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<div align="center">A New Challenger Has Appeared: Grammar</div>

A series of portraits lines the screen, the faces contained within them stuck in a war cry. Each character is different, and their fighting styles are as varied as their looks. The boxer stands ready with gloves up; the ninja prepares to draw his blade; the wrestler holds his belt high above his shaved head. So many characters, all with their unique strengths and weaknesses. It's up to the player to decide on one, for there won't be any redoes in this tournament. To make a calculated, intelligent decision the player must know their choice inside out. They need to know the fighting style, the rhythm of the attacks, the time of the animations, and the adaptability of the character inside the arena. This player, preparing for the tournament on the hardest difficulty is no different than a determined writer. The writer must carefully choose their style depending on their circumstance, and they must know how to use the diction that goes with the style they've decided upon. Because their task is one of multiple layers and considerations, they must be comfortable with all the rules of writing to succeed, just as the player of the game must know his character in every way.

The gamer chooses his fighter—a chef trained in Jeet Kune Do—and readies himself for the first fight. His voice has been chosen, now he must be able to adapt that voice to fit the needs of the ever-changing battleground. The chef is a quick and nimble combatant, and though his profession is only for story purposes, it helps define his character. The writer has also chosen his

subject matter and now must focus on how to make his work successful. How can he "win" and impress his readers? Though the task is a challenge, proper usage of the grammatical and rhetorical systems available to him will carry him to a win. He begins the paper with a simple sentence; he doesn't want to get fancy yet! The gamer readies his fighter as his opponent's face flashes across the screen. He is facing a master of karate. To feel out his opponent, he decides to use a basic combo to see how the karate player will react.

This combo, while simple and short, has its own structure to it. It begins with moving in range of the target, a simple must for any successful melee attack. Similarly, our writer begins with a capitalized letter to begin the sentence. Without it, the sentence would be a disaster and leave him open to heavy criticism, as a missed melee attack leaves our player open to a devastating counterattack. Even the simplest sentence has a subject and a predicate. Together, they form the sentence. Our gamer begins his combo with a few light attacks. Cutting this combo off would counteract its purpose, and it wouldn't be a combo anymore. He finishes the combo with a solid kick to the chest of the foe, sending him reeling backwards. The sentence flows well, just as the series of punches and kicks seem like wind to the foe.

The gamer sees that his opponent is more defensive. He's going to be sniffing around for the perfect opening, the mistake in the fighting process. He knows he must be careful, even against a seemingly easy foe. His set of combos are always the same, but how he uses them is what will set him apart from the competition. His foe stalks around the area looking for a crack in the defense. The gamer knows he should continue his dance to finish the foe off, and the kid gloves come off. After a few simple sentences, our writer decides to follow the same route. He knows who the audience is—he knows that he can utilize all the tools in his bag to dazzle them. He begins typing away, the skills he knows going naturally into use on the paper. His sentences

become longer and more detailed; each sentence begins to encompass multiple subjects or predicates. He notices that some of them look messy though. A distinct lack of conjunctions and semicolons is spotted. The gamer pushes too hard, and is punished. He misses buttons on his controller, the combos don't work. They simply become mashes of random punches and kicks, with nothing to connect them. Nothing it gelling! The writer knows how to fix this: he simply has to use the grammatical rules he knows correctly.

The gamer backs off and quickly refreshes some of the best combos in his mind before unleashing them on his foe. These compound combos have more to them, and more damage goes to the enemy player. Once they're fixed, the writer sees that his compound sentences have more content for the readers and they make it all easier for them to digest. The semicolons create a nice pause allowing the readers to take a break; the semicolon also stresses the words of the sentence better. The fighter uses tactically placed grab (or "throws") attacks to create distance between him and his opponent, allowing him to back away and prepare an even better combo. Some of the fancier grabs even lead into epic animations where his chef spins his opponent around before finishing with a devastating uppercut! Grabs (semicolons) are difficult to use, especially when smaller attacks (or commas) can be used to create distance, but they give the fighter more room to work with their arsenal of other attacks. The writer knows that he can use multiple things for this purpose—dashes for example—but is most comfortable with the simple comma.

The comma goes nearly unnoticed by most readers. An obviously misplaced one will ruin a sentence, but a perfectly placed one will raise the sentence to the next level. The comma can be used for so much and thus it is often overused. The gamer knows that his small linking attacks are incredibly useful for stringing together lists of commands (or attacks), but knows that too

many will make him predictable for the foe. As he defeats the karate master he is already thinking ahead for the next fight. How can he vary his style? What can he do to mix up his attacks enough to adapt to a completely new fighting style?

The writer has moved along his paper quite well so far. He's nearing the midpoint and wonders how he can keep his writing fresh for the readers. He wants to get his ideas across in an understandable way, but he doesn't want to come off as repetitive either. He looks over some of his writing and notes a lack of sentence variety in general. When he reads it aloud, pieces of it come off as dry. He knows a few tricks to alleviate the problem though, and they're simple enough to not be a hassle on him. He really wants some more sentences to pop out for the readers. Deciding that adding too much verbage would only overcomplicate things, the writer sets his eyes on new punctuation. A few simple word changes and the addition of an exclamation point is enough for the readers to spot important or funny details in the lines of text.

The gamer meets the next enemy in the tournament the bodybuilder. The opposing player chose this character because of his devastatingly powerful attacks and high defensive capabilities. Our gamer knows that light attacks won't break this guy's meaty defense so he begins to employ a series of heavier, flashier, and bigger combos. Amongst his regular set of combos, some stick out as big damage dealers. These combos are a surprise for the bodybuilder, and it almost looks like an exclamation point has popped up above his blonde-haired head. These heavy combos aren't more complicated per se; the flashier animations make them stick out from their other command lists. Something as simple as one punctuation mark can change the way a complete sentence is read and taken in. One different button press in a combo can transform the way it is given to the opponent. As with nearly everything in grammar, marks—both exclamatory and inquisitive—must be used sparingly. The writer begins to see his sentences

varying, and the flow changing with these simple yet powerful changes. He has basically given a rhetorical significance to these edited lines, as they stand out as important for the readers. The entire point of his paper is to convey his words to an audience, and all the tricks he's employed have been helping him along. A sentence (or an entire paper) with no intent is basically a waste of time for both the author and the audience. Nothing is gained from meaningless words.

Likewise, the gamer has a goal in mind for his task. He intends to win the tournament and stake his claim as the best player in the lobby. No matter what the gamer is doing in game, whether it be practicing or fighting, he is always doing it for a singular purpose. The writer writes for many reasons. None of it is meaningless. Even the worst writing has its place in the rhetorical arsenal of the author. He can look back to see his own growth; he can look back to see where he still needs improvement.

As he wraps up his paper, he thinks about what he just wrote. His job isn't finished yet! The words have been written, the tournament won, but there is still work to do. How can he do better? Will the readers enjoy his piece? Careful revision is required to ensure that his voice matches the themes he wishes to convey. The gamer looks back at the video of his path to the tournament crown. He sees spots that should've killed his chances at success. He sees areas where he didn't do the attacks or moves that he'd intended. Mistakes are acceptable ways of learning, and both the writer and the gamer know this. They both strive to revise their craft, and make it perfect for their audiences. The rhetorical message the writer seeks to deliver can only be understood with proper grammar. The improvements to the fighting skill that the gamer seeks can only be achieved through mastery of the building blocks of combat: the move set. Each sentence, each combo, has its place in the greater whole. Each word or button press adds to this

goal. The paper cannot be written without grammar, and the fight cannot be won without the move lists.

Though the writer and the gamer don't know each other, their skills are more closely connected than anyone might think. Grammar and writing are serious life skills. Perhaps the skills that go into being good at a fighting video game aren't as important, but the lines of connection are clearly displayed. Developers might not know this when they make their games, and writers might not even play these sorts of games. Because of this, there is no official connection to be made, but it is interesting nonetheless to see the striking similarities between grammar and the gameplay of a fighting video game.