TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL WRITING

WATCH PRONOUN USAGE.

- Do not use "that" to refer to a person ("that" and "which" should be reserved for inanimate objects. Use "who" or "whom" to refer to a person).
  - Incorrect: He liked people that looked after themselves.
  - Correct: He liked people who looked after themselves.

- Do not use reflexive pronouns in compound subjects (1) or as direct or indirect objects (2).
  - Incorrect: John and myself will do the work tomorrow.
  - Correct: John and I will do the work tomorrow.
  - Incorrect: He gave it to John and myself.
  - Correct: He gave it to John and me.

- Do not use nominative forms of pronouns (1, he, she, we, they) as direct objects or objects of prepositions.
  - Incorrect: He talked to Peter and I.
  - Correct: He talked to Peter and me.

- Avoid pronoun disagreement.
  - If anyone protested, they were shot.
  - If anyone protested, he (or she) was shot.

Rule: Indefinite pronouns (anybody, somebody, someone, nobody) are singular and therefore should be followed by a singular pronoun. To avoid sexism, use the plural: All who protested were shot.

- Do not use objective pronoun forms (such as me, him, her) as the subject of a verb.
  - Incorrect: He talked the same way as me.
  - Correct: He talked the same way as I do.

- Do not confuse possessive pronoun forms (which generally do not require apostrophes - e.g. ours, its, yours, theirs) with contractions (you're, they're, it's) and in formal papers avoid the use of all contractions (can't, won't, didn't, etc.).

- Use possessive pronoun forms (my, your, his, her, their) before gerunds (an -ing form used as a noun) instead of the objective.
  - Incorrect: He did not like me doing it.
  - Correct: He did not like my doing it.

DO NOT USE SENTENCE FRAGMENTS (SENTENCES IN WHICH SUBJECTS OR VERBS ARE OMITTED OR WHICH DO NOT EXPRESS COMPLETE THOUGHTS).

- Incorrect: Also in one of her moments of trying to be a better queen.
- Correct: It occurred during one of her moments of trying to be a better queen. [verb added]

AVOID REDUNDANCY (RESTORE … BACK, REVERT … BACK, DESCEND … DOWN, THE REASON WHY … IS BECAUSE).
• Incorrect: He restored the table back to its original condition.
  o Correct: He restored the table to its original condition.

**DO NOT PERSONIFY INANIMATE OBJECTS.**

• Incorrect: The story discusses how Phoenix made the long walk for her grandson.
  o Correct: The author tells us that Phoenix made the long walk for her grandson.

**DO NOT USE “WHERE” IN PLACE OF “WHICH”**.

• Incorrect: The doctors performed an operation where bleeding was employed.
  o Correct: The doctors performed an operation in which bleeding was employed.

**USE “THIS” OR “THAT” TO REFER TO AN IDEA, NOT “WHICH” (WHICH REFERS TO A SINGLE WORD).**

• Incorrect: Many teenagers are committing suicide, which shocks the nation.
  o Correct: Many teenagers are committing suicide; this shocks the nation.

**AVOID “IS … WHEN” AND “IS … BECAUSE” CONSTRUCTION.**

• Incorrect: The reason we do not do it is because we may be caught.
  o Correct: We do not do it because we may be caught.

**USE SEMICOLONS CORRECTLY; AS A GENERAL RULE THEY ARE PRECEDED AND FOLLOWED BY A COMPLET E SENTENCE.**

• Incorrect: The dogs ran together; one black and one tan.
  o Correct: The dogs ran together; one was black, and one was tan. [verbs added]

**DO NOT CONFUSE THE USE OF:**

- **accept** (to receive) and **except** (to exclude)
  • Incorrect: He excepted the book from Gary.
  o Correct: He accepted the book from Gary.

- **affect** (a verb) and **effect** (usually a noun)
  • Incorrect: Love had an important affect on their relationship.
  o Correct: Love had an important effect on their relationship.

  • Incorrect: Their relationship affected her adversely.
  o Correct: Their relationship affected her adversely.

- **good** (an adjective) and **well** (an adverb)
  • Incorrect: He did good on his test.
  o Correct: He did well on his test.
• **lay** (a transitive verb which takes an object) and **lie** (an intransitive verb which has no object)
  o Incorrect: *I want to lay down.*
  o Correct: *I want to lie down.*
  o Incorrect: *I tried to lie it down.*
  o Correct: *I tried to lay it down.*

• **fewer** (use for number) and **less** (use for quantity)
  o Incorrect: *Less casualties resulted than had been expected.*
  o Correct: *Fewer casualties resulted than had been expected.*
  o Correct: *There is less water in the basement now than yesterday.*

• **it’s** (a contraction) and **its** (a possessive pronoun)
  o Incorrect: *He was unsure of it’s(its) outcome.*
  o Correct: *Its (It’s) what he wanted to do.*

**Avoid the double negatives.**
  o Incorrect: *He could not hardly do his work.*
  o Correct: *He could hardly do his work.*
  o Incorrect: *Nobody knew nothing about Hinduism.*
  o Correct: *Nobody knew anything about Hinduism.*

**Do not use misplaced or faulty modifiers.**
  o Incorrect: *A group of unruly boys ruined our meeting from a nearby high school.*
  o Correct: *A group of unruly boys from a nearby high school ruined our meeting.*
  o Incorrect: *To sell antiques, knowledge of their history is an asset.*
  o Correct: *To sell antiques, one should have a knowledge of their history.*

**Be sure that verbs and subjects agree in number.**
  o Incorrect: *The color of the wagons were red.*
  o Correct: *The color of the wagons was red.*

**Avoid comma splices** (two complete sentences joined only by a comma). **Use a period, semicolon, or a comma with a coordinating conjunction.**
  o Incorrect: *Eleven states comprised the Southern Confederacy, North Carolina supplied more troops than any other Southern state.*
  o Correct: *Eleven states comprised the Southern Confederacy; North Carolina supplied more troops than any other Southern state.*

**Use parallel terms when listing.**
  o Incorrect: *He likes to run, swimming, and hiking.*
  o Correct: *He likes to run, swim, and hike.*
  o Correct: *He likes running, swimming, and hiking.*

**Avoid split infinitives.**
o Incorrect:  He wanted to quickly finish his homework.
 o Correct:  He wanted to finish his homework quickly.

**USE APOSTROPHES CORRECTLY.**
 o Singular possessive:  It was Charles’ book.
 o Plural possessive:  I saw the Joneses’ house.

**AVOID USING PAST TENSE OF VERBS WITH HELPING VERBS; USE INSTEAD THE CORRECT PAST PARTICIPLE.**
 o Incorrect:  If I had went earlier, I would have seen the accident.
 o Correct:  If I had gone earlier, I would have seen the accident.

**USE “AN” BEFORE WORDS BEGINNING WITH A VOWEL OR A VOWEL SOUND.**
 o Incorrect:  I’ll wait a hour for you.
 o Correct:  I’ll wait an hour for you.

 o Avoid the use of abbreviations [such as “thru” for “through”, the names of states, and the United States unless used as an adjective (i.e. U.S. soldiers)]

**WORDS OR PHRASES TO BE AVOIDED**
- Irregardless (There is no such word)
- I feel (substitute “I think” instead)
- Enthused (as a substitute for enthusiastic)
  o He was enthused(enthusiastic) about the new job.
- Hopefully (literally means “with hope” and should be used as an adverb)
  o Incorrect:  Hopefully, they would be married soon.
  o Correct:  They awaited hopefully their approaching marriage.
- The reason being (use “because” instead)

**AVOID THESE COMMON MISSPELLINGS:**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incorrect</th>
<th>Correct</th>
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<tbody>
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