

Technical Writing Skills

Sentences - Punctuation and Correctness Continued

Sentence Structures

Which sentence structure is best?

Good writers vary their sentence patterns to meet the needs of their subject and audience.

Coordination (compound sentences) means the two ideas are roughly equal in importance.

Subordination (complex sentences) emphasizes one of the ideas.

Sentence Structures

Simple (one independent clause)

The manager tried to anticipate the problem.

Complex (one independent clause and at least one dependent clause)

Although the manager tried to anticipate the problem, he was unsuccessful.

Sentence Structures

Compound (two independent clauses)

The manager tried to anticipate the problem, but he was unsuccessful.

Compound-complex

Although the manager tried to anticipate the problem, he was unsuccessful, and he decided to halt the project indefinitely.

Sentence Structures

Two of these four types of sentences are most useful in workplace writing:

1. the simple
2. the complex

Sentence Structures

Examples (Simple and Complex)

People's taste buds diminish in sensitivity as they age, and processed-food providers monitor demographics carefully and adjust their spice levels accordingly.

Because people's taste buds diminish in sensitivity as they age, processed-food providers monitor demographics carefully and adjust their spice levels accordingly.

Punctuation

Punctuation - Comma Usage

Rule#1: Use a comma to separate items in a series.

Example

Instrument panels, bumper components, door liners, seat covers, and grille panels are the most common parts produced directly by automakers.

Punctuation - Comma Usage

Rule#2: Use a comma after all introductory elements before the main clause.

Examples

When an atom acquires enough energy to leave its orbit, the atom is positively charged.

Using this concept, Faraday arrived at a relation between the changing flux and the induced electromagnetic field.

Punctuation - Comma Usage

Rule#3: Use a comma between all independent clauses.

Example

One grate turns at 50 mph, but the others turn at 15 mph.

Punctuation - Comma Usage

Rule#4: Use a comma around all non-restrictive elements (phrases and clauses that are nonessential to the grammar of the sentence).

Examples

The Coriolis force, caused by the rotation of the earth, always acts at right angles to the pressure gradient in the northern hemisphere.

Adding waterproofing material to a fabric increases the contact angle, making the fabric water-repellent.

Punctuation - Comma Usage

Be careful: Do not use comma around restrictive elements (phrases and clauses that a sentence needs to make sense).

Example

You can use the system, ~~when the login prompt appears.~~

You can use the system when the login prompt appears.

Activity

Punctuation - Semi-Colon

Rule: Use a semi-colon to connect two sentences that seem very closely related.

Example

"Plaque-fissuring" refers to the formation of an opening from the lumen to the intima; it leads to an intra-intimal thrombus containing not just red cells but mainly fibrin and platelets.

Punctuation - Colon

Rule: Use a colon to introduce lists and explanations.

Example

The main engines of the Space Shuttle consist of six main components: the external tank, the low-pressure turbopump, the high-pressure turbopumps, the preburners, the combustion chamber, and the nozzle.

Punctuation - Apostrophe

Rule#1: Use an apostrophe to show possession.

Example

Earth's shadow (singular possessive)

These companies' employees (plural possessive)

Punctuation - Apostrophe

Rule#2: Use an apostrophe for contractions.

Examples

it is = it's

they are = they're

you are = you're

has not = hasn't

Careful! These have different meanings!

Its, their, your

Commonly Misspelled and Misused Words

Your expected to complete your work on time.

She could of mentioned the problem in the progress report.

Plan A works better then Plan B.

Activity

Discussion

Imagine that you're having a problem with your co-worker:

1. Would you talk to your co-worker or your supervisor first?
2. What would you say?
3. What is this co-worker is a problem for everyone?
4. What is talking to your co-worker didn't change anything?

Activity
