

Week 6

Comm 1133

Writing Strategies

David Laing

Warm-up: evaluate this introduction

In today's society there is a debate on whether recreational marijuana should be legalized. it's not as bad as many people think, it can be used for medicinal reasons, doesn't cause addiction, or death. In this essay I will show why/how this is true.

Plan for today

- Essay instructions
- Misplaced modifiers
- Comma usage
- Essay review

Essays

- I may not have proofread your essay fully.
- Identifying and fixing errors is primarily *your* job, between now and next week.
- Check the back side of your rubric for a better idea of which mechanics concepts to review.
- Next Wednesday you will write your *second draft in class*, which is worth an additional 10%.
- The criteria are the same, but you'll also be expected to understand and apply the concepts from this week's lessons.
- **You must submit your rough draft AND your rubric with your second draft.**

Essays

- I may have occasionally used abbreviations to point out certain errors.
 - “S.E.” stands for “spelling error”
 - “P.E.” stands for “punctuation error”
 - “S.V.A.” stands for “subject-verb agreement”
 - “U.P.R.” stands for “unclear pronoun reference”
- There will be time today for you to ask me specific questions about your essay, but you may also want to attend a drop-in session at the library.

Misplaced modifiers

- A modifier is a word or phrase that modifies another word or phrase.
 - **Having worked all day**, she was ready for bed.
 - **Being a good student**, he always attended class.
- A modifier is said to be misplaced if it modifies the wrong word or phrase:
 - **Plunging 1,000 feet into the gorge**, we saw Yosemite Falls.
 - **As a baboon who grew up wild in the jungle**, I realized that Wiki had special nutritional needs.

Misplaced modifiers

- Plunging 1,000 feet into the gorge, we saw Yosemite Falls.
- Can be fixed by:
 - Reordering phrases:
 - We saw Yosemite Falls plunging 1,000 feet into the gorge.

Misplaced modifiers

- As a baboon who grew up wild in the jungle, I realized that Wiki had special nutritional needs.
- Can be fixed by:
 - Reordering the phrases:
 - I realized that Wiki, as a baboon who grew up wild in the jungle, had special nutritional needs.

Misplaced modifiers: practice questions

1. Locked in a vault for 50 years, the owner of the jewels has decided to sell them.
2. When a small boy, a girl is of little interest.
3. Having killed a man and served four years in prison, I feel that Tom Joad is ripe to get into trouble.

Commas

- Comma as a pause between complete ideas.
 - In a sentence in which a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, or, etc*) connects complete thoughts, a comma usually precedes the conjunction.
 - That was a good movie, **but** I don't feel the need to see it again any time soon.
 - I like listening to music, **and** I like to read too.
 - If the sentence is very short, you can sometimes omit the comma:
 - He's tired but he'll manage.

Commas

- Comma as a pause between an incomplete and a complete thought.
 - A comma is usually placed between a complete thought and an incomplete thought when the incomplete thought comes first.
 - **Because she likes to swim**, she often goes to the pool.
 - **When she gives speeches**, she gets nervous.
 - When the order is reversed (complete thought followed by incomplete), the comma is usually omitted.
 - She often goes to the pool **because she likes to swim**.
 - She gets nervous **when she gives speeches**.

Commas

- Commas separating items in a series.
 - Use commas after items in a series, including the next to last item.
 - **Helen, Joe, Marsha, and John** are joining us on the term project.
 - He works hard **at home, on the job,** and even **during his vacation.**
 - The new employee complained **that the hours were long, that the pay was low, that the work was boring,** and **that the supervisor was paranoid.**
 - Leaving out the last comma can make for some funny and confusing sentences.
 - I wrote this book for my parents, Taylor Swift and God.

Commas

- Comma setting off introductory phrases.
 - An introductory phrase is usually followed by a comma, as are interjections.
 - **In Rome**, do as the Romans do.
 - **Being fat**, the cat was slow at catching mice.
 - **Moving quickly**, the army surrounded the enemy.
 - **Oh**, is that the verdict?

Commas

- Commas setting off nonrestrictive elements
 - A *restrictive* phrase or clause modifies or defines the subject in such a way that deleting the modifier would change the meaning of the sentence.
 - All students **who have work experience** will receive preference.
 - Without *who have work experience*, which restricts the subject by limiting the category *students*, the meaning would be entirely different.
 - All students will receive preference.
 - Because the phrase *who have work experience* is essential to the sentence's meaning, it is *not* set off by commas.

Commas

- Commas setting off nonrestrictive elements.
 - A *nonrestrictive* phrase or clause could be deleted without change the sentence's meaning and *is* set off by commas.
 - Our new manager, **who has only six weeks of experience**, is highly competent.
 - Our new manager is highly competent.
 - This house, **riddled with carpenter ants**, is falling apart.
 - This house is falling apart.

Commas

- Commas setting off parenthetical elements.
 - Phrases that interrupt the flow of a sentence (such as *of course*, *as a result*, *as I recall*, *however*, etc) are called *parenthetical* and are enclosed by commas.
 - This deluxe model, **of course**, is more expensive.
 - Your essay, **by the way**, was excellent.
 - The loss of my job was, **in a way**, a blessing.
 - Our warranty, **however**, does not cover tire damage.

Commas

- Commas setting off parenthetical elements
 - Direct address is parenthetical.
 - Listen, **my children**, and you shall hear.
 - A parenthetical expression at the beginning or the end of a sentence is set off by a comma.
 - **Naturally**, we will expect a full guarantee.
 - **My friends**, I think we have a problem.
 - You've done a good job, **Jim**.
 - **Yes**, you may use my name in your advertisement.

Commas

- Setting off quoted material
 - Quoted items within a sentence are set off by commas.
 - The customer said, “I’ll take it,” as soon as he laid eyes on our new model.
 - Kanye West recently Tweeted, “I’d rather teachers got paid more and books cost less... #2020.”

Commas

- Commas setting off appositives
 - An *appositive*, a word or words explaining a noun and placed immediately after it, is set off by commas when the appositive is nonrestrictive.
 - Martha Jones, **our new president**, is overhauling all personnel policies.
 - Alpha waves, **the most prominent brain waves**, are typically recorded in a waking subject whose eyes are closed.
 - Please make all checks payable to Sam Sawbuck, **school treasurer**.

Commas

- Commas used in common practice
 - Commas separate the day of the month from the year, in a date.
 - May 10, 1989
 - Commas separate numbers at three-digit intervals
 - 11,215
 - 6,463,657
 - They also separate street, city, and state/province in an address or location.
 - We're in Welland, Ontario.

Commas

- Common errors
 - The instructor told me, that I was late.
 - The most universal symptom of the suicide impulse, is depression.
 - This has been a long, difficult, semester.
 - John, Bill, and Sally, are joining us on the trip home.
 - That course was hard but, I learned a lot.
 - I spoke by phone with John, and Marsha.
 - The room was, 18 feet long.
 - We painted the room, red.

Fix the comma usage in these sentences

1. In modern society highways seem as necessary as food water or air.
2. As I started the car, I saw him, dash into the woods.
3. Everyone though frustrated by pollution can play a part in improving the environment.
4. In fact, a writer's reaction to criticism, is often defensiveness.
5. One book however will not solve all your writing problems.
6. Chamomile tea is nice to drink before bed because, it has no caffeine.

Fix the comma usage in these sentences

1. Students, who drink excessively, tend to do poorly in school.
2. Professor Jones who has written three books is considered an authority in her field.
3. This has been a semester of happy, exciting, experiences.
4. Amanda Ford of course is the best candidate for governor.
5. Terrified by the noise Sally ran never looking back.

Essay review

- I recommend that you use this time to do the following:
 - First, reread your essay and identify higher-level concerns.
 - Do any of your major points need revision?
 - Is your thesis clear and strong?
 - Do you have a strong hook in your introduction and a strong “so what?” factor in your conclusion?
 - Second, look for the types of mechanical errors identified on the reverse side of your rubric. Do your best to fix them, and feel free to ask me for help.
 - Review your comma usage.
 - Attempt to cut your word count by 10%.

Warm-up

1. Jerry and I, have had our share of disagreements.
2. Having finished their lunch, the bus left the station.
3. You are I'm sure telling the truth.

Plan for today

- Apostrophes
- Evaluating arguments

Apostrophes

- The apostrophe has three uses:
 - To form possessives of nouns
 - To show the omission of letters
 - To indicate certain plurals of lower-case letters

Apostrophes

- Forming possessives of nouns
 - Add 's to the singular form of the word (even if it ends in s):
 - The owner's car
 - James's hat (James' hat is also acceptable)

Apostrophes

- Forming possessives of nouns
 - Add 's to the plural forms that do not end in s:
 - The children's game
 - The geese's honking

Apostrophes

- Forming possessives of nouns
 - Add ' to the end of plural nouns that end in s:
 - Two cats' toys
 - Three friends' letters
 - The countries' laws

Apostrophes

- Forming possessives of nouns
 - Add 's to the end of compound words:
 - My brother-in-law's money
 - Add 's to the last noun to show joint possession of an object
 - Todd and Anne's apartment

Apostrophes

- Showing omission of letters
 - don't = do not
 - I'm = I am
 - he'll = he will
 - who's = who is
 - shouldn't = should not
 - didn't = did not
 - could've = could have (NOT “could of”!)
 - '60 = 1960

Apostrophes

- Forming plurals of lowercase letters
 - To form the plural of a lowercase letter, place 's after the letter.
 - There is usually no need for apostrophes indicating a plural on capital letters, numbers, and symbols.
 - p's and q's
 - three Macintosh G4s = three of the Macintosh model G4
 - many &s = many ampersands
 - the 1960s = the years from 1960 to 1969
 - The '60s = the years from 1960 to 1969

Apostrophes

- Don't use apostrophes for possessive pronouns
 - Incorrect: the car is **your's**
 - Correct: the car is **yours**
 - Incorrect: the dog is **their's**
 - Correct: the dog is **theirs**
 - Incorrect: the group made **it's** decision
 - Correct: the group made **its** decision
 - Incorrect: **who's** dog is this?
 - Correct: **whose** dog is this?

there vs their vs they're

- Incorrect:
 - there books
 - their now leaving
 - living their
- Correct:
 - their books
 - they're now leaving
 - living there
- Here's a trick for remembering:
 - Their friend knows they're there.

its vs it's

- **It's** means **it is**
- **Its** is the possessive
 - It's watching its reflection in the pond.

who's vs whose

- **who's** means **who is**
- **whose** indicates the possessive
 - Who's interrupting whose work?

Cogency

- What does it mean for an argument to be *cogent*?
 - It's logical, clear, and convincing.
- Cogent:
 - You're tired, you've finished all your work, and you need to be well rested for tomorrow. So you should go to bed.
- Not cogent:
 - It's 2pm, you're wearing a hat, and you have an assignment to finish. So you should go to bed.

Evaluation of Cogency

- Are the premises:
 - **Acceptable?**
 - **Relevant** to the conclusion?
 - **Sufficient** to establish the conclusion?

Acceptability

- **Can we accept each premise as true?**
- Marijuana is far less harmful than alcohol. In fact, marijuana can be used for medicinal or therapeutic purposes. Moreover, if marijuana were legalized, the government could simultaneously generate tax revenue and create jobs. Lastly, marijuana has never caused even a single death. Thus, the drug should be legalized.

Relevance

- **Is each premise relevant to the conclusion?**
- American adults should have the right to carry guns. After all, they already have this right. Furthermore, if law-abiding citizens were denied this right, then the only people in possession of guns would be criminals. For law-abiding citizens, guns provide a means of self-defense, which is necessary because police response time is often so slow.

Sufficiency

- **When taken together, are the premises sufficient to establish the conclusion?**
- Voting should not be mandatory. In almost every election, there are many citizens who feel that none of the political candidates are worthy of being elected.

Portfolio exercise

- Write the strongest three-premise counterargument to your thesis that you can think of.
- Write a brief critique of this argument, using the principles of cogency (acceptability, relevance, and sufficiency).