with an aspirate 'h' and a yew sound: "*a* historic occasion; *a* university." The test is how people say or read such designations. In abbreviations such as that for a Master's Degree, for example, people usually say the letters rather than the words. Consequently "*an* M.A." is correct rather than "*a* M.A."

Good, Well

Do not use an adjective to modify a verb or verb phrase. Adjectives always modify nouns, never verbs

Wrong: The old truck runs *good* (*wrong because good is an adjective and run [verb] requires an adverb [well]*).

Right: The old truck runs *well*.

Its, It's

Many people confuse *its* and *it's*. The former is a pronoun like *his*, *her*, *my*, *ours*. It shows ownership, i.e., the dog was wagging *its* tail.

The word *it's*, on the other hand, is a contraction like *can't* or *won't*. The apostrophe (') stands for the missing letter 'i' (*it's = it is*).

If you are still confused, never use *it's*. Use *it is* instead and you will never go wrong.

There, Their, They're

There is the opposite of *here*.

Example: Not *here* but *there*.

Their shows ownership.

Example: *Their* goods were stolen.

They're is a contraction for *they are*. The apostrophe stands for the letter 'a'.

To, Too, Two

To means motion toward.

Example: I am going *to* the bank.

Too means *in excess* or *also*.

Example: I had *too* much for lunch; my friend did *too*.

Two indicates the *number two*.

Example: I have *two* left feet.

When, While, Where

The adverbs *when*, *while*, *where* are used as follows:

When indicates a period of time. Avoid using *when* to give a definition.

Wrong: Skiing is *when* someone . . .

While indicates duration in time. Avoid using *while* to show contrast or comparison.

Wrong: *While* I couldn't even remember my own name . . . (*Instead, use though, although, whereas, or but.*)

Right: *Though* I couldn't even remember my own name . . .

Where relates to location. Avoid using *where* to state a definition.

Wrong: Golf is *where* . . . (*You may use that instead.*)

Right: Golf is a sport *that* . . .

Who, Whom

To determine correct usage of *who* and *whom*, follow these steps:

- First, eliminate the part of the sentence up to the *who*, *whom* clause.

Example: . . . *whoever* is ready first . . .

- Second, instead of *whoever* say *him* or *he*.

Example: . . . *him* is ready first . . . (*Sound right? No.*)

. . . *he* is ready first . . . (*Sound right? Yes!*)

- He* is equivalent to *who* (subjective).
Him is equivalent to *whom* (objective).

Therefore, use *who*.

Example: I will take *whoever* is ready . . .

Your, You're

Your is a pronoun that shows ownership like *my*, *his*, *her*.

Example: I like *your* style.

You're is a contraction meaning *you are*. The apostrophe stands for the letter 'a'.

Active And Passive Voice

In the active voice, the subject acts on the predicate.

Example: George Bush dislikes broccoli.

In the passive voice, the subject is acted upon.

Example: Broccoli is disliked by George Bush.

The active voice is usually more vigorous and direct. The passive voice is indirect and often more wordy.

Note: Passive voice often contains an auxiliary with the main verb in the past tense (is disliked) and the word *by* with an agent (by George Bush).

To change from passive to active voice, delete the auxiliary verb; put the past tense verb in the present tense; delete the word *by*; and place the noun following *by* in the position of the traditional subject.

Example: My trip will be remembered by me (*passive*).

I will remember my trip (*active*).

When to Use the Passive Voice

- When the agent (doer) of the action is too obvious to mention.
"The package was delivered before noon."
- When the action is more important than the agent. "The thief was apprehended."
- When the agent is indefinite or unknown. "*Bribery is not accepted as a way of doing business in the U.S.*"
- When the intent is to downplay or avoid naming the agent.
"Weapons were shipped yesterday."

Do not switch from active to passive voice (and vice versa) within a sequence.

Wrong: Sam asked for recognition, was recognized, and made a fool of himself.

Right: Sam asked for recognition, got it, and made a fool of himself.

Splitting the Infinitive

Split Infinitives

An infinitive consists of the word *to* and a present tense verb.

Examples:

To work is my idea of the good life.

One does not have *to taste* jellyfish *to know* how it feels going down.

To split an infinitive is to insert one or more words between *to* and the verb. Some grammarians consider such splitting an error.

Example: “. . . *to not survive* . . .” should be “. . . *not to survive* . . .”

When to Use a Split Infinitive

- When it prevents ambiguity.

Wrong: I want you *to denounce* all dishonest practices firmly.

Right: I want you *to firmly denounce* all dishonest practices.

(*Intent: The denunciation should be firm, not the practices.*)

- When avoiding a split infinitive is next to impossible.

Example: Jack expected his salary *to more than double* in six months.

- When avoiding a split infinitive causes unnecessary clumsiness or awkwardness.

Wrong: Jack expected his salary *to double* almost in six months.

Right: Jack expected his salary *to almost double* in six months.

Noun/Verb Agreement

With Pronoun Subjects

When a sentence has two subjects, one of them a pronoun, determine the correct pronoun by mentally deleting the noun subject.

Example: Oscar and [her, she] are enemies.

Her is an enemy (*object pronoun*).

She is an enemy (*subject pronoun*).

Obviously, the second choice is correct: *Oscar and she are enemies*.

With Indefinite Pronoun Subjects

The following indefinite pronouns require **singular verbs**: *anybody, anyone, any one, anything, each one, either, every, everybody, everyone, every one, everything, neither, nobody, no one, nothing, one, somebody, someone, something*.

Examples:

Each of us carries a company health insurance policy.

Neither Fred nor his manager wants to face the facts.

One of the engineers never transfers phone calls.

Everyone had his own lunch.

Neither of my two suits fits me right.

One of the staff members always votes against a company picnic.

Every one of the secretaries has a new desk.

Either of the programs meets the requirements of the job.

Wrong:

Any one of the suspects are capable of lying.

Neither are pretty.

Everybody is obliged to do their own job.

Right:

Any one of the subjects is capable.

Neither is pretty.

Everybody is obliged to do his own job.

Note: the words *any one* and *every one* are written as two words when followed by an *of* prepositional phrase.

Examples:

Everyone is called, but few are chosen.

Every one of the thieves was caught.

With Two Subjects

Use a **plural verb** when two separate subjects are joined by *and*.

Wrong: The exposure and the publicity *has* yet to be evaluated.

Right: The exposure and the publicity *have* yet to be evaluated.

Exposure *and* publicity = *plural*

Have = *plural* (*has is a singular verb*)

Exception: If a subject joined by *and* refers to only one person or idea as a unit, use a singular verb.

Example: My friend and roommate *plays* chess every evening.

Use a **singular verb** when two singular subjects are joined with *or* or *nor*.

Example: Neither Jay nor Betty *wins* my esteem. (*Win = plural*)

When a singular subject and a plural subject are joined with *or* or *nor*, put the plural subject last and use a **plural verb**.

Example: Either the dog or the pigs *are eating* the snake.

Note: In general, singular verbs in the third person (he, she, it) end in 's'; plural verbs (in any person) do not.

Comparisons With *Than*

When a sentence contains a comparison between a noun and a pronoun using the word *than*, complete the thought to determine the case of the pronoun.

Example: Alphonse is taller than [him, he].

Alphonse is taller than *he* is tall.

Alphonse is taller than *him* is tall.

Since *him is tall* can't be right (objective case [him] for a subject pronoun), *he is tall* obviously is (subjective case pronoun for a subject).

With the Verb *To Be*

In sentences that contain a form of the verb *be* as the predicate, use a subject pronoun to complete the verb. Think of *is* as an equal sign. As in mathematics where an equation can be reversed around an equal sign without changing the meaning, so too in a sentence with a linking verb.

Example: The culprit is she. = She is the culprit.

Test for the right pronoun, therefore, by reversing the sentence.

This is [her, she]. *She* is this [one]. *Her* is this [one].

Faulty Predication

Faulty predication occurs when a linking verb (*be*) is used to connect two parts of a sentence that are not equivalent.

Wrong: The only way to end a war is a treaty.

The above sentence tries to say that an action (*to end*) is a treaty (*thing*). To correct the sentence, make the two parts equivalent.

(action) is (action)

to end is to sign

Right: The only way to end a war is to sign a treaty.

To define a term by saying "*it is when*" is incorrect because it tries to make *a thing* equivalent to *a time* (when).

Wrong: Cheating is when . . .

Right: Cheating is a process in which . . .

Another case of faulty predication occurs in the expression, "*The reason is because . . .*" Although this expression is common, it is not proper because the word *because* means "*for the reason that.*" Thus "*The reason is because . . .*" becomes "*The reason is for the reason that . . .*" and the writer looks like a silly dolt.

Wrong: The reason is because . . .

Right: The reason is that . . .

6. Writing Refinements

Weak Openings

Using *This* to Begin a Sentence

The word *this* used to introduce a sentence often causes confusion in the reader's mind. For example, if I say "*And this led to the Civil War,*" the reader is forced to review the preceding text to figure out just what led to the Civil War. Ask yourself, *this what?* *This what* will almost always be a noun or a noun phrase: "*And this decision led to the Civil War.*"

The trouble with the word *this* is that it can't always carry the load it's given.

Unclear: A few years ago I attended an academic symposium and presented a paper that described a technique for creating a proficient writer in one day. *This* may sound ridiculous, but it's not. (*What may sound ridiculous? The day? the symposium? the paper? the writer?*)

Clear: A few years ago I attended an academic symposium and presented a paper that described a technique for creating a proficient writer in one day. *This notion* may sound ridiculous, but it's not.

Using *There* To Begin A Sentence

The word *there* can never be the subject of a sentence. It is also a weak opening for a sentence. To find the real subject, mentally drop the word *there*; the subject usually follows the verb.

Example: There are three people in line for that position.

Subject: people

Verb: are

Pronoun References

A pronoun should refer to the noun preceding it (antecedent) and agree with the antecedent in person, number and gender. When unclear about pronoun usage with antecedents, mark (e.g., underline) the pronoun in question and the noun it renames.

Example: If the manager shows up, collect your bonus and tell him your wife has already spent it.

If you can't find a noun to mark, or if a pronoun has more than one possible noun, the pronoun reference is probably unclear or nonexistent.

Example: If your wife agrees, pay the maid and give her the day off. (*Question: Who should get the day off, the wife or the maid?*)

- Once a noun is established as singular or plural, keep it the same throughout the sentence.

Wrong: A child needs their parents home at night.

Right: A child needs his/her parents home at night.

- Put the pronoun as close as possible to the noun it refers to.

Wrong: The president told Fred he was going to take the rest of the month off. (*Looks like Fred's getting time off, when the intent was probably to say that the president was taking off.*)

Right: The president told Fred that he, the president, was taking the month off.

Right: The president planned to take the month off and told Fred about it.

Wrong: When you finish the last section of the proposal, send it to me. (*What's wanted, the last section or the whole proposal?*)

Right: Give the proposal to me when you've finished with the last section.

- Do not merely imply the antecedent; put it in the sentence.

Example: My opinion is that the initiative will be defeated. This will result in chaos. (*This what? Say it! This defeat will result in chaos.*)

- The relative pronouns refer as follows: *who*, *whose*, *whom* refer to humans and introduce either essential or non-essential clauses. *That* refers to things and is needed to introduce essential clauses. *Which* refers to things and is used to introduce nonessential clauses.

Essential clauses are *never* set off by commas. Non-essential clauses are *always* set off by commas.

Subjunctive Mood

Mood means manner. Through our manner in speaking and writing we can state, ask, command, and hypothesize. In English we divide these moods into three:

Indicative: to make a statement or ask a question.

Imperative: to give a command or make a request.

Subjunctive: to express a wish, a possibility, or a statement of doubt.

Examples:

Around 3000 B.C. men decided to install male deities into a female pantheon. (*Indicative.*)

Put that pistol down, you varmint. (*Imperative; the subject [you] is understood, but not stated.*)

If I were a carpenter, and you were a lady, I'd marry you anyway. (*Subjunctive—condition contrary to fact.*)

Because subjunctive mood is the least commonly understood, and causes the most problems, here are some ways to recognize it:

- It is often signaled by the verbs *were* and *be*.
- The words *should*, *would*, and *could* often signal subjunctive mood.
- If/then statements are usually expressed in subjunctive mood.
- In the subjunctive, *be* replaces *are* and *is*.

Examples: I insist that you *be* the driver. The holdup man asked that he *be* allowed to make a withdrawal.

- In subjunctive, the 's' ending of the third person, singular, present tense verb form of all verbs is omitted.
Example: I suggest that he *begin* the plan today.

- If the writer believes a statement to be within the realm of possibility, he should use the indicative mood. The writer determines the intended meaning.
Wrong: If his statement be true, I apologize.
Right: If his statement is true, I apologize.

- Reserve subjunctive mood for conditions that are not likely to be fulfilled or are impossible.
Example: I wish my mother were here to see you now. (*It's not possible. She's dead.*)

Parallel Construction

Another word for parallelism in writing is consistency. Parallel construction means that when two or more connective thoughts are expressed in a sentence, they should take the same grammatical form. To put it another way, expressions similar in content should be expressed in similar format.

Wrong: Today is a day not for swimming but dancing.

Right: Today is a day not for swimming but for dancing.

Right: Joselda thought that the play was appropriate for the day, that the actors knew their lines, and that more people should have been there. (*clause—clause—clause*)

Right: To dress well, to wear makeup in moderation, and to style one's hair are prerequisites for this occasion.
(*phrase—phrase—phrase*)

Right: The designing, marketing, and selling of this product used up the company's budget. (*gerund—gerund—gerund*)

Some words commonly used in pairs or connectives are the following:

either—or	both—and
neither—nor	not only—but also
if—then	since—therefore

Example: Not only the engine, but also the transmission need overhauling.

Avoid mixing the first half of one pair with the second half of another pair.

Wrong: Neither the supervisor or the manager . . .

Right: Neither the supervisor nor the manager . . .

Sometimes connective pairs may seem parallel when they are not.

Wrong: The doctor not only was sued but also incarcerated.

Right: The doctor was not only sued but also incarcerated. (*Place the verb after the not only pair.*)

Use parallel construction to build drama toward the end of a sentence.

Example: Jade went home, poured herself a cup of tea, and shot herself through the heart.

You can also use the construction to surprise or humor.

Example: The mayor walked to the podium, took out his speech and ripped it to shreds.

Coordination And Subordination

A **coordinate conjunction** is one that joins sentence elements of equal, grammatical importance. The coordinate conjunctions are *and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, *for*, *yet*, *so*. To join two complete and independent ideas, use a coordinating conjunction preceded by a comma.

Examples:

My eyes may look green to you, *but* they're really blue.

I can take only evening courses, *for* I work during the day.

The building may be locked, *so* you had better take a key.

A **subordinate conjunction** is one that joins sentence elements of unequal, grammatical importance. A sentence with a subordinate conjunction has two clauses: one dependent and one independent. The independent clause can form a sentence by itself.

Common Subordinating Conjunctions

after	although	as	as if
as though	because	before	even though
if	in order that	since	so that
though	unless	until	when
whenever	where	wherever	whether
while			

Example: *Although* I just had lunch, I'm hungry for an ice cream cone.

Although I just had lunch = *dependent clause*

I'm hungry for an ice cream cone = *independent clause*

Always use a comma *after* a subordinate clause that introduces a sentence.

Example: *After* I found my husband, I headed for home. (*After I found is a subordinate clause.*)

Do not use a comma *before* a subordinate clause.

Example: I went home after I found him. (*No comma because subordinate clause follows the main clause.*)

Ablative Absolutes

An ablative absolute construction consists of a modifier made from a noun and a participle or a noun phrase and a participle. It can be formed from a clause or a prepositional phrase in which everything but the noun and the participle are stripped out.

Example:

After she flexed her muscles, Cynthia hefted the barbells to her chest.
Her muscles flexed, Cynthia hefted the barbells to her chest.

Problems With Modifiers

Misplaced Modifiers

A misplaced modifier is one that does not point to its referent, i.e., the word or phrase it modifies. Modifiers must be placed as close as possible to the words they modify.

Wrong: The truck was inspected by the owner that was received today. (*This sentence makes it appear that the owner was received today.*)

Right: The truck that was received today was inspected by the owner. (*In this sentence the truck was received today.*)

Dangling Modifiers

A misplaced modifier has a referent but does not refer to it. A dangling modifier has *no* referent.

Wrong: Swinging the bat, the ball was missed.

Right: Swinging the bat, Jose missed the ball.

The first sentence lacks a referent, a "who," a subject. We don't know who is swinging the bat.

Prepositions and Prepositional Phrases

Common Prepositions

The most common prepositions are as follows:

about	above	across	after	against
alongside	around	at	before	behind
below	beneath	beside	between	beyond
by	despite	down	during	except for
in	inside	into	like	near
of	off	on	onto	out
outside	over	through	throughout	to
under	underneath	until	up	upon
with	within	without		

These words usually introduce phrases. Most are single words. Some, however, consist of more than one word.

Prepositions of Two or More Words

according to	along with	apart from
because of	by means of	contrary to
due to	except for	in addition to
in behalf of	in case of	in favor of
in spite of	next to	on account of
regardless of	with regard to	with the exception of

A few difficulties arise from misunderstanding how prepositional phrases function in sentences. Ms. Grammar hopes the following guidelines help.

- Use simple prepositions when possible.

<u>Use</u>	<u>Rather Than</u>
about	in regard to
after	subsequent to
before	prior to
for	for the purpose of
if	in the event that
since	inasmuch as
because	due to the fact that

- Avoid using unnecessary prepositions.
Wrong: I will type up the report.
Right: I will type the report.
Wrong: . . . will start in . . .
Right: . . . will start . . .
- Sometimes prepositions are better omitted altogether or moved from the end.
Wrong: Try the game out.
Right: Try out the game.
Wrong: Where's the library at?
Right: Where's the library?
- Ideas of equal importance require equal grammatical structure. Therefore, repeat a preposition before the second of two parallel ideas.
Wrong: The game begins by choosing sides and tossing a coin.
Right: The game begins by choosing sides and by tossing a coin.
- When two words require two different prepositions, use both prepositions.
Wrong: He has an aversion and an excuse for all kinds of work.
Right: He has an aversion to and an excuse for all kinds of work.
Wrong: Larry has an interest and an aptitude for tennis.
Right: Larry has an interest in and an aptitude for tennis.
- The preposition *among* is used when comparing more than two persons, places, or things. The preposition *between* is used when referring to only two.
Wrong: It has spread among the two of us.
Right: It has spread between the two of us.

- A prepositional phrase never functions as the subject of a sentence.
Wrong: The *box* of oranges *are* on the table.
Right: The *box* of oranges *is* on the table.
(The sentence is about the box. It is on the table. It might contain paper for all it matters to the structure of the sentence.)
- Wrong:** A *group* of people *stand* on the curb.
Right: A *group* of people *stands* on the curb.
(The sentence is about a group. The phrase of people is merely a prepositional phrase.)
- The words *any one* and *every one* are written as two words when followed by an *of* prepositional phrase.
Examples:
Everyone is called, but few are chosen.
Every one of the thieves was caught.

Required Preposition Combinations

In English some words require that they be followed by certain prepositions. Here's a partial list:

account for	acquaint with
addicted to	agree on (<i>a plan</i>)
agree to (<i>another's proposal</i>)	agree with (<i>a person</i>)
angry at or about (<i>a thing</i>)	angry with (<i>a person</i>)
apply for (<i>a position</i>)	capable of
comply with	contrast with
convenient for	convenient to (<i>near</i>)
correspond to (<i>match</i>)	correspond with (<i>write</i>)
depend on	differ from
differ with (<i>a person</i>)	different from
expert in	identical with
independent of	interested in
plan to	reason with
responsible for	similar to
speak to (<i>tell something</i>)	speak with (<i>discuss with</i>)
specialize in	

Numbers

Like you, Ms. Grammar has a difficult time with numbers. The dilemma is always: should I spell out this number (four) or should I use a figure (4). Here are some general rules:

- Never begin a sentence with a figure. Rewrite the sentence if spelling out a number is awkward.
Example: Eighty-nine people showed up for the hanging.
- Use figures if spelling out a number would require more than two words.
Example: My lunch had 789 calories.
- Use figures for addresses, dates, exact times of day, exact sums of money, scores of games, mathematical ratios, fractions, and page numbers.
- When a number is given in round figures, spell it out.
Example: In those days five dollars was a lot of money.
- In general, if no other rule takes precedence, spell out numbers from one to ten.
- When typing numbers, never use either the lowercase *L* for the number 1(one) or the capital letter *O* for 0 (zero).
- Use figures and the dollar sign (\$) for amounts over \$1. With even dollar amounts, do not use a decimal point followed by two zeros.
Example: Gertrude paid \$95.99 for her watch. Bartholomew paid \$70 for his.
- In legal documents use words and then cite figures in parentheses.
Example: The bill for services is eighty-four hundred dollars (\$8,400).
- Use figures for quantities and measures—weight, distance, dimension, area, volume, temperature, pressure, market quotations.
- Use figures for decimals and percentages.
- Use figures for volumes, pages, chapters, and other divisions of a book.
- When dealing with numbers in a series, be consistent. Don't spell out some and use figures for others.

Capitalization

Some of the rules that follow are probably common knowledge. They are provided more as a reminder than anything else. Other rules, however, may relieve some nagging doubt and so prove useful.

- Always capitalize names of particular persons:
Names—Avery Askew
Titles—Dr. Ou, Professor Blackwell, Judge Cheetam
Family relationships—Uncle Scrooge, Aunt Hazel
- Always capitalize names of particular places:
States—California
Countries—Germany
Bodies of water—Pacific Ocean
Streets—Main Street, Primrose Lane, First Avenue
Buildings—Crocker Tower, Palmer House, Federal Courthouse
Organizations—Red Cross, Mothers Against Everything
Institutions—Menlo College, World Bank
- Always capitalize names of particular things:
Historical events—Battle of Waterloo
Historical periods—the Renaissance
Documents—Bill of Rights
Race, nationality—Jewish, American
Religion—Catholic, Baptist, Islamic
Months, days—March, Monday
Holidays—Christmas, Thanksgiving
- If any of the above do *not* name a particular person, place or thing, use lower case.
Example: Mother Jones, *but* a mother's work. (*In fact, if you use Mother, Father, Grandmother, or Grandfather as a name, capitalize it. If, however, these words are preceded by a pronoun [my mother], an article [the mother], or an adjective [possessive mother], use the lower case with these words.*)
- Geographical locations are capitalized, i.e., the East, the South, the Midwest. Directions are not capitalized, i.e., . . . east two miles.
- Academic subjects are capitalized when used with course numbers, i.e., Mathematics 35. Otherwise, use lower case except for languages, i.e., English, history, French, Japanese, mathematics.

- Capitalize adjectives made from proper nouns: Italian leather, February earnings.
- Capitalize names of brands, products, key elements of projects and documents if they have code names: Project Cookie Monster, Seahawks, Kellogg's Rice Crispies, Koran.
- Capitalize all important words in a title, headline, or article: The Wall Street Journal, Laptop Computers Come of Age.
- Capitalize nouns with numbers or letters that are part of a sequence: Purchase Order 54367, Appendix B, Chapter 7, Section 25.
Do not, however, capitalize the following nouns: line 3, verse 10, paragraph 7, size 16, page 367.

Italicizing/Underlining

Underlining has almost become obsolete now that word processing has made italicizing easy. The following rules, therefore, are for italicizing unless you are handwriting or using a typewriter (ugh).

- Underline or italicize titles of books, magazines, newspapers, plays, films, and television shows. Underline or italicize all words, spaces and punctuation in the title.
Example: *A Black, Boisterous Affair*. A Black Boisterous Affair.
- Underline or italicize words, letters, and numbers used as words.
Examples: The word *byte* was new to me until computers entered my life. What is this an *e* or an *i*? I thought I heard you say *9,999*.
- Underline or italicize foreign words unless they have been completely accepted into English, as have the words *rendezvous* and *kimono*. (Consult a dictionary when in doubt. If listed, consider it English.)
Examples:
Don't look at me with that *joie de vivre* expression on your face.
The teacher pointed to my head and said: "*Nemo in casa*."
- Underline or bold to emphasize, but use sparingly.
Example: Do not, I said, do not open that door.

7 • Punctuation Rules

The following rules are certainly not exhaustive. Such was not Ms. Grammar's intention. Rather, she hopes to call attention to some of the most common errors in punctuation. It is her educated guess that misuse of the possessive case causes more gray hair than any other grammatical error.

Possessive Case

- To form the possessive of singular nouns, add "'s." If the singular form already ends in "s," add an apostrophe after the "s." However, if a word ending in "s" has only one syllable, add an "'s."

Examples:

Mike's hair is long.

Molasses' sticky texture is appealing to me.

Ms. Bluegrass's car is fast. (*Exception: "'s" added for ease of pronunciation.*)

Mrs. Jones's kitchen always looks immaculate.

- If the plural noun does not end in "s", add an apostrophe and an "s."

Example: women's clothing

- If the plural noun does end in an "s," add an apostrophe after the "s."

Example: boys' clothing

- To show joint possession, add the apostrophe to the last noun only.
Example: Dewey Cheetam and Howe's law firm

To show separate possession, add the apostrophe to each word.

Example: Polly's and Molly's dogs

- Use possessive pronouns and nouns with gerunds (*-ing* words that function as subjects or objects in a sentence).
Examples:
His spiraling toward failure
Ralph's tumbling down the stairs
- Sometimes apostrophes are omitted in plural possessives. *The parents association; the teachers college.* Be careful, however, because there is a difference between the *boy's room*, and the *boys' room*, to cite one possible confusion that might occur if an apostrophe is misplaced.
- To indicate the plural of figures, letters, decades, years, use "'s."
Examples: nine 6's, seven C's, the roaring 20's, the 1700's, the SJX's.
- If it is the sense of the words that matters, no apostrophe is used.
Example: No ifs, ands, or buts. (*In this example we are not talking about patterns of anything as in the previous examples.*)

Commas and Semicolons

With Restrictive And Nonrestrictive Clauses

A restrictive clause is one which cannot be eliminated from the sentence without changing the basic meaning of the sentence. A restrictive clause is *never* set off with commas.

Example: The coat that I bought was stolen.

To say *the coat was stolen* is quite different from saying *the one I bought*. I meant to limit the word *coat* to that particular one and no other. The clause beginning *that* is not just added, nonessential information; it is necessary.

Example: The man who breaks bread with me will be my betrayer.

The clause *who breaks bread with me* is necessary to the meaning of the sentence. Take it out and see what's left: *The man is my betrayer*. As you can see, an essential clause is missing. The whole meaning of the sentence is lost without it.

A **nonrestrictive clause** is one that contains unnecessary, added information that wouldn't destroy the meaning of the main clause if omitted. Nonrestrictive clauses are *always* set off with commas.

Examples:

The coat, which has raglan sleeves, was stolen.

My wife, who loves to shop, spends all the money I earn. (Who loves to shop is *just unnecessary, added information.*)

With Compound Sentences

A compound sentence consists of two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction. A comma separates the two independent clauses.

Example: The test does not measure intelligence, *and* we certainly hope you don't expect it to.

However, in very short sentences a comma is not needed. Also, it is incorrect to substitute a comma for the coordinating conjunction.

Doing so is called comma splicing.

Wrong: The test does not measure intelligence, we certainly hope you don't expect it to.

Omitting both (comma and conjunction) results in a run-on sentence.

Wrong: The test does not measure intelligence we certainly hope you don't expect it to.

Ms. Grammar likes to think of a semicolon as an intermediary step between a comma and a period. Some compound sentences require the use of a semicolon. The rule is as follows: In a compound sentence, use a **semicolon** between independent clauses that are *not* joined by a coordinate conjunction.

Example: In movies Ms. Grammar could stomach no violence; her husband couldn't get enough.

- Some compound sentences use what grammarians call conjunctive adverbs. They are as follows: *therefore, however, nevertheless, furthermore, consequently*. Their function is to connect independent clauses to each other and show the relationship of the clauses to each other. Use a **semicolon** before and a **comma** after.
Example: I was deathly ill; nevertheless, I decided to go to work.
- When a sentence has two clauses, one dependent and the other independent, and the dependent clause comes first, use a **comma** after the introductory dependent clause.
Example: When I finished working on the computer, I went to the fax machine.
- Sometimes a **comma** is used after an introductory independent clause, if a pause is desirable.
Example: I had to make a decision, although the troops didn't like the one I made.

With Clauses and Phrases

Use **commas** to separate words, phrases and clauses in a series.

Examples: For lunch I had pizza, sauerkraut, and ice cream.

You can find me at my desk, at the copy machine, or in the cafeteria.

Use a **comma** to set off introductory words or phrases.

Examples: Hoping for the best, I put Oswald in charge.

Unfortunately, he had a prison record.

Use **commas** to set off sentence interrupters.

Example: The pastor, hoping for the best, authorized weekly bingo games.

With Appositives

An appositive is a noun that describes or identifies the noun or noun phrase that precedes it.

Examples:

Beatrice, my sister, is a computer programmer.

The bridge, a massive structure of steel and concrete, collapsed under the weight of the equipment.

Dashes

Ms. Grammar thinks too many people use dashes when they don't know what punctuation ought to be used. The motto seems to be, when in doubt, use a dash. To clarify matters once and for all, a dash is correctly used to indicate a breaking off of a thought.

Example: I wish you would chew with your mouth closed—but who am I to criticize?

Secondly, a dash is used to mark a summing up at the end of a sentence.

Example: I went home with little in my pocket—two dollars and some change maybe.

Dashes often appear as pairs instead of parentheses.

Example: I went to the dance—who says I'm too old—to meet my old friend.

Watch out for a rash of dashes in your writing. Usually commas, parentheses, semicolons, and colons make the use of dashes totally unnecessary.

Hyphens

Use a hyphen when two or more adjectives together have a different meaning than when used separately. To show that the modifier functions as a unit, use a hyphen.

Examples: The up-to-date equipment arrived yesterday.

The two-headed monster ate too much.

She has an out-to-get-me attitude.

Note: If the two words are not adjectives preceding a noun, they are not hyphenated.

Example: Mary was well dressed.

Use a hyphen in all written-out numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine.

Use a hyphen to divide words at the end of a line of text. Do so only at the end of a syllable. Always take down at least three letters to the line below.

Use a hyphen to separate prefixes from proper nouns.

Examples: un-American, pre-Civil War, pro-French, anti-Communists.

Use a hyphen with the prefixes *self-*, *ex-*, and *all-* as in self-denial, all-school drama, ex-husband.

Use a hyphen when fractions function as adjectives.

Example: . . . two-thirds majority.

Do not, however, hyphenate a fraction used as a noun.

Example: One half of the class voted.

Colons

Use a colon to introduce enumerations, examples, or formal quotations.

Example: When you come to the meeting, bring the following items: paper, pen, calculator, and bag lunch.

Often the words *thus*, *as follows*, and *the following* are followed by colons and lists. The group of words before the colon must form a complete sentence. No colon may follow the preposition *of* or the verb *are*.

Direct And Indirect Quotations

A direct quotation cites the exact words of a speaker. An indirect quotation reports what a speaker said without using the exact words.

Indirect: Carlton said he wouldn't be going.

Direct: Carlton said, "I won't be going."

To punctuate a direct quotation, use a comma if the words introducing the quotation don't form a sentence.

Example: She was "not in the mood," to quote her own words.

Use a colon if the words introducing the quotation form a complete sentence.

Example: She said it loudly: "I'm not in the mood."

If the quotation comes as the first part of the sentence, place the comma inside the quotation.

Example: "I won't go," she said loudly.

A direct quotation may be interrupted in a sentence or be broken into two sentences or more.

Examples: "A tart temper," he said, "never mellows with age." (*one sentence*)

"The world," Huxley said, "is a chessboard. The rules of the game are what we call the laws of Nature."

The period is always placed inside the end quotation mark.

Example: Shakespeare said, "We burn daylight."

The question mark and exclamation point may go either inside or outside of the quotation marks depending upon the sense of the sentence.

Examples: Oscar Wilde asked, "If the lower orders don't set us an example, what on earth is the use of them?" (*The '?' goes inside because the quoted words constitute a question.*)

Did Wilde say: "Truth is rarely pure and seldom simple"? (*The quotation is not itself a question; so put the '?' outside the quotation mark.*)

"Stop!" the guard yelled. (*The exclamation is in the guard's voice, not the commentator's.*)

Most Commonly Asked Interview Questions

Personal background—What interests you about the field? State three accomplishments you are most proud of. What does a job have to have to give you satisfaction? Why do you want to work for this company? How would you do the job? Where would you like to be in five, ten years? What are your strengths? Weaknesses? What do you like to do in your spare time? What have you read lately? State five reasons why I should hire you.

The First Impression

Once you are in the office, manage the first impression by doing the following:

- Use a firm grasp for the handshake. Cup the hand and press firmly; don't squeeze the other person's fingers.
- Smile and make direct eye contact.

During the interview don't interrupt, but remember that you need to know some things too. Try to uncover the interviewer's needs. If you can satisfy those needs, present yourself in that light. Be positive about your present situation. No one likes a negative person. Have a few stories ready to tell, stories that demonstrate your selling points. Just stating that you are resourceful, for example, won't be convincing without a corroborating anecdote.

Some Knock-Out Factors

- A poor self-image
- Being overly sensitive
- Taking over the interview and talking too much
- Not talking enough, i.e., answering questions with a simple yes or no.
- Interpreting things negatively
- A sloppy appearance
- A desire to get credit rather than get the job done
- Inability to accept praise

- No eye contact
- Questions relating to salary and benefits in an early interview (Discuss money only after a firm offer has been made.)
- Smoking and chewing gum
- Interrupting
- Dead fish handshake
- No knowledge of company and company's product
- Lack of self-knowledge (inability to identify a weakness)

Know What Employers are Looking For

Ability to communicate: clear, concise, well-organized

Intelligence: logical progression of thoughts; precise memory; ability to plan and get to the heart of a problem quickly; an inquisitive mind; a well-read person; willingness to accept responsibility and get things done; initiative: sees what needs to be done and does it; flexibility; an ability to handle conflict and deal with stress; goal-oriented; a sense of direction.

Remember: The interviewer has as much at stake as you do. It's his responsibility to hire a person who will make the maximum contribution to the organization. The interviewer has the following concerns: That you will be lazy, dishonest, inept, frequently absent, a druggie or an alcoholic, unstable, unable to get along with others, a gossip, negative, do the minimum you can get away with, lack enthusiasm, spread dissention, blame others.

After the Interview

Send a follow-up letter of thanks. Use titles. Make it personal and conversational. Use an attention-getting introduction, a persuasive middle, and a motivating conclusion. Keep the letter to a page or less. Don't ask people to call you. Tell them when you will call.

The Cover Letter

A cover letter is called such because it covers in brief the major points in your resume. It should be one page or less. Because the employer usually sees the letter before the resume, it is crucial that it focus on the job, and your ability to do it well. The cover letter is as close to a personal introduction as you can get without being there; so try to make yours unique and a reflection of your personality. A cover letter also offers a chance to build on your resume by expanding on any past experience that suits the particular job for which you are applying.

Avoid making general statements without corroborating evidence to support them.

Make sure the letter is formatted properly, looks attractive, and is free of all errors. Address it to a specific person (the one who will interview you). Go the extra mile to find out who that person is if you don't know. A cover letter is a persuasive sales letter. Do not bring a cover letter with you for a walk-in interview.

Include the following information:

- Your address.
- Your purpose for writing the letter.
- Your interest in the position offered, the company and its products or services.
- Highlights of your resume including your related qualifications and interests.
- Follow-up action that you plan to take, and how and when you can be reached for an interview.

Sample Cover Letter

4239 Swan Way
Palo Alto, CA 94306
415/555-6242

May 10, 19__

Mr. Steve Huffman
Vice President of Public Relations
American Creative Advertising
527 Parkway Avenue
Detroit, MI 48207

Dear Mr. Huffman:

As my senior year at Menlo College rapidly approaches, I am eager to apply my business administration and advertising studies as a member of your marketing department. After researching area advertising and public relations firms and checking our business department career files, I found that you have an opening and that many of my qualifications reflect my suitability for this position.

As my enclosed resume indicates, I have focused my studies and work experiences in business areas—particularly marketing and advertising. On a practical level, as Advertising Manager of *The Oak*, the college newspaper, I achieved record sales last year, helping the newspaper reach unequalled financial security by implementing a unique sales/advertising incentive program. I gained basic accounting experience as a cashier at Wicks' Department Store, and based upon my work record and related interests, I was asked to design seasonal merchandise displays.

I would like to speak with you to learn more about the specifics of the Advertising/Public Relations position at American Creative Advertising. I will call you on Monday, May 17 should you not contact me before, so that we might arrange a date to discuss the details of this position.

Sincerely,

Laura S. Jackson

Enclosure

Sample Resume

Laura S. Jackson

4239 Swan Way
Palo Alto, CA 94306
415/555-6242

Career Objective: To gain an entry-level position in a public relations or advertising firm where my education can contribute to company growth and career fulfillment.

Education

Bachelor of Science, June 19__
Menlo College School of Business Administration

Selected Courses:

Sales and Marketing
Public Relations Campaigns
Managerial Communications
Oral Communications

Related Experience

Student Assistant, School of Business, Marketing classes: Assisted department director in general office duties, such as maintaining departmental correspondence. Also tutored peers in general marketing instruction, spring and fall 19__.

Advertising Manager, *The Oak* (college newspaper): Coordinated advertising sales and layout for the monthly publication. Achieved record sales for fall 19__ to spring 19__.

Sales Clerk, Wicks' Department Store: conducted general sales and cashier activities. Created seasonal merchandise window displays, summers of 19__ and 19__.

Activities and Awards

Delta Mu Delta Honor Society, Treasurer, Fall 19__ to present.

William Stokes Independent Study Award Recipient, 19__.

Menlo College Tennis Team Member, 19__ through 19__.

United Way Volunteer, 19__ to present.

References available upon request.

The Resume

Ms. Grammar realizes that countless books, chapters, and articles have been written about employment strategies. That's just the trouble. It's too much when only a few reminders are necessary.

She is also aware of the electronic media available today, from software resume writing packages to career placement registries. She knows that you can spend a small fortune having a video resume prepared for yourself, and that recruiters do word searches to isolate potential job candidates. A lot of money is spent by both candidates and companies. In the end, however, it is you, not a piece of paper that will get you a job. Consequently, although a resume may be necessary, the best approach to the interview is still person-to-person networking.

In general, keep the resume short and to the point. The most common fault of resumes is that they are too long. The second most common fault is typographical and grammatical errors. Appearance and accuracy count for a great deal in a resume.