Basics of Academic Writing

A Guide for Navigating the Perils of Mechanics, Punctuation, Grammar, and Style

Rebecca Pieken, Thesis Processing Office
Summer 2017
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MECHANICS</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPELLING/WORD CHOICE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMONLY CONFUSED WORDS</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPITALIZATION</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITALICS</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUMBERS</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPOUND WORDS—HYPHENS AND EN DASHES</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABBREVIATIONS</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARENTHESES</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUNCTUATION</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APOSTROPHES</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EM DASHES</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMAS</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERIODS</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLONS</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEMICOLONS</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXCLAMATION POINTS</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUESTION MARKS</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUOTATION MARKS</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRAMMAR</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARTICLES</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONJUNCTIONS</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRONOUNS</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREPOSITIONS</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STYLE AND CLARITY</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERB TENSE</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MODIFIERS</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARALLEL SENTENCE STRUCTURE</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HANDY URLS/RESOURCES</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MECHANICS

You want to make sure when you go out there that the tag on the back of your collar isn’t poking up—unless, of course, you are deliberately wearing your clothes inside out.

—Norris 2015, 36

Mechanics includes the most basic—some might say the most automated—aspects of writing. However, students often take it for granted that spelling- and grammar-checking programs will catch all errors. This section covers the most common problem areas in writing mechanics: spelling and word choice, capitalization, italicization, number formatting, compound words, abbreviations, and parentheses.

SPELLING/WORD CHOICE

“A misspelling undermines your authority. And an eye for the misspelled word can give you an edge in the workplace” (Norris 2015, 30).

It is so easy to run on autopilot, but avoid the temptation. Follow this checklist for accurate spelling and word choice:

✓ Run spelling and grammar checker before submitting your draft. Run these checkers with a grain of salt. They’re good, for instance, for checking if author names are spelled inconsistently and to find many misspelled words.

Remember that Microsoft Word does not catch homophones, words that sound the same but have different meanings (such as plain and plane). Notice that many of the commonly confused words are homophones.

✓ If your paper is about materiel and you want to ensure you aren’t using material in its place, perform a search for the word “material.” Repeat for other similar words.

✓ If you use a thesaurus to dress up your regular vocabulary, make sure to double check the usage of the word in a dictionary.

✓ Keep Merriam-Webster.com up at all times for reference while you are writing.

✓ MS Word’s embedded dictionary is not sufficient.

✓ Allow enough time to have a writing coach, friend, or spouse review your paper. Having another set of eyes read your work is priceless.

✓ Read your paper aloud. This is sometimes the only way to catch a spelling or word choice mistake.
# COMMONLY CONFUSED WORDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word Group</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>affect/effect</td>
<td><em>affect</em> (v): to create an impact upon (<em>affect</em> is an <em>action</em>); <em>effect</em> (n): the result of an action. (Tip: apply “negative” or “positive” correctly for effect, will not work for affect.) (John had a habit of drinking too much beer, which affected his driving and had a negative effect on his driving record.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>angel/angle</td>
<td><em>angel</em> (n): spiritual being, good person; <em>angle</em> (n): the space or shape formed when two lines or surfaces meet each other. (Be an angel and put that picture at an angle.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brake/break</td>
<td><em>brake</em> (n): a mechanism that disengages a machine / (v): to use this mechanism; <em>break</em> (n): a pause in activity / (v): to cause a malfunction. (If you don’t give the brakes a break, you will wear them out.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carat/caret/carrot</td>
<td><em>carat</em> (n): unit for measuring the weight of jewels (such as diamonds) that is equal to 200 mg; <em>caret</em> (n): a wedge-shaped mark made on written or printed matter to indicate the place where something is to be inserted (^); <em>carrot</em> (n): has been called one of the world’s healthiest foods—carrot cake comes to mind. (Coming up with a logical sentence that includes carat, caret, and carrot is tricky. However, you can choke on a carat, include a caret, and eat a carrot. If you can’t eat it, it’s not a <em>carrot</em>.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comprise/compose/consist</td>
<td><em>comprise</em> (v): to contain, to include (best using active voice, the United States comprises 50 states); <em>compose</em> (v): to bring together (the United States is composed of 50 states); <em>consist</em> (v): to be composed or made up. (The United States is composed of 50 states; its mainland comprises 48 states and consists of many municipalities.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disinterested/uninterested</td>
<td><em>disinterested</em> (adj): impartial, unbiased; <em>uninterested</em> (adj): not interested. (As a judge, it is best if you are disinterested. If you are uninterested, why are you here?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>farther/further/furthermore</td>
<td><em>farther</em> (adv): to a greater distance; <em>further</em> (adv): to an increased degree / (v): to promote a cause; <em>furthermore</em> / (adv): also. (I can throw farther than you, but I suggest studying Babe Ruth’s skills to further your technique. Furthermore, I recommend reading <em>Baseball in the Classroom</em>.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regardless/irregardless</td>
<td><em>regardless</em> (adv): despite everything; <em>irregardless</em>: not a word. (Regardless of her stomachache, she managed to eat 59 hot dogs in the contest.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it’s/its</td>
<td><em>it’s</em>: contraction of <em>it</em> and <em>is</em> or has; <em>its</em> (adj): singular pronoun, gender neutral. (It’s important that the bird stay in its cage.) Contractions are not used in academic writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lay/lie</td>
<td><em>lay</em> (v): to place something on a surface; <em>lie</em> (v): to recline (oneself) / (v): to make a false statement / (n): a false statement. (Lay that book here before the librarian notices it is missing. There is no need to lie about it; you simply fell asleep while lying down while you read.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lose/loose</td>
<td><em>lose</em> (v): to misplace something; <em>loose</em> (adj): unsecured; relaxed. (You are about to lose that loose tooth.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>materiel/material</td>
<td><strong>material</strong> (n, adj): (n) the substance of which a thing is made or composed, fabric; (adj) important, major, significant; <strong>materiel</strong> (n): equipment used by an organization, institution, or military. (The boxes with materiel arrived, but the uniforms appeared to be made of poor materials.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>method/methodology</td>
<td><strong>method</strong> (n): a technique for doing something; <strong>methodology</strong> (n): a system of procedures. (Six methods make up Smith’s methodology.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personnel/personal</td>
<td><strong>personnel</strong> (n): people employed in an organization; <strong>personal</strong> (adj): belonging or relating to a particular person. (Company personnel became disgruntled at the lack of personal attention.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>principal/principle</td>
<td><strong>principal</strong> (adj): primary; fundamental / (n): an administrative authority of a school; <strong>principle</strong> (n): a rule or maxim to follow. (The principal principles.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>than/then</td>
<td><strong>than</strong> (conj): used as a comparison or contrast; <strong>then</strong> (adv): used to situate actions in time. (I would rather take a hike and then eat, rather than eating first.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>respectively/respectfully</td>
<td><strong>respectfully</strong> (adv): to act or speak with respect, courtesy, or high regard; <strong>respectively</strong> (adv): one by one in the order stated. (I respectfully disagree with you. John, Carl, and Emma are employed as a grocer, a chemist, and a doctor, respectively.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>there/their/they’re</td>
<td><strong>there</strong> (adv): indicates direction; <strong>their</strong> (plural possessive pronoun): gender neutral; <strong>they’re</strong>: contraction of <em>they</em> and <em>are</em>. (Their shoes are there, but they’re wet.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>theirs</td>
<td><strong>theirs</strong> (plural possessive pronoun): gender neutral; <strong>there’s</strong>: contraction of <em>there</em> and <em>is</em>. (There’s nothing more to say; what’s ours is ours and what’s theirs is ours.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to/too/two:</td>
<td><strong>to</strong> (prep): toward; <strong>too</strong> (adv): also / (adv): very; <strong>two</strong>: number. (I want to do two sentences, too.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>versus/verses</td>
<td><strong>versus</strong> (prep): against, in contrast to; <strong>verses</strong> (noun): part of a poem or song, writing in which words are arranged in a rhythmic pattern. (I sang the verses versus speaking them.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>your/you’re</td>
<td><strong>your</strong> (second person possessive pronoun): used to refer to any person or to people in general; <strong>you’re</strong> (contraction): shortened version of <em>you</em> and <em>are</em>. (You’re driving your car too.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This list has been streamlined to indicate which of the aforementioned words are commonly confused. Please consult a dictionary for more detailed definitions.

**CAPITALIZATION**

It is common in the military, in business, and in technological fields to capitalize EVERYTHING. In academic papers, capitalize only proper nouns, major words in publication titles, special ranks or titles when used BEFORE a person’s name, and compass directions when they name a specific region. Based on tradition, capitalizing Sailor, Soldier, Marine, etc., is allowed.
Use the following guidelines for capitalization:

✓ Capitalize the names of all proper nouns.

DO THIS: Regional Manager Michael Scott met with Vice President David Wallace today.

DO THIS: The regional manager met with the vice president today.

NOT THIS: The Regional Manager and Vice President met today.

✓ Capitalize major words in titles and headings.

DO THIS: Dr. Sanders published his seminal work *The Beginning of the End* in 1958.

DO THIS: Kevin’s article on “Potato Chips Are the Next Food Group” was not accepted by the *Journal of Nutrition*.

✓ Capitalize compass directions when they identify a specific region rather than a general direction.

DO THIS: Students from the West often melt in eastern humidity.

DO THIS: Students from western Oklahoma often melt in eastern humidity.

NOT THIS: Students from Western Oklahoma often melt in eastern humidity.

✓ Do not capitalize names of scientific laws, theories, models, statistical procedures, or hypotheses; however, capitalize words that are proper nouns.

DO THIS: Use the scientific method to determine a course of action.

NOT THIS: Use the Scientific Method to determine a course of action.

DO THIS: Based on the Lagrangian theory… (after mathematician and astronomer Joseph-Louis Lagrange)

NOT THIS: Based on the Lagrangian Theory…

**ITALICS**

Italicization has a short list of uses. Use italics only to format linguistic examples, to introduce key terms, to set off titles of books and reports, and to specify mathematical symbols:

✓ Use italics to format a letter, word, phrase, or sentence used as a linguistic example.

DO THIS: The following chart explains the difference between *effect* and *affect*.

✓ Use italics to indicate foreign language terms. Follow the term with a translation in parentheses or in a footnote.

DO THIS: Guatemala’s *Mano Dura* (firm hand) approach has led to an increase in gang activity.

✓ Use italics to introduce a new, technical, or key term.

DO THIS: The term *commercial off-the-shelf* (COTS) is an important marketing concept.

✓ Use italics to set off the names of magazines, newspapers, and journals and the titles of books, films, and most reports.

DO THIS: Film critics gave *American Sniper* mixed reviews.

DO THIS: Ryan’s favorite book as a child was *The Wind in the Willows*.

DO THIS: His most recent article in the *Journal of Psychology* was well received.
DO THIS: Analyst Marshall Erwin drafted *Intelligence Issues for Congress* while working for the Congressional Research Service.

✓ Use italics to indicate letters used as statistical symbols or algebraic variables.

DO THIS: This graph illustrates the *y* variable over time.

✓ Do not use italics to emphasize a point because the writing itself should do this.

DO THIS: He wanted the report written in the orderly way he had instructed in the meeting.

NOT THIS: He wanted the report written *that way*.

✓ Do not use italics to set off foreign phrases that are common in English. Ibid., et al., i.e., e.g., are not in italics.

DO THIS: The employee’s *ad hoc* approach led to problems for the company’s reputation.

NOT THIS: The employee’s *ad hoc* approach led to problems for the company’s reputation.

**NUMBERS**

Consistency is key when formatting numbers in an academic paper. Follow these guidelines for numbers at the sentence level:

✓ Write numbers out in words for whole numbers zero through nine.

DO THIS: Over the course of one week, four participants sent in their surveys.

✓ Use numerals for numbers 10 and greater.

DO THIS: Our office went through 100 pencils in a week.

✓ Use numerals for numbers less than 10 for timelines, a string of data, etc., whenever there are a lot of numbers in a small space.

✓ Percentages are always a number.

✓ Always spell out numbers at the beginning of a sentence, or rewrite sentence.

DO THIS: The year 2016 promises to be interesting.

NOT THIS: 2016 promises to be an interesting year.

**COMPOUND WORDS—HYPHENS AND EN DASHES**

Use hyphens to avoid ambiguity, to join prefixes, to form single ideas from two or more words, or to create compound adjectives:

✓ Use a hyphen if *not* doing so creates confusion or ambiguity.

DO THIS: President Obama met with small-business owners during his recent visit to Oklahoma City.

NOT THIS: President Obama met with small business owners during his recent visit to Oklahoma City. (If you do not use the hyphen here, one might think the sentence refers to business owners of small stature rather than the size of the business.)

✓ Use a hyphen to form a single idea.

DO THIS: Daniel’s mother-in-law is visiting from out of town.
Use a hyphen to indicate widely accepted compound adjectives.

DO THIS: Joan made a disability claim for a work-related injury.
DO THIS: Consulting a subject-matter expert ensures the final document meets industry standards.

Do not use a hyphen to link adverbs ending in *ly* to an adjective.

DO THIS: The handbook warned against mishandling highly explosive material.
NOT THIS: The handbook warned against mishandling highly-explosive material.

Do not use a hyphen if the compound adjective follows the noun, unless it is necessary to add clarity to the sentence.

DO THIS: Her reputation as a leader was well renowned.
DO THIS: She possessed a well-renowned reputation as a leader.
NOT THIS: Her reputation as a leader was well-renowned.

HANDY TIP: Do not confuse the en (–) dash with its siblings, the hyphen (-) and the em dash (—)!
Use en dashes only for the following types of compound: to indicate words of equal weight, either in proper names or in relationships. To create the en dash: CTRL+ hyphen; em dash: CTRL+ ALT+ hyphen.

DO THIS: The Mason–Dixon line makes up the southernmost border of Pennsylvania.
DO THIS: The Israeli–Palestinian conflict
DO THIS: The executive–legislative dynamic puzzles most Americans.

Use an en dash to extend a compound over more than two words.

DO THIS: The post–Cold War era is still a precarious time for international relations.

Do not add space on either side of ANY dash.

Do not use the en dash as a form of punctuation within a sentence. Use an em dash (—).

Use an en dash between page and date ranges.

DO THIS: The restrictions were in full force during the 2005–2006 season.
DO THIS: The Thesis Processing Office is open 7:30 a.m.–5 p.m.
DO THIS: She ate 15–20 Snickers bars in one sitting.
DO THIS: He read pages 87–92 before falling asleep.

ABBREVIATIONS

An abbreviation is a shortened form of a word or phrase. The term “abbreviation” includes acronyms and initialisms.

Always spell out your abbreviations in text the first time they appear in a paper or chapter of a thesis/capstone. When a portion of a document is considered a standalone (for example: abstract or executive summary within a thesis) you will need to redefine acronym in body of text.

DO THIS: The Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) is located in Monterey, California.
DO THIS: Leadership requires that documents be submitted by close of business (COB) Friday.

Use periods after a shortened form of a person’s name.
DO THIS: A. W. Birmingham conducted the meeting.

✓ Spell out United States when it appears as a noun; use the abbreviation U.S. (with periods) only when it appears as an adjective.

DO THIS: The United States assisted earthquake victims.

NOT THIS: The U.S. assisted earthquake victims.

DO THIS: U.S. troops provided support to civilian law enforcement.

NOT THIS: United States’ troops provided support to civilian law enforcement.

✓ Use periods surrounding Latin abbreviations.

DO THIS: a.m., p.m., i.e., e.g., et al.

DO THIS: Greg detested the poor work habits of his subordinates (e.g., tardiness, inefficiency, and sloppiness).

✓ Do not use periods to abbreviate state names, acronyms, initialisms, or measurements (except “in.” for inches):

DO THIS: CA, WV, NASA, DOD, GAO, OPM, cm, mm

NOT THIS: C.A., W.V., N.A.S.A., D.O.D., G.A.O., O.P.M., c.m., m.m.

✓ Do not add an additional period when an abbreviation falls at the end of a sentence.

✓ Consult the style guides for the Department of Defense and the Naval Postgraduate School for a list of standard acronyms, initialisms, and abbreviations https://my.nps.edu/web/thesisprocessing/resources).

PARENTHESES
Parentheses confine information within a sentence. If you overuse parentheses, chances are you are restricting the flow of your writing and distracting your readers. Use parentheses only for the following:

✓ Use parentheses to introduce an abbreviation or acronym that will be used in the body of the paper.

DO THIS: The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) employs more than 18,000 workers.

✓ Use parentheses to set off structurally independent elements such as references to a graph or an appendix.

DO THIS: Profits increased significantly during the 1990s (Figure 1).

✓ Use parentheses to attribute a quotation to its original source, depending upon your citation style:

DO THIS: Johnson’s research concluded that “right-brain learners need special consideration in the classroom” (Adams 2003, 17).

✓ Do not use two or more sets of parentheses back to back. Instead, join pertinent information with a semicolon.

DO THIS: For further information, consult the study (Carter, 2004; Figure 2).

NOT THIS: For further information, consult the study (Carter, 2004) (Figure 2).

✓ Place the period outside the closed parentheses for in-text citations, with the exception of block quotes.
Avoid using parentheses within parentheses. Instead use brackets inside the parentheses.
DO THIS: The Office of the United States Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology (ASA[ALT]) is known as OASA(ALT).

Surround “i.e.” and “e.g.” with parentheses when providing additional information.
DO THIS: She loves Italian food (e.g., pizza, spaghetti, lasagna).

NOT THIS: She loves Italian food (e.g., pizza, spaghetti, lasagna, etc.). Why is this incorrect? Using both “etc.” and “e.g.” is redundant.

NOT THIS: She loves Italian food, e.g., pizza, spaghetti, lasagna.
PUNCTUATION

APOSTROPHES

Think of apostrophes as jewelry—maybe that’s what would make us handle them properly. The apostrophe is possessive: it will hang in.

—Norris, 2015, 156

Erroneous apostrophe usage appears everywhere. Don’t fall prey to it in your academic papers. There are only two primary uses for apostrophes: to indicate possession or to identify an omission. That is all.

✓ Use an apostrophe to indicate possession.
  DO THIS: The president’s new policy both enthused and displeased representatives equally.
  DO THIS: The students’ papers need to be graded.

✓ Use an apostrophe to indicate where letters have been omitted in a contraction. However, in formal and academic writing, limit use of contractions altogether.
  DO THIS: It is a good idea to brush your teeth before bed.
  NOT THIS: It’s a good idea to brush your teeth before bed.

✓ Use an apostrophe to indicate where numbers have been omitted in an era.
  DO THIS: The tacky fashions of the ’80s has returned.

✓ Do not use an apostrophe to indicate a decade.
  DO THIS: The tacky fashions of the 1980s returned in the 2010s.
  NOT THIS: The tacky fashions of the 1980’s returned in the 2010’s.

✓ Do not use apostrophes to indicate plural nouns.
  DO THIS: The company purchased 100 cases of paper.
  NOT THIS: The company purchased 100 case’s of paper.
  
  DO THIS: Often, FAQs do not provide answers to my questions!
  NOT THIS: Often, FAQ’s do not provide answers my questions!

EM DASHES

Em dashes—not to be confused with hyphens or en dashes—can create dramatic pauses or shifts in the middle of a sentence; if you execute them correctly. They also work nicely to insert a series in the middle of a sentence when commas don’t quite do the job.

✓ Use dashes to denote abrupt changes in thought or to create emphatic pauses.
  DO THIS: The bill will create thousands of new jobs—if it ever passes the Senate.
  DO THIS: The company instituted a new policy—it was widely unpopular—that required all employees to work holidays.

✓ Use dashes within a sentence to set off an internal series separated by commas.
  DO THIS: Don’s resume listed the strengths—leadership, cleanliness, organization, creativity—that set him apart from his peers.

✓ Do not include spaces before or after dashes.
COMMAS

Commas are some of the most difficult punctuation marks to master. This section provides guidance for commas relating to lists and non-essential phrases. Comma placement involving conjunctive words and phrases begins on in the Conjunctive section.

There are five types of sentence patterns:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SENTENCE PATTERNS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Independent clause.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Independent clause; independent clause.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Independent clause, <strong>but</strong> [and, so, nor, yet, for, or] independent clause.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Independent clause <strong>dependent clause.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Dependent clause, independent clause.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BLUF:**

Please use a comma when:

- Separating two independent clauses (not an independent clause [complete sentence] and a dependent clause [incomplete sentence]) when they are joined by a conjunction, e.g., “and” or “but.”
- Using an introductory clause and/or prepositional phrase (dependent clauses): “In the beginning of the 15th century, the Normans went around creating mayhem” and “In 1978, the East Coast experienced extraordinarily heavy snowstorms.”
- Separating words or phrases in a series.
- Separating out non-essential information. (She ate the chocolate, which really wasn’t very good, because it was there.) In this example, the sentence is completely fine without the text between the commas.
- Distinguishing between restrictive and nonrestrictive appositives (a noun or noun phrase that renames another noun right beside it). For example: “I want to thank my wife Wendy for her incredible support during my stay here at NPS” is only true if I am a bigamist or polygamist. “I want to thank my wife, Wendy, for her incredible support during my stay here at NPS” is true if I have only one wife.
MORE IN-DEPTH EXAMPLES

✓ Use commas to separate each element in a list.

✓ Use a serial comma, also known as the Oxford comma, to indicate the final list item and to eliminate ambiguity.

DO THIS: The Marine expressed gratitude to his parents, the president, and his platoon leader.

NOT THIS: The Marine expressed gratitude to his parents, the president and his platoon leader.

For current events regarding the serial comma, see https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/16/us/oxford-comma-lawsuit.html?_r=0.

✓ Use commas to set off non-essential information, details that do not change the meaning of the main clause.

DO THIS: The House and Senate, despite the impending hurricane, reconvened to pass the resolution.

DO THIS: John Glenn, an American hero, was recently buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

✓ Do not use commas to set off essential phrases (phrases that lose their meaning when the text within commas is removed).

DO THIS: Walt Whitman’s collection of poetry *Leaves of Grass* has become a standard in the classroom.

NOT THIS: Walt Whitman’s collection of poetry, *Leaves of Grass*, has become a standard in the classroom.

✓ Use commas to set off introductory elements, including single words and phrases, from the main clause.

DO THIS: Toward the end of the conflict, the economic growth had become stagnant.

NOT THIS: Toward the end of the conflict the economic growth had become stagnant.

DO THIS: Since its inception, the Department of Homeland Security has faced funding challenges.

NOT THIS: Since its inception the Department of Homeland Security has faced funding challenges.

DO THIS: First, I will summarize the latest research in the field.

NOT THIS: First I will summarize the latest research in the field.

✓ Use a comma on either side of the year when giving a month-day-year date.

DO THIS: The original founders signed the U.S. Constitution on September 17, 1787, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

DO THIS: On September 17, 1787, the founders signed the U.S. Constitution.

NOT THIS: On September 17, 1787 the founders signed the U.S. Constitution.

✓ Do not set off the date with commas if any element of the date is missing, e.g., October 2004 (not October, 2004).

✓ Do not use commas when using military-style dates: 20 March 2016.
✔ Use commas to indicate a city/state or city/nation within a complete sentence.

   **DO THIS:** Steve began his cross-country journey in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and concluded it in Los Angeles, California.

   **DO THIS:** Miguel lived in Madrid, Spain, his entire life.

**PERIODS**

A period signals the end of an idea; just make sure it is a complete idea. Use a period to punctuate both sentences and bulleted lists that are complete sentences.

✔ Use a period to end a complete sentence.

   **DO THIS:** The committee will not meet today.

✔ Differentiate independent clauses (complete sentences) with either a period or a semicolon, not a comma.

   **DO THIS:** I have given you instructions; please follow them closely.

   **DO THIS:** I have given you instructions. Please follow them closely.

   **NOT THIS:** I have given you instructions, please follow them closely.

✔ Use periods after bulleted or numbered items of a list when each item is itself a complete sentence.

   **DO THIS:** Each person in the organization has a specific function:

   1. The manager supervises daily tasks.
   2. The sales staff promotes the products.
   3. The HR department handles individual employee problems.

**COLONS**

✔ Use a colon to draw a connection between the information in an independent clause and another clause or phrase.

   **DO THIS:** Ideally, U.S. airmen demonstrate three core values: integrity, service, and excellence.

   **NOT THIS:** Ideally, U.S. airmen demonstrate three core values integrity, service, and excellence.

✔ Use a colon *only* after an independent clause, not a dependent clause.

   **DO THIS:** The writing process includes brainstorming, outlining, drafting, proofreading, and revising.

   **NOT THIS:** The writing process includes: brainstorming, outlining, drafting, proofreading, and revising.

**SEMICOLONS**

Don’t “use the semicolon to join things that really have no relation to each other; it is a bald maneuver to make you keep reading” (Norris 2015, 142).

**HANDY TIP:** When in doubt, don’t use a semicolon.

✔ Use a semicolon to create a distinctive connection between two independent clauses.

   **DO THIS:** She ate pizza and chocolate and potato chips; her stomach hurt.
Use a semicolon to separate elements in a series when individual segments contain material that also must be set off by commas.

**DO THIS:** The committee included Leslie Knope, Pawnee city-council member; Ron Swanson, parks department manager; and Ben Wyatt, Indiana state auditor.

**NOT THIS:** The committee included Leslie Knope, Pawnee city-council member, Ron Swanson, parks department manager, and Ben Wyatt, Indiana state auditor.

Do not use a semicolon to introduce items in a list. Use a colon.

**DO THIS:** She inventoried the items on her desk: paper, pens, vitamins, soup, coffee, and water. She needs to clean it up!

**NOT THIS:** She inventoried the items on her desk; paper, pens, vitamins, soup, coffee, and water. She is a slob.

**EXCLAMATION POINTS**

An exclamation point is a punctuation mark used to create special emotional emphasis at the end of a sentence. Do not use an exclamation point in academic writing unless it already exists in a quotation. In that case, enclose the exclamation point *within* the quotation marks and add a period *after* the parenthetical citation.

**QUESTION MARKS**

A question mark is a form of punctuation used to indicate an interrogative sentence.

Use a question mark outside quotation marks to pose a question regarding that quote.

**DO THIS:** Who said the objective was “unattainable”?

Do not rely on a question to make a simple statement in a paper:

**DO THIS:** It is unclear whether this poses a problem for the industry.

**DO THIS:** Questions remain as to whether this will pose a problem.

**NOT THIS:** Does this pose a problem for the industry?

**QUOTATION MARKS**

We use air quotes when speaking and double quotation marks to express sarcasm in our text messages and emails. It’s no wonder, then, that we have problems using quotes academically. Follow these guidelines closely.

Remember: you use two fingers to indicate air quotes; you would look silly if you used one.

Follow these rules for double quotation marks (“ ”):

Use double quotation marks to introduce a coined or invented expression the first time it is used.

**DO THIS:** The corporate office called the micromanaging behavior of the district managers “performance-stifling.”

Use double quotation marks to enclose the title of an article (the shorter work within a journal), a chapter in a book, or another short work mentioned in text.

**DO THIS:** His article “The Lure of Sugar” made waves among the medical community.
✓ Do not use double quotation marks to introduce a word or phrase used ironically, euphemistically, or as slang.
   DO THIS: The group members considered themselves tough guys.
   NOT THIS: The group members considered themselves “tough guys.”

✓ Use single quotation marks solely to indicate a quote within another quote.
   DO THIS: “Admit it,” she said. “You don’t know the words to ‘Wild Horses.’”

✓ Use single quotation marks inside double quotation marks to indicate material that was originally cited in another source, but do so only when you cannot locate the original source of the quotation.
   DO THIS: Sandra Hendricks assured the board things would turn around after the president had commented that “‘shareholder confidence is down’” (Anders 2012, as cited in Hendricks 2013, 59).
GRAMMAR

The term *grammar* refers to all the parts of speech and the way they relate to one another to form sentences. This section provides an overview of some of grammar’s common pitfalls.

ARTICLES

An article signals whether a noun has a general or specific connotation and is used with countable, singular nouns. Generally, you can insert articles *the, a, or an* before a noun when no other modifiers are present or before modifiers. However, correct article placement may be a little tricky. Follow these guidelines and refer to your favorite grammar guide for more exceptions to the rules:

The Definite Article—*The*

- Use the definite article *the* to modify specific singular or plural nouns.
  - **DO THIS:** Did you see the accident on the freeway this morning?
  - **DO THIS:** That was the best meal I have ever had.
  - **DO THIS:** The right thing is not always the easiest thing.
  - **DO THIS:** The national parks draw millions of tourists.
- Use the definite article *the* to modify most initialisms—abbreviated words for which you pronounce the individual initials—if they stand alone.
  - **DO THIS:** The DOD oversees the armed forces of the United States.
  - **DO THIS:** That investigation falls within the FBI’s purview.
  - **NOT THIS:** DOD oversees the armed forces of the United States.
- Do not use the definite article *the* to modify acronyms—abbreviated words that you pronounce phonetically—if they stand alone.
  - **DO THIS:** NASA is leading space exploration in the 21st century.
  - **NOT THIS:** The is leading space exploration in the 21st century.

Indefinite Articles—*A and An*

- Use indefinite articles to modify non-specific singular or collective nouns.
  - **DO THIS:** The little girl wants a pony for her birthday.
  - **DO THIS:** He hopes to receive a promotion within one year.
  - **DO THIS:** Sharon is an exceptional leader.
  - **DO THIS:** He viewed the media as a pack of wolves.
- Select either *a* or *an* depending on the first sound of the word that follows it. Sometimes the vowel *u* mimics the consonant *y*.
  - **DO THIS:** a university, a unified cause, a unicorn, an ultimatum
  - **DO THIS:** an SoS, a PET scan
  - **NOT THIS:** a SoS, a PET scan
- Sometimes the consonant *h* is silent.
  - **DO THIS:** an honorable mention, an hour, an honest man
- Use an indefinite article to indicate an affiliation with a group.
  - **DO THIS:** a firefighter, an Englishman, a banker, a democrat
✓ Omit articles before most nouns that are both singular and plural in construction.
DO THIS: Soldiers must use logic and intuition.
NOT THIS: Soldiers must use the logic and the intuition.

✓ Omit articles before languages and nationalities.
DO THIS: The students are learning English.
NOT THIS: The students are learning the English.
DO THIS: The students are learning the English language.

✓ Omit articles before academic subjects.
DO THIS: Shannon is majoring in anthropology.
NOT THIS: Shannon is majoring in the anthropology.

CONJUNCTIONS

The term *conjunction* applies to any one of the following categories: coordinating conjunctions, subordinating conjunctions, and conjunctive adverbs. Information on correlative conjunctions appears under Parallel Sentence Structure. Conjunctions are unique parts of speech that enhance a writer’s overall style and illustrate relationships between ideas within a special set of grammatical rules. Mastering the use of conjunctions reveals your sophistication and makes your writing more interesting. Conjunctions are used to connect dependent and independent clauses, to adjoin one idea with another, and to create parallel sentence structure.

**Coordinating Conjunctions: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so (FANBOYS)**

✓ Use a coordinating conjunction to connect an independent clause to a dependent clause without a comma.
DO THIS: Lower management understood the corporate directive but failed to comply.
NOT THIS: Lower management understood the corporate directive, but failed to comply.
DO THIS: Upper management understood their concerns yet ignored them anyway.
NOT THIS: Upper management understood their concerns, yet ignored them anyway.

✓ Use a coordinating conjunction to connect an independent clause to another independent clause with a comma.
DO THIS: The company president resigned, and the vice president took his place.
NOT THIS: The company president resigned and the vice president took his place.
DO THIS: He did not accept the media’s interpretation of events, so he avoided watching the evening news.
NOT THIS: He did not accept the media’s interpretation of events so he avoided watching the evening news.

✓ Use a coordinating conjunction to group like items or to make a list within a sentence.
DO THIS: Fishing, sailing, and skiing are Ted’s favorite activities.
DO THIS: Susan will bring Yahtzee, Monopoly, or Catchphrase to her company retreat.
Subordinating Conjunctions: after, although, as, as if, as though, because, before, even if, even though, if, if only, in order that, now that, once, provided, rather than, since, so that, that, though, till, unless, until, when, whenever, where, whereas, wherever, whether, which, while —The Scott Foresman Handbook for Writers, Eighth edition.

✓ Use subordinating conjunctions to create logical relationships between two ideas.

✓ If the sentence begins with a subordinating conjunction, use a comma between clauses.
  DO THIS: Provided that his promotion interview goes as planned, Steve should advance in rank by the end of 2015.
  DO THIS: Whereas most employees prefer to take vacation during the holiday season, Jake prefers to vacation in the spring.
  NOT THIS: Whereas most employees prefer to take vacation during the holiday season Jake prefers to vacation in the spring.

✓ If the sentence begins with a subordinating conjunction, do not follow it with a comma.
  DO THIS: Although the employees were upset about the new policy, morale remained high.
  NOT THIS: Although, the employees were upset about the new policy, morale remained high.

✓ If the subordinating conjunction appears between the two clauses, do not use a comma.
  DO THIS: She will read the book whether she is required to read it or not.
  NOT THIS: She will read the book, whether she is required to read it or not.

  DO THIS: I will not speak to you until you speak to me.
  NOT THIS: I will not speak to you, until you speak to me.

Conjunctive Adverbs: accordingly, also, besides, consequently, finally, for example, for instance, furthermore, however, indeed, instead, meanwhile, moreover, nevertheless, subsequently, then, therefore, thus

Conjunctive adverbs function as transitional words in a body of work, serving primarily to connect ideas from one sentence to another or from the end of one paragraph to the beginning of another.

✓ Use a conjunctive adverb to make transitions between independent clauses.

✓ Always use a comma after a conjunctive adverb.
  DO THIS: Private Young neglected to follow his chain of command; consequently, he received a letter of counseling from his superior officer.
  DO THIS: The village suffered an influx of mosquito-borne infections. Thus, the World Health Organization provided aid in the form of mosquito nets and immunizations.

✓ Use commas to set off conjunctive adverbs in the middle of a sentence.
  DO THIS: The company president, consequently, took an impromptu trip to South America.
PRONOUNS

These seemingly miniscule words create ongoing dilemmas for students everywhere. This section attempts to demystify the most common pronoun errors. Three primary pronoun categories are discussed here: relative, personal, and indefinite.

Pronouns are used in place of nouns to prevent repetition within the same sentence or within consecutive sentences, to differentiate subjects from objects, and to achieve sentence variety throughout a body of work.

Relative Pronouns: who, whoever, which, that, whom, whomever, whichever

✓ Use relative pronouns to define nouns in more specific terms.
✓ Use who, whom, whoever, or whomever to refer to people.

HANDY TIP: he/she = who, him/her = whom

DO THIS: Please find the person who won the lottery.
NOT THIS: Please find the person that won the lottery.

“The correct use of ‘whom’ is easier than you think. When it is right, it is sublime. When it is wrong, it blocks your passage” (Norris 2015, 91).

Use who to replace a subject and whom to replace an object of a sentence.

HANDY TIP: Remember “I love you”; I is the subject, you are the object. The subject is the doer; the object is the receiver.

DO THIS: The person to whom you wrote the letter never responded.
NOT THIS: The person who you wrote the letter to never responded.

✓ Use the pronoun that to introduce essential information.

DO THIS: The company that signed the agreement is based in Chicago.
DO THIS: The company, which signed the agreement, is based in Chicago.
NOT THIS: The company, that signed the agreement, is based in Chicago.

✓ Use a set of commas and the pronoun which to introduce nonessential information

DO THIS: His new book, which is much funnier than his last one, was released today.
NOT THIS: His new book that is much funnier than his last one was released today.

Personal Pronouns (Third Person): she, he, it, they; her, him, them; Possessive Pronouns (Third Person): his, her, hers, its, their, theirs

I hate to say it, but the colloquial use of “their” when you mean “his or her” is just wrong. It may solve the gender problem, and there is no doubt that it has taken over in the spoken language, but it does so at the expense of number.

—Norris 2015, 69
✓ Ensure personal and possessive pronouns agree with the nouns they are replacing in number.

DO THIS: Congress is at a stalemate; as usual, it can never pass a bill.
DO THIS: Members of Congress are at a stalemate; as usual, they can never pass a bill.

NOT THIS: Congress is at a stalemate; as usual, they can never finalize a bill.
NOT THIS: Members of Congress are at a stalemate; as usual, it can never pass a bill.

✓ If the noun is gender neutral, ensure the pronoun agrees in number.

DO THIS: A Sailor has to remain alert on his or her watch.
DO THIS: A Sailor has to remain alert on his watch.
DO THIS: A Sailor has to remain alert on her watch.
NOT THIS: A Sailor has to remain alert on their watch.

✓ Use gender-neutral pronouns to refer to vessels (i.e., ships and aircraft); consult military style guides for military-specific, non-academic conventions.

✓ Use singular pronouns when referring to an individual organization.

Singular Indefinite Pronouns: anybody, anyone, anything, each, either, everybody, everyone, everything, much, neither, nobody, no one, nothing, one, somebody, someone, something

Plural Indefinite Pronouns: both, few, many, several

Either Singular or Plural Pronouns: all, any, most, none, some

Use an indefinite pronoun to indicate non-specific subjects and objects.

DO THIS: Someone needs to pick up the mail.
DO THIS: Someone needs to pick up his (or her) mail.
NOT THIS: Someone needs to pick up their mail.

DO THIS: Each class has a different midterm schedule.
DO THIS: Each class has its own midterm schedule.
NOT THIS: Each class has their own midterm schedule.

DO THIS: No one knows the answer.
DO THIS: There were two possible definitions. Both were correct.
DO THIS: Though many are capable, few actually vote.
DO THIS: All (the teachers) review class material at midterm.

PREPOSITIONS

Prepositions are the words that show direction, location, or time, or to introduce an object. Prepositions create relationships between nouns (or pronouns) and other words in a sentence. Each preposition falls within a prepositional phrase:

Prepositional phrase construction: Preposition + (modifiers) + Object(s)
Complete List of Prepositions

about               concerning       onto
above               despite          on top of
according to       down             out
across              during           out of
after               except           outside
against             except for       over
along               excepting         past
along with          for              regarding
among               from             round
apart from          in               since
around              in addition to    through
as                  in back of       throughout
as for              in case of       till
at                  in front of       to
because of          in place of      toward
before              inside           under
behind              in spite of      underneath
below               instead of       unlike
beneath             into             until
beside              like             up
between             near             upon
beyond              next             up to
but*                of               with
by                  off              within
by means of         on               without

*but is very seldom a preposition. When it is used as a preposition, it means the same as except.

Prepositions are easily confused because many have nuanced meanings. Use the following tips adapted from www.grammar.net/prepositions to prevent confusion and to promote clarity:

✓ Use at to identify where an object or subject is; use to for other locations.
   DO THIS: Jason works at Disneyland.
   DO THIS: She took a flight to Paris.

✓ Use for to measure periods of time; use since to reference a past event.
   DO THIS: I have lived in Monterey for one year.
   DO THIS: You have eaten lunch by yourself since July.

✓ Use in and for to indicate general measurements; use on and at to indicate specific dates or times.
   DO THIS: I vacation in Yosemite for several days in the fall.
   DO THIS: Harold receives his award on November 5 at the Lincoln Memorial.

✓ Use about and around to estimate quantities (yes, time is a quantity).
   DO THIS: Shannon ate about 20 pieces of licorice today.
   DO THIS: Derek arrived home around 5:00 p.m.

✓ Use in when referring to geographical locations.
DO THIS: I experienced the best hospitality in Bavaria.

✓ Use on when referring to road or street names.
   DO THIS: The worst traffic is on Fremont Street.

Sometimes the presence of a prepositional phrase tricks writers into mismatching their subjects and verbs. Problems with subject-verb agreement are some of the most common. If you cannot decide which verb to use, try removing the words between the subject and verb.

✓ Ensure your verb agrees with your subject despite the presence of a prepositional phrase.
   DO THIS: Experts in the field explain this phenomenon. (experts…explain)
   NOT THIS: Experts in the field explains this phenomenon. (experts…explains)

✓ Ensure subject–verb agreement in the presence of a non-count or collective noun.
   DO THIS: Literature about civil–military relations has been expanding. (literature…has)
   DO THIS: Faculty from the business and engineering schools have coordinated their efforts. (Faculty in this case refers to two groups of faculty, thus it is plural in meaning.)
   NOT THIS: Faculty from the business and engineering schools has coordinated its efforts.
STYLE AND CLARITY

VERB TENSE

Passages that shift dramatically in verb tense can be jarring for readers. Follow these simple guidelines to improve the flow of your papers. Use past or present tense (not future) to describe the methods and data of your completed experiment (and text within your thesis). Text that reads: “Chapter IV will describe” is incorrect; Chapter IV has already been written, or will be by the time the paper is published.

SIMPLE PRESENT TENSE

The simple present tense is the basic tense of most academic writing. Specifically, the present simple is used

✓ To “frame” your paper: In your introduction, the present simple tense describes what we already know about the topic. In the conclusion, it says what we now know about the topic and what further research is still needed.

✓ To make general statements, conclusions, or interpretations about previous research or data, focusing on what is known now; in the present.

DO THIS: The data suggests…

DO THIS: The research shows…

NOT THIS: The data suggested…

✓ To cite a previous study or finding without mentioning the researcher.

DO THIS: Tomatoes grown in the Salinas Valley taste better on bacon cheeseburgers than tomatoes grown in the Napa Valley (Agricultural Factoids 2015, 5).

✓ To introduce evidence or support in the structure.

DO THIS: There is evidence that…

✓ Use the simple present tense to describe contemporary events or perpetual action

DO THIS: Tension in Middle East continues.

✓ Use the simple past tense for specific findings or data.

SIMPLE PAST TENSE

✓ When referencing a specific study that supports your research, use the simple past tense to introduce those results.

✓ Use the simple past tense to describe a specific or definite past action.

DO THIS: Each incumbent received the report.

NOT THIS: Each incumbent receives the report.

DO THIS: Dr. Heuberger’s study on obesity inspired her team to eat more carrots.

NOT THIS: Dr. Heuberger’s study on obesity inspires her team to eat more carrots.

DO THIS: The collaborative effort between the Monterey Bay Aquarium and Stanford University led to the Tuna Research and Conservation Center.
PRESENT PERFECT TENSE

The present perfect tense is mostly used for referring to previous research in the field or to your own previous findings. Since the present perfect is a present tense, it implies that the result is still true and relevant today.

✔ Use the present perfect to describe an indefinite past action or one that is ongoing.

DO THIS: Subsequent to the accident, industry leaders have attempted to make changes.

NOT THIS: Subsequent to the accident, industry leaders attempted to make changes.

DO THIS: Since the end of the Cold War, Western nations have focused on nuclear disarmament.

NOT THIS: Since the end of the Cold War, Western nations focused on nuclear disarmament.

MODIFIERS

Modifiers—either words or phrases—should provide more information about a subject or object within a sentence. A dangling modifier—usually in the form of an introductory element—implies but does not name the subject or the object. Here are a few tips for revising these pesky phrases:

✔ Turn the introductory element into a subordinating clause or a prepositional phrase.

DO THIS: As the inspectors toured the facility, the damage became apparent.

NOT THIS: Touring the facility, the damage became apparent.

✔ Revise the passive construction in the main clause to an active construction.

DO THIS: To recognize this problem early, scientists have studied corrosion.

NOT THIS: To recognize this problem early, corrosion has been studied.

DO THIS: After scrutinizing the problem, the inspectors think that corrosion is the culprit.

NOT THIS: After scrutinizing the problem, corrosion is now thought to have been the culprit.

✔ Ensure that your introductory element has a subject and a verb.

DO THIS: When corrosion is present, inspectors know that it will likely break down infrastructure.

NOT THIS: When present, inspectors know that corrosion is likely to result in infrastructure breaking down.

PARALLEL SENTENCE STRUCTURE

If you think of parallel sentence structure in terms of geometry, you are bound to get confused. Instead, think of parallelism in writing as setting a pattern and sticking with it, either within sentences, paragraphs, or the entire body of a paper.

✔ Ensure bulleted and numbered lists follow parallel sentence structure.

DO THIS: The hiring process entails

1. interviewing applicants
2. weighing the strengths of each applicant
3. selecting the best applicant for the position
✓ Achieve parallelism in a sentence containing a list of words or phrases beginning with the same part of speech; make sure to include the serial comma.

**DO THIS:** running, biking, and jumping
**DO THIS:** the hospital, the conservatory, or the museum
**DO THIS:** intelligent, creative, and resourceful
**NOT THIS:** highly motivated, management, team player

✓ Achieve parallelism by ensuring list items follow from the same verb.

**DO THIS:** Daniel’s main concerns included receiving his paycheck on time, getting along with his co-workers, and earning a promotion within the year.
**NOT THIS:** Daniel’s main concerns included receiving his paycheck on time, getting along with his co-workers, and his boss.
**DO THIS:** The author illustrated the reasons behind climate change, the impact climate change will have on our future, and the steps companies can take to reduce their carbon footprints.
**NOT THIS:** The author illustrated the reasons behind climate change, changing our habits, and that companies contribute to the problem.

**Correlative Conjunctions: both … and, between … and, either … or, neither … nor, not only … but also, as … as, not … but**

Correlative conjunctions stress equality and balance and thus emphasize the relation between elements, even long phrases and clauses. The elements should be parallel to conform their relation.

✓ The coordinating conjunctions *and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, and *yet* always signal a need for parallelism.

**DO THIS:** both at bat and at second base
**DO THIS:** the difference between the teachers and the administration
**DO THIS:** Neither the meal nor the dessert arrived promptly.
**DO THIS:** Either the department supervisor or the store manager will have to find employment elsewhere.
**DO THIS:** The foreign publications were impossible both to read and to translate
**NOT THIS:** The foreign publications were both impossible to read and translate.

✓ If the sentence elements linked by coordinating conjunctions are not parallel in structure, the resulting sentence will be awkward and distracting (*The Little, Brown Handbook*).

**DO THIS:** Three reasons why steel companies kept losing money were inefficient plants, high labor costs, and increasing foreign competition.
**NOT THIS:** Three reasons why steel companies kept losing money were that their plants were inefficient, high labor costs, and foreign competition was increasing.
HANDY URLS/RESOURCES

DKL—many handouts in GWC area
Graduate Writing Center: https://my.nps.edu/web/gwc
Grammar Girl, Quick and Dirty Tips: http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/grammar-girl
Purdue Online Writing Lab: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/
Thesis Processing: http://my.nps.edu/web/thesisprocessing
Top 20 Grammar Errors: http://wac.gsu.edu/49577.html
BIBLIOGRAPHY


