

## Part 1: Getting the details right

**Ending sentences with prepositions** → in spoken happens. *but not in*

Examples:

1. There is an increasing number of methods that science has to put up with
2. There was no one who the women immediately took to → *there is better to leave like this*
3. The period which special offers are available during is usually too short for most people to fully benefit.

Guideline: the final position is not optimal for isolated prepositions, but it may be the only option for phrasal or prepositional verbs.

### Long words

Examples:

Anglo-Saxon:	Latinate:
Difficult	intricate
Empty <i>more common</i>	vacuous <i>more formal</i>
Use	utilize
Make easy	facilitate

Guideline: if you are not sure of the synonym relation, look the word up in a good learner dictionary (like Collins Cobuild).

### The shall/will distinction

1<sup>st</sup> person singular and plural: shall (I shall, we shall)

other persons: will

Guideline: use will in all contexts.

*you shall*

*shall is more definite*

### Split infinitives

Example:

1. the audience were asked to quickly get up from their seats

Sometimes they are inevitable. Compare:

1. The opposition rarely succeeds in persuading the Government to really think about what it is doing
2. The opposition rarely succeeds in persuading the Government really to think about what it is doing

Guideline: try and leave infinitive intact unless you need it for emphasis reasons.

### Sentences starting with AND or BUT

Not very frequent. Guideline: use sparingly.

### The that/which distinction

Ties in which the restrictive/non-restrictive opposition:

1. There are a number of major problems that this study has tried to address
2. There are a number of major problems which this study has tries to address

*That* can only be used in restrictives, while *which* can be used in both. Compare:

1. Research institutes which are government-funded are attracting more scientists every year

*restrictive (defining)*

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2. Research institutes, which are government-funded, are attracting more scientists every

Would you choose *that* or *which* ?

There are a number of major problems.....the committee has still not discussed in any detail and.....need to be resolved before the Brussels meeting.

Guideline: as *which* is phonologically weightier, use it when the relative clause is at some distance from its host.

The who/whom distinction

Examples:

- 1. Hobson is the only person who went on to university
- 2. Hobson is the only person whom we have yet to see

Guideline: use *who* throughout, except when preceded by a preposition:

- 1. The subjects for whom this task was new first received a formal instruction

Part 2: Punctuation

What is the pun of the following joke?

A panda walks into the library. He eats a sandwich, then draws his bow and shoots two arrows. "Why did you do that?" asks the librarian as the panda walks toward the exit. The panda shows her a badly punctuated book. "I'm a panda," he says. "That's what it says we do." The librarian looks at the page:

Panda. Large black-and-white bear-like mammal, native to China. Eats, shoots and leaves.

Some more examples of why punctuation is important:

- Slow, children crossing VERSUS slow children crossing
- Go, get him doctors VERSUS go get him, doctors
- I've finally decided to cheer up, everybody! VERSUS I finally decided to cheer up everybody!

Comma use: orientations → NOT OVER DIS

Do you need a comma in the following sentence?

- 1. Over the last five hundred years, the English language has expanded to become the everyday speech of over three hundred million people across the world.

Guidelines: the shorter the initial element, the less need for a comma. Compare:

- 1) for most people the decision to block off the Channel Tunnel did not come as a great shock.
- 2) Despite the fact that English teachers are concerned with both academic and non-academic education, it is the Scots who value a professional training for teachers most highly.

Comma use: insertions

Example:

Comma use - distinct -> by comma - Value of comma -> (Suppl. 3)

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- 1) the Danes, who were the first to announce a referendum, fully understood the danger of a federal, but strongly centralized Europe

**Comma use: additions**

Consider the following sentences:

- 1) we did not appoint John because we thought he would be useful → you hire
- 2) we did not appoint John, because we thought he would be useful ??
- 3) we did not appoint John, because we thought we had little use for him
- 4) we did not appoint John because we thought we had little use for him. → you

**In-class exercise: comma use**

- 1) What is more, the reality of the situation should not be overlooked. → or without
- 2) Whether that will be enough for a recovery of the population remains to be seen
- 3) In addition to these compulsory subjects, Muslim children also learn more about their own cultural norms, which means that they see things from both sides.
- 4) American plant efficiency is much improved, with Ford leading the way → or without ?
- 5) As a matter of fact, the five countries asking for the ban to be lifted (Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia, and South Africa) have protected their elephants so well that they are not suffering from overpopulation.
- 6) After reading this, memo should be burned.
- 7) The more cynical governments claim that the only people who protest their innocence are those that are very clearly guilty.
- 8) However, thousands of children have to fight every day which is regrettable.

**Tricky comma use: before AND and BUT**

Consider:

- 1) It is hardly likely that an agreement will be reached and, even if it were, the chances of a long-term solution would be small.
- 2) On a number of occasions, the Dutch Government has promised to take radical measures to help members of ethnic groups with their language problems, but this is more easily said than done.

**Tricky comma use: comma splices**

Examples:

1. The public are often aware of this, they are consciously influenced by the newspaper's opinion.
2. The reasons for capture were various, one could be punished for stealing bread as well as murder.

**In-class exercise: comma splices**

Get rid of the comma splices below:

- 1) The answer to the problems concerning integration cannot be found in pointing out the shortcomings of the minority groups, these shortcomings are found within all groups of society.



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- 2) The economic refugees form one of the largest groups of asylum seekers, therefore governments could save a large amount of money if they did not allow them to make an official request for asylum.
- 3) The third type of RP is 'advanced RP', it is only spoken by young people belonging to exclusive social groups.

**Colon use**

Examples:

- 1) Although few regard the agreement as a perfect solution, a large majority hold the view that no better alternative is at hand: it is a choice between the possibility of peace and the certainty of a further escalation of the conflict.
- 2) The report makes recommendations in three vital areas: security, building maintenance and warden salaries.

**Things that can go wrong in colon use**

1. This study looks at three aspects of technological developments: Ethics, practical limitations and shortcomings of previous developments.
2. The period in which this happened has generally been called: the industrial revolution
3. Burma is a good example: at present it has a market feature that would prompt most firms to pass it by: a per capita income of \$250 a year, an immature, socialist economy, a foreign exchange deficit, and domestic turmoil.

**Semi-colon use**

Examples:

1. The New Republic by no means meant a prosperous period for the Dutch nation; it was rather a period of stagnation.
2. The community surrounding the sheltered-care facility may be the place in which ex-mental patients find a comfortable home or an oppressive one; a place in which their safety is threatened or in which they can feel free to be about; a place in which they can establish relationships or in which others are unavailable to them.

**In-class exercise: colons or semi-colons?**

- 1) Often a financial consideration is made \_\_\_ what would I get in return if I helped some country?
- 2) The situation is no less volatile on the other side of the Pacific \_\_\_ in Thailand, migrant workers flock to the forests along the Thai-Combadian border to harvest timber or mine for precious stone, only to contract malaria \_\_\_ in some villages in Vietnam and Burma, almost everyone has the disease.

[Most sentences and exercises were taken from: Hannay, Mike & Lachlan Mackenzie (2002). *Effective Writing in English: a sourcebook*. Bussum: Coutinho]