

# ***BAC 101 Writing Resources***

## ***Parts of Speech***

In the following sentences, identify nouns (N), verbs (V), pronouns (P), adjectives (AJ), and adverbs (AV).

1. My college offers special courses for adult learners.
2. The professors have taught their adult learners for many years.
3. The student usually arrives in class early.
4. The college provides study areas for them.
5. The library frequently is open until midnight.

## ***All About Adjectives***

Adjectives jazz up writing by providing vivid descriptions. See how many adjectives you can come up with to modify the nouns in the sentence below. Try to include at least 20 adjectives per blank. As you are thinking of adjectives, pay attention to how different descriptors will change the meaning of the sentence.

The \_\_\_\_\_ man walked his \_\_\_\_\_ dog through the \_\_\_\_\_ park.

**All About Adverbs**

Adverbs modify adjectives, verbs, and other adverbs and also make your writing colorful, snazzy and interesting. See how many adverbs you can come up with to modify the nouns in the sentence below. Try to include at least 20 per blank.

Sandra \_\_\_\_\_ opened the front door and \_\_\_\_\_ walked into the room.

**Beyond the Basics**

Out of habit, we often use the same word to describe something and our writing gets boring and monotonous. Brainstorm alternatives for these boring words that don't belong in a college paper.

Nice	A lot	Great	Said
Big	Got	Angry	Bad

**Noun – Pronoun Agreement**

A pronoun can replace a noun or another pronoun. You use pronouns like “he,” “which,” “none,” and “you” to make your sentences less cumbersome and less repetitive. Be sure to use the correct pronoun so your reader clearly understands which noun your pronoun is referring to.

Visit the OWL for more information: [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g\\_pronuse.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_pronuse.html)

In the sentences below, choose the correct answer from the words in parentheses.

1. Before (his/her, their) 9:00 class, Sally and Doug each decided to buy (his/her, their) coffee at the student center.
2. Taking (his/her, their) time, they noticed how everyone has (his/her, their) favorite flavor of coffee.
3. While still in line, both realized it was two minutes before they had to be across campus for (his/her, their class).
4. After paying for (his/her, their) coffee, the students rushed out of the Student Center.
5. Each student knew (he/she, they) should not be tardy.
6. As they hurried through the exit, each cast a quick look around (his/her, their) lab partner.
7. They knew that if they arrived late to class everyone else would already be in (his/her, their) seat.
8. Being careful not to spill (his/her, their) coffee, they ran to class.

## ***Hop on the Comma Cluebus***

Commas are correctly used for six main reasons. When writing, make sure there is a reason for every instance in which you use a comma. Don't go comma crazy like some students, but don't neglect to use commas where they are needed.

Visit the OWL for more information.

[http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g\\_comma.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_comma.html)

**1. Commas are needed before a coordinating conjunction linking independent clauses.**

She followed her own dream, and she played her own tune.

**2. Commas are necessary after an introductory clause, phrase or word.**

When Kay graduated, her co-workers gave her a party.

**3. Commas separate items in a series.**

The wind covered the prairie with hot, gritty, choking dust.

**4. Commas are use on both sides of words that interrupt the flow of thought in a sentence.**

The car, cleaned and repaired, is ready to be sold.

**5. Commas set off a direct quotation from the rest of the sentence.**

"Those who sling mud," he said, "usually lose ground."

**6. Commas also are used in these situations.**

1, 500 hours of typing can kill a person.

January 15, 1876

Cleary University is located in Howell, Michigan.

Dear Tom,

Sincerely,

Place needed commas and remove unneeded commas in the selection below.

Sitting Bull the great Sioux chief was born about 1830. From the stories of the tribal elders he learned that a Sioux must be brave strong generous and wise. He also learned that a Sioux, had to earn his adult name.

When he was fourteen he earned the name Sitting Bull. Armed with only a coup stick a long wooden poke he rode into battle against the Crow Indians. He was the first Sioux to touch a Crow with his coup stick. This act was considered as brave as killing an enemy. After that battle his father gave him his adult name a bow arrow spear and other weapons.

When he was thirty-five years old Sitting Bull became the chief of the Hunkpapa Sioux. He led, his people, across the Great Plains. He saw greedy men taking away Indian Land ruining Indian holy places and destroying the buffalo.

The destruction of the buffalo was disastrous for the Sioux. The Sioux used every part of the buffalo "the giver of life." They made leather clothes from the hide they ate the meat and they used the tendons for bow strings. In fact they even used buffalo droppings for fuel. Without the buffalo the Sioux could barely survive. They had to fight to protect their land and their "giver of life."

On June 25 1876 the Sioux fought their famous battle against General George Custer and his army. In less than half an hour Custer and all his men had been killed. This battle became known as "Custer's Last Stand." It also was the Sioux Indian's last stand against the United States cavalry. Despite their great victory most of the Sioux were forced to settle on reservations. Killed December 15 1890 Sitting Bull is still remembered for his leadership for his courage and for his wisdom.

## **Possessives**

The possessive case of a noun or pronoun indicates ownerships or association between the noun or pronoun and the word it modifies. To form the possessive case, either add an apostrophe and s or just an apostrophe.

Visit the Owl for more information.

[http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g\\_apost.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_apost.html)

Correct each sentence to make a noun possessive.

1. The students performance on the last test disappointed our professor.
2. The lecturers discussion of Hamlet was confusing for many of the students.
3. We came away from the lecture not fully understanding the plays theme.
4. Hamlets behavior in the play is difficult to explain.
5. We wondered about Shakespeares intentions in writing the play.
6. The lecturer did explain some modern interpretations of Hamlets behavior.
7. That part of the lecturers presentation was interesting.
8. Yet the tests focus was not on those interpretations.
9. Instead, we were asked to write a paragraph on each characters role in the play.
10. Each characters significance was not a part of the lecturers presentation.

## ***Active and Passive Voice***

Using the active voice in your writing will make it more interesting. Usually, in this style, the noun comes before the verb. The subject of the sentence performs the action expressed in the verb; the subject acts.

Visit the Owl for more information.

[http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g\\_actpass.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_actpass.html)

**Active:** The dog bit the boy

**Passive:** The boy was bitten by the dog.

Identify sentences written in the passive voice and change them to the active voice. You may need to invent subjects for the sentence.

1. The material was presented in a confusing manner.
2. Our professor was late to class yesterday.
3. A delay was experienced on the expressway.
4. The expressway was designed before the city grew to its present size.
5. The road frequently becomes clogged during rush hour.
6. Although the professor came a few minutes late, the topic for the day was covered.
7. Students were told what would be covered on the next test.
8. Students were informed about their grades.
9. Some students were surprised at their current ranking
10. All of us were told that reviewing class notes will be important for the test.

## ***Run, Sentence Run!***

A run-on sentence consists of two independent clauses joined together without punctuation. For instance, *They fell in love so fast they got married six days after they met on the cruise to Tunisia* is a run-on sentence.

There are a few ways to correct a run-on sentence:

- Insert a period between two independent clauses. It is better to have two short sentences than one run-on. For example: *They fell in love fast. They got married six days after they met on the cruise to Tunisia.*
- Separate the independent clauses by adding a conjunction (and, but, or, , not, for, yet, so) and a comma: *They fell in love, fast, so they got married six days after they met on the cruise to Tunisia.*
- Insert a semicolon between the two independent clauses: *They fell in love fast; they got married six days after they met on the cruise to Tunisia.*

## ***Fragments***

Fragments are incomplete sentences. Usually, fragments are pieces of sentences that have become disconnected from the main clause. One of the easiest ways to correct them is to remove the period between the fragment and the main clause. Other kinds of punctuation may be needed for the newly combined sentence.

For more information. [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g\\_frag.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_frag.html)

*Fragment:* The current city policy on housing is incomplete as it stands. Which is why we believe the proposed amendments should be passed.

*Revision:* **Because** the current city policy on housing is incomplete as it stands, we believe the proposed amendments should be passed.

*Fragment:* Cleary University offers many majors in business. Such as marketing, business administration, and health care management.

*Revision:* Cleary University offers many majors in business, **such as** marketing, business administration, and health care management.

## ***Transition Words and Phrases***

Transition words and phrases help establish clear connections between ideas and ensure that sentences and paragraphs flow together smoothly, making them easier to read. Use the following words and phrases in the following circumstances.

### **To indicate more information:**

Besides  
 Furthermore  
 In addition  
 Indeed  
 In fact  
 Moreover  
 Second, ... Third, ... etc.

### **To indicate an example:**

For example  
 For instance  
 In particular  
 Particularly  
 Specifically  
 To demonstrate  
 To illustrate

### **To indicate a cause or reason:**

As  
 Because  
 Because of  
 Due to  
 For  
 For the reason that  
 Since

### **To indicate a result or an effect:**

Accordingly  
 Finally  
 Consequently  
 Hence  
 So  
 Therefore  
 Thus

### **To indicate a purpose or reason:**

why:  
 For fear that  
 In the hope that  
 In order to  
 So  
 So that  
 With this in mind

### **To compare or contrast:**

Although  
 However  
 In comparison  
 In contrast  
 Likewise  
 Nevertheless  
 On the other hand  
 Similarly  
 Whereas

### **To indicate a particular time frame or a shift from one time period to another:**

After  
 Before  
 Currently  
 Doing  
 Eventually  
 Finally  
 First, .... Second, ... Etc.  
 Formerly  
 Immediately

Initially  
 Lastly  
 Later  
 Meanwhile  
 Next  
 Previously  
 Simultaneously  
 Soon  
 Subsequently

### **To Summarize:**

Briefly  
 In brief  
 Overall  
 Summing up  
 To put it briefly  
 To sum up  
 To summarize

### **To Conclude:**

Given these facts  
 Hence  
 In conclusion  
 So  
 Therefore  
 Thus  
 To conclude

**Commonly Misused Words**

<b>Words</b>	<b>Sample Sentence</b>
Accept/Except	I didn't accept his gifts, except for the Kevin Smith doll.
Advise/Advice	I advise you to take my advice.
Affect/Effect	Widespread information about the effects of smoking on health has not affected the behavior of some people who suffer from the habit. <i>Hint: "affect" is a verb; "effect" is usually a noun (but not always, for example "effected a change" means "brought about a change.")</i>
All ready/Already	I was finally all ready, but my friends had left for the mall already.
All right/alright	My answers were not all right, so I didn't feel alright about my grade on the test.
All together/ Altogether	Is it altogether out of the question that we could sing this song all together?
Anyone/ Any one	Does anyone know any one of those songs?
Any way/ anyway	There wasn't any way I could pass the test, but I took it anyway.
Conscious/ Conscience	I am conscious of the fact that I completely ignored my conscience when I lied to my eight-year-old cousin.
Farther/Further	When Joan moved farther away from her family, her relationship with her mother further declined. <i>Hint: "farther" designates distance; "further" designates quantity or degree</i>
Good/ Well	Neil, who is well known for his good deeds, is well respected by his friends and his enemies. <i>Hint: "good" is an adjective; "well" is an adverb</i>
Idea/Ideal	The ideal student is one who has ideas.
Its/It's	Once it is spotted by tourists, it's too late for the giant snapping turtle to pull its legs into its shell. <i>Hint: "its" is the possessive form of "it"; "it's" is a contraction for "it is."</i>
Lay/Lie	Lay the blanket on the sand and lie down on it. <i>Hint: "lay" has an object; "lie" does not</i>
Lead/Led	I have been led to believe that I am allergic to lead.
Less/Fewer	My dad has less hair than he had when I was born 20 years ago. Because he has less hair, he has fewer hairs.
Our/Are	Our computers are broken.
Past/Passed	Over the past two weeks, I have passed all of my tests.
Precede/Proceed	After he finished tying his shoe, Jim proceeded with his run, slowing down when he got to the end so that his best friend could precede him across the finish line. <i>Hint: "proceed" means to move forward after stopping; "precede" means to go before in rank or importance</i>
Than/Then	Then, my little brother realized that he is taller than I am. <i>Hint: "then" means after; "than" is used for comparisons.</i>
Their/There/They're	They're going to put their books over there on the bookcase.
To/Too/Two	The two of us are going to the mall, too.
We're/Were/Where	We were going to the mall, but now we're going to stop by the grocery store first. Where are you going?

## Capstone Writing Resources

What is a capstone paper? The capstone paper is an academic writing assignment that requires a more abstract, critical, and thoughtful level of inquiry than you might be used to. The more you write, the more comfortable you will become in putting together your capstone.

Below are some helpful hints to get started on writing your capstone:

### **Thought Starters**

(Courtesy of the Purdue OWL: [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl\\_plan3.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_plan3.html))

As a writer, you can begin by asking yourself questions and then answering them. Your answers will bring your subject into focus and provide you with the material to develop your topic. Here are twenty questions or “thought starters” that present ways of observing or thinking about your topic. Each question generates the type of essay listed in parentheses after the question.

1. What does X mean? (Definition)
2. What are the various features of X? (Description)
3. What are the component parts of X? (Simple Analysis)
4. How is X made or done? (Process Analysis)
5. How should X be made or done? (Directional Analysis)
6. What is the essential function of X? (Functional Analysis)
7. What are the causes of X? (Causal Analysis)
8. What are the consequences of X? (Causal Analysis)
9. What are the types of X? (Classification)
10. How is X like or unlike Y? (Comparison)
11. What is the present status of X? (Comparison)
12. What is the significance of X? (Interpretation)
13. What are the facts about X? (Reportage)
14. How did X happen? (Narration)
15. What kind of person is X? (Characterization/Profile)
16. What is my personal response to X? (Reflection)
17. What is my memory of X? (Reminiscence)
18. What is the value of X? (Evaluation)
19. What are the essential major points or features of X? (Summary)
20. What case can be made for or against X? (Persuasion)

*(Adapted from Jacqueline Berke's Twenty Questions for the Writer)*

## Developing a Thesis Statement

Writing a thesis statement is a process that involves critical thinking about your topic and responding thoughtfully to your assignment.

### A Thesis Statement ...

- Makes an argumentative assertion about a topic; it states the conclusions that you have reached about your topic.
- Makes a promise to the reader about the scope, purpose, and direction of your paper.
- Is focused and specific enough to be “proven” within the boundaries of your paper.
- Is generally located near the end of the introduction; sometimes, in a long paper, the thesis will be expressed in several sentences or in an entire paragraph.
- Identifies the relationships between the pieces of evidence that you are using to support your argument.

### What Goes into a Thesis Statement?

Here are some general rules to keep in mind.

- A thesis statement is a complete sentence that contains both the subject of the essay and the writer’s *opinion* about that subject.
- A thesis statement is framed as a *statement*, not a question.
- A thesis statement should be broad enough to cover the material and narrow enough to be adequately supported within the paper.
- A thesis statement should be expressed precisely.
- A thesis statement should be reasonable; it should not insult the reader.

### Examples of Unacceptable vs. Acceptable Thesis Statements

Unacceptable: When will we find a cure for HIV and AIDS?

Acceptable: While it may seem the media has forgotten about them, HIV and AIDS remain serious health risks.

Unacceptable: The history of the study of genetics has changed the world.

Acceptable: Scientists in the United States should be unafraid to explore the next great scientific frontier, stem-cell research.

Unacceptable: All diets are ridiculous because hardly anyone has any will-power anyway.

Acceptable: Despite the popularity of high-protein, low-carbohydrate diets, the healthiest approach to eating consists of a low-fat, high-carbohydrate diet.

## Organizing your Capstone Paper

There are many ways to set up, or organize a capstone paper. It is important to present evidence or information in a way that will help readers to understand and follow your logic.

Consider these ways to order your evidence:

- Chronological order
- Order of importance
- Quality-by-quality order (discuss one quality of an idea or subject and then move on to the next quality - each item is equally important)
- Cause-and-effect order
- Compare and contrast

How would you organize the following pieces of writing?

- An essay about the mood of a painting
- A manual called "How to be a Model Student"
- An essay comparing cars in 1950 to cars today
- A capstone paper about the different databases Cleary offers

### Your Student Outline

Outlines help students to organize their thoughts and arrange the elements of an argument. Use the outline form below to plan out an argumentative essay about why you should be voted Cleary's Student of the Year!

Thesis Statement: \_\_\_\_\_

Main Point of the first body paragraph: \_\_\_\_\_

Supporting details: \_\_\_\_\_

Main Point of the second body paragraph: \_\_\_\_\_

Supporting details: \_\_\_\_\_

Main Point of the third body paragraph: \_\_\_\_\_

Supporting details: \_\_\_\_\_

Conclusion: \_\_\_\_\_

## Outline Worksheet

Remember each topic sentence must clearly support your thesis.  
Think carefully about the purpose of each paragraph.

*Thesis Statement:* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Introductory Paragraph:*  
Start with an interesting fact, quote, or statistic to catch your reader's attention.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*First Body Paragraph:*  
Topic Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Supporting Information:*  
One Example/Quote: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Source: \_\_\_\_\_  
Explanation of quote in your own words and how it supports your thesis:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Second Body Paragraph:*  
Topic Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Supporting Information:*  
One Example/Quote: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Source: \_\_\_\_\_  
Explanation of quote in your own words and how it supports your thesis:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Third Body Paragraph:*

Topic Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Supporting Information:*

One Example/Quote: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Source: \_\_\_\_\_

Explanation of quote in your own words and how it supports your thesis:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Continue this process with outlining for each main thought or component of your capstone thesis*

*Conclusion:*

Restatement of Thesis: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Evidence of Critical Thinking: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Interesting Thought on which to End: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## ***Writing the Capstone***

### *Introduction*

Introductions are important. They arouse a reader's interest, introduce the subject, and in short, they are your paper's "first impression." But you don't have to write them first. In fact, many students prefer launching right into the body of the essay before they tackle intros and conclusions. However, other students prefer writing the introduction first to help "set up" what's to follow.

Whatever your style, you'll probably put your thesis statement at the end of the paragraph and some important background information directly before. But that still leaves the very beginning. Contrary to what you may have been taught, intros don't have to begin with a "general statement." So what are some different ways to start that first sentence?

- Begin with a quotation. Just make sure you explain its relevance.
- Begin with a question.
- Begin with an acknowledgment of an opinion opposite to the one you plan to take.
- Begin with a very short narrative or anecdote that has a direct bearing on your paper.
- Begin with an interesting fact or startling statistic.
- Begin with a definition or explanation of a term relevant to your paper.
- Begin with irony or paradox.
- Begin with an analogy – comparison of two pairs which have the same relationship. Make sure it's original but not too far-fetched.

Choose one of the techniques listed above. Then, write an introduction paragraph for your capstone paper. Note - Introductions are usually the final thing written on a capstone.

### *Body*

The body paragraphs are perhaps the most important pieces of your paper. Essentially without them, your thesis statement is meaningless and your research remains an unanswered question. Remember each paragraph is a unit of organization and development.

A body paragraph begins with a topic sentence that gives focus to the entire paragraph and relates to the point that you are trying to make in your outline. Every paragraph should contain five to seven sentences.

The number of paragraphs in the body of your capstone depends entirely on the length of your paper and the complexity of each subtopic. Be sure to indent the beginning of each paper and make sure that your paragraphs are not too long.

The best way to think about the body of your capstone is to equate it to someone strolling through a hilly terrain. At the hill peaks, you introduce your readers to the "bigger picture" with more general, abstract words. You then descend the hill from these heights of generality to the examples down in the valley. It is here that you can explain in concrete terms what you mean by your lofty claims and back them up with examples, statistics or quotes. Eventually, you may your way back up again and start back over. The body of your capstone should flow: up and down and up again.

Be sure to use adequate development in each paragraph - fulfill what you promised in your topic sentence. Give your readers enough "meat to chew on" about the topic. For instance, if you say you are going to discuss several unusual items found in drugstores, then discuss several.

Methods to make sure your paragraph is well-developed:

- Use examples and illustrations
- Cite data (facts, statistics, evidence, details, and others)
- Examine testimony (what other people say such as quotes and paraphrases)
- Use an anecdote or story
- Define terms in the paragraph
- Compare and contrast
- Evaluate causes and reasons
- Examine effects and consequences
- Analyze the topic
- Describe the topic
- Offer a chronology of an event (time segments)

Please note, as you write and edit your paper, you will discover if each paragraph is fully developed. Try reading the paper out loud, slowly to yourself. Give yourself a chance to breathe and think about the paragraphs and see if they make sense.

### *Conclusion*

Every capstone paper needs a conclusion. The final paragraph is your chance to use language, imagery, and ideas to leave a lasting impression on your readers. It is also a time to display your critical thinking. Your conclusion should do more than simply restate your thesis, instead use your conclusion to:

- Cite a quotation and interpret that quotation within the context of your argument.
- Apply your argument to a related topic.
- Discuss how your idea reaches beyond the scope of the topic or matters in some larger context.
- Ask a question of your readers, or urge them to take action.

Choose one of the techniques listed above. Then, write a concluding paragraph for your capstone paper.

## References

As part of your Capstone, you will need to cite references for your paper. Using what you have learned so far and handouts from class, put the following entries into APA form. Don't forget to alphabetize!

Visit this site for color coordinated help!

<http://www.liu.edu/CWIS/CWP/library/workshop/citapa.htm>

1). Art and the Creative Unconscious

By: Erich Newumann Translated by Ralph Manheim

Harper Torchbook, Published in New York in 1966.

2). Jacques Barzun's The Use and abuse of art, published by Princeton University Press, located in Princeton, New Jersey in 1975

3). The Sense of Sight by John Berger New York. Publisher- Vintage 1985

4). Another book by John Berger, The Success and Failure of Picasso, published by Pantheon, in New York in 1989.

5). An online article written by Mark Bernstein in 2002. 10 Tips on writing the living Web. A list apart: For People who make websites, 149. Retrieved 5/2/2006 from <http://www.alistapart.com/articles/writeliving>

6) Online journal article from Proquest, a proprietary database written by Siobhan Leftwich in May, 2006. Are you a Procrastinator? Black Enterprise, Volume 36, Issue 10. Page 122. Retrieved on July 16, 2007. Id # 1024319191

**Capstone Revision Checklist**

- Do I start the paper with an attention-grabbing introductory statement?
- Does my paper include a thesis statement at the end of the first paragraph?
- Did I credit sources properly?
- Is every source listed on the Reference page?
- Did I paraphrase sufficiently?
- Is the spelling, punctuation, and grammar correct?
- Did I avoid using the words, “I” and “You” and write in the third person?
- Do my paragraphs begin with topic sentences?
- Do I make good use of transition sentences?
- Is my language concise?
- Is it evident that I outlined before I wrote this paper?
- Do I end the paper with a strong conclusion that reveals critical thinking?

## Twelve Common Errors: An Editing Checklist



Use this checklist as a list of reminders while you are editing your paper.

**Sentence fragments** -- Make sure each word group you have punctuated as a sentence contains a grammatically complete and independent thought that can stand alone as an acceptable sentence.

**Sentence sprawl** -- Too many equally weighted phrases and clauses produce tiresome sentences.

**Misplaced and dangling modifiers** -- Place modifiers near the words they describe; be sure the modified words actually appear in the sentence. A modifier is a phrase or word meant to describe or explain part of a sentence.

**Faulty parallelism** -- Be sure you use grammatically equal sentence elements to express two or more matching ideas or items in a series.

**Unclear pronoun reference** -- All pronouns must clearly refer to definite referents [nouns]. *Use it, they, this, that, these, those, and which carefully to prevent confusion.*

**Incorrect pronoun case** -- Determine whether the pronoun is being used as a subject, or an object, or a possessive in the sentence, and select the pronoun form to match.

**Omitted commas** -- Use commas to signal nonrestrictive or nonessential material, to prevent confusion, and to indicate relationships among ideas and sentence parts.

**Superfluous commas** -- Unnecessary commas make sentences difficult to read.

**Comma splices** -- Do not link two independent clauses with a comma (unless you also use a coordinating conjunction: and, or, but, for, nor, so, yet). *Instead use a period or semicolon, or rewrite the sentence.*

**Apostrophe errors** -- Apostrophes indicate possession for nouns (“Jim’s hat,” “several years’ work”) but not for personal pronouns (its, your, their, and whose). Apostrophes also indicate omissions in contractions (“it’s” = “it is”). In general, they are not used to indicate plurals.

**Words easily confused** -- “Effect” is most often a noun (the effect), and “affect” is almost always a verb. Other pairs commonly confused: “lead”/“led” and “accept”/“except.” *Check a glossary of usage to find the right choice.*

**Misspellings** -- Spelling errors are usually perceived as a reflection of the writer’s careless attitude toward the whole project. Don’t allow your hard work to be marred in this way! In addition to comprehensive dictionaries, you may want to use electronic spell checks, spelling dictionaries, and lists of frequently misspelled words found in handbooks.

For more information, visit <http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/CommonErrors.html>.

