Detailed descriptions of grammar and refinement guidance

This document provides explanations and examples for the grammar and refinement guidance provided in the Microsoft Editor service. Some issues are detected only when you are signed in to the service with a Microsoft 365 account.

*Warning:* This document includes examples of language that might be considered offensive.

# Grammar

| Issue | Guidance | Explanation | Examples |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Academic degrees | Double-check capitalization or format of the degree. | Capitalize names of specific degrees. Degree types should be lowercase and, for some types, possessive. Doctorate is a degree type, while Doctor is used in a degree name. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | She earned her Bachelor degree. | She earned her bachelor's degree. | | She earned her doctorate of philosophy. | She earned her Doctor of Philosophy. | |
| Adjective used instead of adverb | An adverb works better here. | Use the adverb form (typically ending in -ly) to modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | She said, “Will you be real careful not to spill your coffee?” | She said, “Will you be really careful not to spill your coffee?” | | No one took him serious. | No one took him seriously. | |
| Adverb used instead of adjective | An adjective works best to modify a noun. | Adjectives and not adverbs are used to modify nouns. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Then we need to be sure that you have the exactly requirement satisfied. | Then we need to be sure that you have the exact requirement satisfied. | | A recently case was related to Jane. | A recent case was related to Jane. | |
| Agreement with noun phrases | Double-check whether the noun is singular or plural. | The words within a noun phrase should refer to a singular noun (one thing) or a plural noun (more than one thing). | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | She would like to buy this apples. | She would like to buy this apple.  Or: She would like to buy these apples. | | We already have two sweet puppy. | We already have two sweet puppies. | |
| “An” “And” confusion | Did you mean “and” instead of “an” here? | Sometimes “an” is used mistakenly in place of “and.” | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Make sure you listen to your teacher an her. | Make sure you listen to your teacher and her. | | The player had caught an thrown the ball. | The player had caught and thrown the ball. | |
| Capitalization | Double-check capitalization here. | Articles (like “the” and “an”), short prepositions (like “in” and “to”), and conjunctions (like “and” and “if”) should be lowercase in titles. Capitalize the first word in a title. Commas are typically followed by lowercase words. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | We read Of Mice And Men. | We read Of Mice and Men. | | It is cold, But we are going. | It is cold, but we are going. | |
| Capitalization of March and May | Did you mean the month? Capital M. | The months March and May should always be capitalized. The verbs “march” and “may” are capitalized only in certain situations, such as at the beginning of a sentence. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Camping in may can be an enjoyable experience. | Camping in May can be an enjoyable experience. | | They have not gone on vacation since march this year. | They have not gone on vacation since March this year. | |
| Capitalization of personal titles | Double-check capitalization of the person's title here. | Capitalize certain family relationships and personal titles immediately before a name when used to refer directly to the person. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | She and grandma Joan arrive today. | She and Grandma Joan arrive today. | | It is a possibility highlighted by president Ricardo Lagos earlier this year. | It is a possibility highlighted by President Ricardo Lagos earlier this year. | |
| Comma after greetings | Hi, it's best to add a comma when you greet someone. | When starting a sentence with a greeting, insert a comma after your greeting phrase. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Dear Sir or Madam I read your letter, and I like your suggestions. | Dear Sir or Madam, I read your letter, and I like your suggestions. | | Hello there are you enjoying your stay? | Hello there, are you enjoying your stay? | |
| Comma before quotations | It's best to add a comma before a quotation. | Insert a comma before quotes longer than a single word. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | He responded “Will the party be tomorrow night?” | He responded, “Will the party be tomorrow night?” | | The visitor said “Is this a restricted area?” | The visitor said, “Is this a restricted area?” | |
| Comma missing after introductory phrase | After an introductory word or phrase, a comma is best. | If your sentence begins with an introductory word or phrase, such as “however” or “for example,” insert a comma before the independent clause. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Thanks he will try it tomorrow. | Thanks, he will try it tomorrow. | | When I ordered the fish it was good. | When I ordered the fish, it was good. | |
| Comma splice | Both clauses can stand alone, so a semicolon works best. | To join two related but independent clauses without a coordinating conjunction such as “and” or “but,” use a semicolon instead of a comma. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | We do not have a discussion board, the website is not big enough for one yet. | We do not have a discussion board; the website is not big enough for one yet. | |
| Comma after conjunction | A comma isn't usually needed after a conjunction. | A comma after a conjunction is generally not needed unless an intervening phrase immediately follows. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Because, we need to act quickly, we will meet now. | Because we need to act quickly, we will meet now. | | The dog loved food, and, everyone loved the dog. | The dog loved food, and everyone loved the dog. | |
| Comma with conjunctive adverbs | It's best to add a comma with this type of adverb. | An adverb that joins clauses, or that introduces, interrupts, or concludes a clause, typically requires one or more commas. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | They, nevertheless wished the whole ordeal would end. | They, nevertheless, wished the whole ordeal would end. | | Make sure you do not waste your time however. | Make sure you do not waste your time, however. | |
| Comma with conjunction | It's better to have no comma between these phrases. | When a dependent clause with a coordinating conjunction follows the main clause, it should not be separated by a comma. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The dog went to the park, and learned how to play fetch. | The dog went to the park and learned how to play fetch. | |  |  | |
| Commas around descriptive clause | Commas around a description make it clearer. | Commas should surround descriptive clauses, including relative clauses. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The building, known as the science building is the oldest on campus. | The building, known as the science building, is the oldest on campus. | | The farm which was once a field is all dried out again. | The farm, which was once a field, is all dried out again | |
| Commonly confused phrases | Rewording here will make the meaning clearer. | Some words are commonly used in combination with each other. You may have used a different preposition, helping verb, or other word than expected. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | I do not see TV. | I do not watch TV. | | You should tell to him what you think. | You should tell him what you think. | |
| Commonly confused words | Some words are similar but are used differently. | Pay special attention to words that may sound or look similar and may have related meanings. They often have different parts of speech (word classes) and different spellings. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The man who's keys are in the ignition is here. | The man whose keys are in the ignition is here. | | They are late form time to time. | They are late from time to time. | |
| Comparative use | Double-check the way this adjective makes a comparison. | Use “more” and “most” with adjectives that have no comparative or superlative form, but not with adjectives that do have these forms. Do not use comparative or superlative forms with “less” or “least.” | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Spot is the less nicer of the two dogs. | Spot is the less nice of the two dogs. | | She is the most smart girl in her class. | She is the smartest girl in her class. | |
| Correlative conjunction mismatch | Words in a corresponding pair should work together. | Correlative conjunctions must occur in corresponding pairs. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Food is available both in restaurants or in private homes. | Food is available both in restaurants and in private homes. | | He will order either the spaghetti nor the lasagna. | He will order either the spaghetti or the lasagna. | |
| Date formatting | Double-check the punctuation in this date. | When writing dates, commas should separate day of the week from month (for example, “Monday, October 4”) and day from year (for example, “October 4, 1976”), but not month from year (for example, “October 1976”). | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | She went to Paris on June 4 1986. | She went to Paris on June 4, 1986. | | It starts in October, 2016. | It starts in October 2016. | |
| Embarrassing words | Is this the word you intended here? | Typos can result in a correctly spelled wrong word. Replace an embarrassing word with the right word for the context. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The agency specializes in pubic relations. | The agency specializes in public relations. | | The burger patties were anus beef. | The burger patties were Angus beef. | |
| Hyphenation | These words work best when connected with a hyphen. | When modifying a noun with more than one word, use a hyphen to link the modifying words. Also hyphenate the numerals “twenty-one” through “ninety-nine.” | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Our five year old son is learning to read. | Our five-year-old son is learning to read. | | There are fifty two cards in a deck. | There are fifty-two cards in a deck. | |
| Incorrect auxiliary | Double-check for the right helping verb or verb form. | Ensure that the helping verb you use is correct for the form of the verb being helped. (Helping verbs express the tense or mood of a verb.) | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | We are not taken them to the movies before. | We have not taken them to the movies before. | | That is cost us too much money. | That has cost us too much money. | |
| Incorrect determiner | Double-check the word choice here. | The definite article “the” indicates a specific reference. The indefinite article “a” or “an” allows nonspecific reference. Certain determiners are used only before countable nouns. Others occur only before uncountable nouns. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | He is a fastest man of all. | He is the fastest man of all. | | There are much people. | There are many people. | |
| Incorrect negation | Double-check for the right negative word or word order. | Ensure that you have used the correct words and word order for negation. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | That is no enough. | That is not enough. | | The cat not is happy. | The cat is not happy. | |
| Incorrect number ending | Double-check the ending on the number. | Particular endings must follow certain numbers. Ensure that the ending is correct for the number. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | He finished in 1rd place. | He finished in 1st place. | | Today is November 22th. | Today is November 22nd. | |
| Incorrect preposition | Double-check for the right preposition here. | Decide correct prepositions based on surrounding grammatical context, common expressions, and customary usage. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The election takes place at November. | The election takes place in November. | | Our plan focuses towards local strategies. | Our plan focuses on local strategies. | |
| Incorrect pronoun case | A pronoun's form depends on how it's used in a sentence. | The form of a personal pronoun is dictated by its function in a sentence. Use nominative form (I, he, she, we, they) for subjects; use accusative form (me, him, her, us, them) for objects of verbs or prepositions. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | They pointed to he. | They pointed to him. | | Mother and me watched TV. | Mother and I watched TV. | |
| Incorrect reflexive pronoun use | Double-check whether a reflexive pronoun is needed here. | Reflexive pronouns—words that end in “self” or “selves”—refer to a particular noun or pronoun. When there’s no noun or pronoun to refer to, use a non-reflexive form. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Yourself and the team must do what you can. | You and the team must do what you can. | | Please return the form to myself. | Please return the form to me. | |
| Incorrect use of “that” | Double-check whether “that” is used correctly here. | In relative clauses beginning with a comma, “that” should never be used. A comma sets off a clause that is not essential to the sentence. Such clauses are introduced with “which” or “who” instead of “that.” | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | His old guitar, that was of unknown make, would be harder to sell. | His old guitar, which was of unknown make, would be harder to sell. | | We brought our dog, that was fantastic. | *“Which,” if the relative clause refers to the whole experience:* We brought our dog, which was fantastic.  *Or “who,” if the relative clause refers just to the noun (dog):* We brought our dog, who was fantastic. | |  |  | |
| Incorrect verb form – double gerund | Double-check the use of the -ing verb here. | Combining two verbs ending with “ing” is usually incorrect. Typically, an -ing verb is followed by a past participle or infinitive verb. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Having misunderstanding the directions, she failed. | Having misunderstood the directions, she failed. | | We will be getting seeing my family. | We will be getting to see my family. | |
| Incorrect verb form – inflection | Double-check for the right verb form or phrase here. | The infinitive verb form should be used after the infinitive marker “to” and in constructions with certain verbs. Other constructions may require a progressive (-ing) or present form. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Thank you for letting me staying here. | Thank you for letting me stay here. | | He suggests to take the train. | He suggests taking the train. | |
| Incorrect verb form after auxiliary | Double-check the verb form after the helping verb. | Use the correct verb form after a helping verb. (Helping verbs express the tense or mood of a verb.) | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The candidate is tells the truth. | The candidate is telling the truth. | | They had ate when we came. | They had eaten when we came. | | Did she forgot it? | Did she forget it? | | He would not travels alone. | He would not travel alone. | |
| Indefinite article | “A” before consonant sounds, “an” before vowel sounds. | Use “a” before a word beginning with a consonant sound. Use “an” before a word beginning with a vowel sound. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | This is an problem. | This is a problem. | | An tear slowly ran down her face. | A tear slowly ran down her face. | |
| Indirect questions | Double-check the use of the helping verb here. | When writing an indirect (as opposed to a direct) question, the helping verb should not precede the subject. (Helping verbs express the tense or mood of a verb.) | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | They wonder how could have the architect created it. | They wonder how the architect could have created it. | | He asked what time could it start raining. | He asked what time it could start raining. | |
| Misheard phrases | Careful of phrases that sound like something else. | Some idioms and other phrases are commonly misunderstood as a different phrase. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The patient had old-timer's disease. | The patient had Alzheimer's disease. | | The monster reeled its ugly head. | The monster reared its ugly head. | |
| Missing auxiliary | A helping verb or main “be” verb may be needed here. | Many verbs require pairing with a helping verb (like “be,” “have,” or “do”) or a modal (such as “can,” or “may”). Some sentences require a main “be” verb. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | It is the best course I taken yet. | It is the best course I have taken yet. | | They will not afraid to speak. | They will not be afraid to speak. | |
| Missing comma | A comma between clauses is better here. | When an independent clause is followed by a coordinating conjunction and another independent clause, insert a comma before the coordinating conjunction. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The goats ate the grass but the herder had nothing to eat. | The goats ate the grass, but the herder had nothing to eat | |
| Modal confusion | Double-check the form or use of the helping verb here. | Ensure that the tense of the modal helping verb is correct. Modal helping verbs express likelihood, ability, permission, or obligation without use of another helping verb, and most do not require the infinitive marker “to.” | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | We will shovel if it had snowed. | We would shovel if it had snowed. | | The dog should to be good. | The dog should be good. | |
| Multiple modals | One of these verbs is all that's needed here. | Certain sets of modal helping verbs cannot be used together. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Please explain what should can happen. | Please explain what should happen.  Or: Please explain what can happen. | | They would might never know. | They would never know.  Or: They might never know. | |
| Noun number | Check whether the noun should be singular or plural. | Nouns should have correct number based on surrounding grammatical context, common expressions, and customary usage. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Older car consume too much gas. | Older cars consume too much gas. | | It is never wise to waste times. | It is never wise to waste time. | |
| Participle or adjective form | Double-check for the right verb or adjective form. | Most verb-derived adjectives end in -ed, -d, -en, -n, or -ing (participial form), and some have a unique derived form. Passive verbs end in ‑ed, ‑d, ‑en, or -n. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | An increase number of people call. | An increased number of people call. | | He is depend on her. | He is dependent on her. | |
| Possessives and plural forms | Double-check whether a possessive is needed here. | Possessive nouns must have an apostrophe while possessive pronouns must not have one. For example, “its” is possessive, while “it's” is a contraction of “it is.” | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The average mouse can stray 25 feet from it's nest. | The average mouse can stray 25 feet from its nest. | | He hopes your believe him. | He hopes you believe him. | |
| Punctuation | Double-check whether a comma is needed here. | Commas are used between certain clauses, with some phrases, and with direct address. A comma is usually not needed after a coordinating conjunction. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | If I am tired I will sleep. | If I am tired, I will sleep. | | Thanks Mom for the gift. | Thanks, Mom, for the gift. | |
| Question mark missing | Try adding a question mark to make this a question. | Place a question mark at the end of any sentence that asks a question (interrogative sentence). | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Who is the woman in the black coat. | Who is the woman in the black coat? | |  |  | |
| Redundant colon | Double-check whether a colon is needed here. | Colons should only be used at the end of a complete sentence. Removing unnecessary colons will help improve readability. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | She is: kind, smart, and helpful. | She is kind, smart, and helpful. | | Mom told you we: went to the mall yesterday and got ice cream. | Mom told you we went to the mall yesterday and got ice cream. | |
| Redundant comma before complement clause | A comma doesn't usually separate a verb from its clause. | Typically, a comma should not separate a verb from the clause it introduces. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Her mother said, that Annabelle and Alex were moving into an apartment together. | Her mother said that Annabelle and Alex were moving into an apartment together. | | Her teacher decided, whether I should consult a doctor. | Her teacher decided whether I should consult a doctor. | |
| Redundant comma before object | A comma doesn't usually separate a verb from its object. | With few exceptions, a comma should never separate a verb from its object. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The list included, the book. | The list included the book. | | The problem is, his unpredictable schedule. | The problem is his unpredictable schedule. | |
| Redundant comma following subject | Removing the comma makes this sentence clearer. | With few exceptions, a comma should never separate a verb from its subject. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | His neighbor John, is a lawyer. | His neighbor John is a lawyer. | | Max, was part of a panel discussion. | Max was part of a panel discussion. | |
| Redundant question mark | A period would work better here. | A question mark in a declarative sentence may indicate uncertainty and should be replaced with a period to express an assertion. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | She made sure to finish her test on time? | She made sure to finish her test on time. | | He will take out the trash? | He will take out the trash. | |
| Repeated auxiliary | One helping verb or phrase is all that's needed. | A helping verb should not be used both before and after an adverb. Also, a sequence of helping-verb-with-verb or helping-verb-with-adverb should not be repeated. (Helping verbs express the tense or mood of a verb.) | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | You should also should keep track of time. | You should also keep track of time. | | The power adapter will be will be hot. | The power adapter will be hot. | |
| Semicolon use | A semicolon isn't usually used in this situation. | Semicolons serve to join two independent clauses without a coordinating conjunction or to separate items in a complex list. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Prizes include; cash, cars, and boats. | Prizes include cash, cars, and boats. | | He wanted to swim; however; it was cold. | He wanted to swim; however, it was cold. | |
| Spacing | A space should follow most punctuation. | Use at least one space after most punctuation. Do not insert a space after an opening parenthesis or an opening bracket. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Take these charts,reports, and memos. | Take these charts, reports, and memos. | | He did not get a grade;he plagiarized the paper. | He did not get a grade; he plagiarized the paper. | |
|  | A space usually comes before this type of punctuation. | Although most punctuation is placed directly after the preceding word, a space is placed before an opening parenthesis or an opening bracket. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The memo said the picnic(employees only) would be this afternoon. | The memo said the picnic (employees only) would be this afternoon. | |
|  | Double-check placement of the punctuation here. | Place most punctuation directly after the preceding word. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Everybody wants parking, better food ,and flexible hours. | Everybody wants parking, better food, and flexible hours. | | The picnic (employees only )was fun. | The picnic (employees only) was fun. | |
|  | It’s better to have no space after this punctuation. | Although most punctuation is followed by a space, there is no space after an opening parenthesis or an opening bracket. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | He did not get a good grade on his ( mostly plagiarized) paper. | He did not get a good grade on his (mostly plagiarized) paper. | |
|  | It’s better to have no space before this punctuation. | Place most punctuation directly after the preceding word. Commas, periods, and other punctuation should not be preceded by a space. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | You know , I still have not seen the photos. | You know, I still have not seen the photos. | | The wedding (family only ) will be simple. | The wedding (family only) will be simple. | |
|  | Only one space between words is better. | Usually, words in a sentence should have only one space between them. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The line was extra long. | The line was extra long. | | She laughed quietly at the little joke. | She laughed quietly at the little joke | |
| Subject-verb agreement | Double-check that you're sticking to singular or plural. | The subject and verb should agree in number. They should both be singular (one), or they should both be plural (more than one). | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The teacher want to see him. | The teacher wants to see him. | | Their apologies was sincere. | Their apologies were sincere. | |
| Too many determiners | Using only one of these words is better here. | Certain determiners, such as articles (like “a” and “the”), possessive pronouns (like “my” and “our”), and demonstratives (like “this” and “those”), may not be combined. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | She gave you a the carrot. | She gave you the carrot. | | Have you seen their these pictures yet? | Have you seen these pictures yet? | |
| Unnecessary determiner | Double-check whether all words are needed here. | Determiners are words like “a,” “this,” “my,” and “many” that precede some nouns and noun phrases. They cannot modify certain nouns or any other class of word or phrase. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | He is president of the France. | He is president of France. | | We liked the what you presented. | We liked what you presented. | |
| Unnecessary hyphen | Double-check whether a hyphen is needed here. | Hyphens are needed to combine elements only in certain contexts. For example, hyphens are not used when an adverb modifies an adjective or in common noun phrases. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | It was a strongly-held belief. | It was a strongly held belief. | | The market for real-estate is strong. | The market for real estate is strong. | |
| Use of plain verb form | Double-check the form of the verb here. | A plain verb form generally cannot follow prepositions, adjectives, or main verbs. After most prepositions and adjectives, add -ing to the verb. Following a main verb, use “to” and the verb, or add -ing. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | We would like invite you. | We would like to invite you. | | Thank you for help me. | Thank you for helping me. | |
| Use of the word “lack” | When “lack” is a verb, “of” isn't needed. | The use of “lack” as a noun is usually followed by the preposition “of” (for example, “a lack of sleep”). As a verb, “lack” should not be followed by any preposition. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The country was lacking of qualified medical staff. | The country was lacking qualified medical staff. | |
| Use of “will” and “would” | Double-check whether a helping verb is needed here. | When referring to an imagined or desired situation, use a verb in the subjunctive mood. The helping verbs “will” and “would” do not go with subjunctive verbs. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | He asks that you will join him. | He asks that you join him. | | She had to go home lest her family would worry about her. | She had to go home lest her family worry about her. | |
| Verb use | “Have,” not “of,” is used with this type of verb. | Use “have” rather than “of” in constructions with modal helping verbs like “could,” “can't,” “may,” and “will.” | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | He could of known that. | He could have known that. | |
| “Which” “Who” confusion | “Who” for people and some animals, otherwise “which.” | Use “who” with nouns that refer to humans and some animals. Use “which” for nouns that refer to other animals and inanimate objects. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | We need assurance that the hikers, which disappeared on Friday, are safe. | We need assurance that the hikers, who disappeared on Friday, are safe. | | This is the surgeon which will take your vitals today. | This is the surgeon who will take your vitals today. | |
| “Who” “Whom” confusion | “Who” for a subject, “whom” with verbs or prepositions. | Use “who” or “whoever” for the subject of a clause. For the object of a verb or preposition, use “whom” or “whomever.” | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | He knows that whomever goes will love it. | He knows that whoever goes will love it. | | To who did you speak? | To whom did you speak? | |
| Word split | These words work better combined into one word. | Prefixes, suffixes, combining forms, and some compounds should not be separated. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | That is bio degradable. | That is biodegradable. | | The book store is open. | The bookstore is open. | |

# Clarity

| Issue | Guidance | Explanation | Examples |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Adjective order | A different adjective order sounds more natural here. | When adjectives are used in sequence, there is an accepted order in which they should occur depending on the class of each adjective. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | She still drove a blue old car for her commute. | She still drove an old blue car for her commute. | | They fashioned a cardboard oblong piece to fit. | They fashioned an oblong cardboard piece to fit. | |
| Adverb placement | This reads better if adverb placement is changed. | When an adverb is between a verb and the object, consider moving the adverb. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | They sing loudly a new song. | They loudly sing a new song. | | He owes now ten dollars to my classmate. | Now he owes ten dollars to my classmate | |
| Double negation | Try rewording here to avoid a confusing double negative. | The use of two negative words may be interpreted as indicating a positive. To avoid confusion, do not use double negation. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | I did not see nothing. | I did not see anything. | | He did not go nowhere. | He did not go anywhere. | |
| Jargon | Try avoiding words that might be unfamiliar to a reader. | Jargon, technical terminology, or abbreviations may confuse readers. Consider using more common language that is likely to be understood. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | They hired a well-known headhunting firm. | They hired a well-known recruiting firm. | | Please see the accompanying letters. | Please see the enclosed letters.  Or: Please see the attached letters. | |
| Passive voice | Saying who or what did the action would be clearer. | Active voice is more concise and helps avoid confusion. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The dog was seen by the man. | The man saw the dog. | | They were quickly caught by the police. | The police quickly caught them. | |
| Passive voice with unknown actor | Saying who or what did the action would be clearer. | Active voice is more concise and helps avoid confusion. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The house was built on a hill. | *There’s no suggested revision because the person or thing that’s acting isn’t in the sentence. Consider rewriting by saying who or what built the house, like this:*  They built the house on a hill.  Or: The architect built the house on a hill. | |
| Sentence structure | Sticking to one grammatical subject would be clearer. | Using clauses that have the same subject can increase clarity and coherence. When using a participle (a verb acting as an adjective), be sure that it’s clear what the participle refers to. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | As a scientist, that would be my best guess. | *There’s no suggested revision because the sentence doesn’t include enough information. Consider rewriting by starting the second clause with a noun or pronoun that states who the scientist is:*  As a scientist, I gave it my best guess. | |
| Simpler wording | A simpler word here would be clearer for your reader. | Use simple words wherever possible to present a clear message in an approachable tone. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The magnitude of the problem is overwhelming. | The size of the problem is overwhelming. | | The boy will transmit the message. | The boy will send the message. | |
| Split infinitives | Avoiding multiple words between “to” and a verb is best. | Using multiple adverbs between “to” and a verb can create an awkward or unclear sentence. Consider avoiding this in formal writing. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | They began to very quickly run home. | They began to run home very quickly. | | He tried to firmly but politely decline the offer. | He tried to decline the offer firmly but politely. | |
| Use of euphemisms | Direct language is clearer and won't confuse a reader. | Euphemisms (words or phrases that soften or “talk around” harsh truths) can make sentences unclear. Direct language is often better. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | His neighbor kicked the bucket. | His neighbor died. | | My younger brother is a couch potato. | My younger brother is a lazy person. | |

# Conciseness

| Issue | Guidance | Explanation | Examples |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Conjunction overuse | Commas instead of conjunctions are clearer. | Items in a list are better coordinated by commas than by multiple conjunctions. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Susan and Dale and Anthony eat lunch together. | Susan, Dale, and Anthony eat lunch together. | | Teachers are smart and professional and caring. | Teachers are smart, professional, and caring. | |
| Nominalizations | Try using a verb instead of a noun phrase to be concise. | Nouns typically need extra words to introduce them, while verbs can be used more concisely. Consider using a verb instead of a longer phrase with a noun. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The trade union is holding negotiations with the employers. | The trade union is negotiating with the employers. | | Please make an effort to be on time. | Please try to be on time. | |
| Wordiness | More concise language would be clearer for your reader. | Eliminating redundant or unnecessary words often improves readability. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Adding sugar is absolutely essential. | Adding sugar is essential. | | Her backpack was large in size. | Her backpack was large. | |
| Words expressing uncertainty | Words expressing uncertainty lessen your impact. | Your meaning will be more clear and impactful with language that is direct. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The homework is basically ready. | The homework is ready. | | They felt adequately prepared for the disaster. | They felt prepared for the disaster. | |

# Formality

| Issue | Guidance | Explanation | Examples |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Colloquial verb phrase | This verb or phrase may strike a reader as too informal. | Informal verbs and verb phrases are most appropriate for familiar, conversational settings. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | We should hang out more often. | We should spend time together more often | | Please get in touch with my supervisor. | Please contact my supervisor. | |
| Contractions | In formal writing, try spelling out the words. | Contracted expressions (like “let's,” “we've,” and “can't”) should generally be avoided in formal writing. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Let's suppose we have three apples. | Let us suppose we have three apples. | | The animal won't be out of the bag during the flight. | The animal will not be out of the bag during the flight. | |
| Informal language | This word or phrase may strike a reader as too informal. | Informal words and phrases are most appropriate for familiar, conversational settings. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Our atmosphere includes comfy massage chairs. | Our atmosphere includes comfortable massage chairs. | | The student must get to thinking. | The student must start thinking. | |
| Missing auxiliary in question | Including a helping verb adds formality. | In formal English, many questions require the use of a helping verb like “be,” “have,” or “do”). The form of the verb changes to indicate the subject and tense of the question. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | You sure about that? | Are you sure about that? | | What they want from the store? | What do they want from the store? | |
| Number formatting | In formal writing, try spelling out the number. | Using digits instead of number words may reduce readability. To improve clarity, consider spelling out numbers instead of using digits. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | We had 20 items on our list. | We had twenty items on our list. | | This was her 1st time in the city. | This was her first time in the city. | |
| Opinion markers | Expressing opinions with certainty adds formality. | Favor objectivity, and consider removing overt markers of opinion or uncertainty. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | I feel we treated them unfairly. | We treated them unfairly. | | I believe it is correct. | It is correct. | |
| Preposition at end of clause | Ending with a preposition may come across as informal | A convention of formal writing is to avoid placing a preposition at the end of a sentence. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Where did you get your shirt from? | Where did you get your shirt? | | This is everything he is working for. | This is everything for which he is working. | |
| Slang | This term may strike your reader as too informal. | Slang terms may not be understood by a general audience and should be avoided in formal writing. Consider using more standard expressions. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The show was uber boring. | The show was boring. | | The cop pulled John over for speeding in a school zone. | The police officer pulled John over for speeding in a school zone. | |
| Subjunctive mood | For imagined or desired states, try a subjunctive verb. | A verb in the subjunctive mood expresses an imagined or desired situation. Subjunctive forms of the verb “be” include “be” (present) and “were” (past). | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | If he was your father, you would have never been able to go there. | If he were your father, you would have never been able to go there. | | She wishes she was going to the movie. | She wishes she were going to the movie. | |

# Inclusiveness

| Issue | Guidance | Explanation | Examples |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Age bias | Some age-related terms may strike your reader as biased. | Some expressions may draw undue attention to age or imply negative attributes due to a person's age. Consider removing unnecessary, negative, or condescending references to age. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | For a man of his age, he does well. | He does well. | | She is a typical teenage girl. | She is a girl.  Or: She is a typical girl. | |
| Cultural bias | Some terms may strike a reader as culturally biased. | Some terms may imply cultural bias or negative stereotypes. Consider removing or replacing potentially biased or sensitive expressions. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The fuzz searched her house without a warrant after the chase ended. | The police searched her house without a warrant after the chase ended. | | The Afghani flag changed between the different leaders of Afghanistan. | The Afghan flag changed between the different leaders of Afghanistan. | |
| Disability bias | *Guidance for this issue is currently under review.* |  |  |
| Ethnic slurs | Using neutral language here would be more inclusive. | Some terms may convey racial or ethnic bias. Consider removing or replacing ethnically insensitive language. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Do not be so uppity about the issue. | Do not be so self-important about the issue.  Or: Do not be so arrogant about the issue. | |
| Gender bias | It's best to avoid language that may imply gender bias. | Some terms may suggest negative attitudes or stereotypes related to gender roles or a person’s gender identity or expression. Consider avoiding expressions that may imply bias. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | She is smart, for a girl. | She is smart. | | He is empathetic, for a man. | He is empathetic. | |
| Gender-specific language | A gender-neutral term here would be more inclusive. | Gendered language may be perceived as excluding, dismissive, or stereotyping. Consider using gender-inclusive language. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | We need more policemen to support public safety. | We need more police officers to support public safety. | | We met a male nurse at the hospital. | We met a nurse at the hospital. | |
| Mental health bias | Try to use language that's sensitive to differences. | Some terms may suggest negative attitudes or stereotypes related to psychiatric or developmental differences. Consider removing or changing language that may imply bias. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | They hire retarded people. | They hire people with cognitive disabilities.  Or: They hire people with intellectual disabilities. | | The doctor suffers from autism. | The doctor has autism. | |
| Racial bias | Some terms may imply to your reader an ethnic bias. | Some terms related to race, ethnicity, or national origin may be considered outdated or offensive. Consider removing or replacing language that may imply bias towards people from Europe or with European ancestry. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The bog Irish men arrived. | *There’s no suggested revision. Consider rewriting the sentence with a neutral reference to race or ethnicity, like this:*  The Irish men arrived. | |
|  | Some terms may convey bias about Indigenous people. | Some terms related to Indigenous peoples of the Americas may be considered vague, outdated, or offensive. Consider removing or replacing these to avoid implying bias. Find out from the relevant group how they prefer to be referred to. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | They met with the red men. | They met with the Native Americans. | |
|  | Some terms about national origin may imply bias. | Some terms related to a person's national origin or immigrant status may be considered vague, outdated, or offensive. Consider removing or replacing these to avoid implying bias. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The migrant was fleeing the war. | The refugee was fleeing the war. | | The exotic woman wore a green dress. | The unique woman wore a green dress.  Or: The beautiful woman wore a green dress. | |
|  | Some terms about origin or religion may imply bias. | Some terms related to a person's race, ethnicity, national origin, or religion may be considered vague, outdated, or offensive. Consider removing or replacing language that may imply bias towards people based on their country of origin, ancestry, or religion. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The Chinaman walked down the street. | The Chinese person walked down the street. | | It is a country with a high Moslem population. | It is a country with a high Muslim population. | |
|  | This language may imply historical or ethnocentric bias. | Some phrases related to the colonization of the Americas by Europeans may be considered marginalizing, excluding, or offensive. Consider removing or replacing these to avoid implying bias. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | In 1492, Columbus sailed to the New World. | In 1492, Columbus sailed to the North American continent. | |
|  | This language may strike your reader as racially biased. | Some terms related to a person's race, ethnicity, or national origin may be considered vague, outdated, or offensive. Consider removing or replacing language that may imply bias towards people from Africa or with African ancestry. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | A few coloreds saw the movie last night. | A few people of color saw the movie last night. | |
| Sexual orientation bias | This language may imply bias about orientation. | Some terms related to a person's sexual orientation may be considered vague, outdated, or offensive. Consider removing or replacing these to avoid implying bias. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The homosexual couple ran a marathon. | The same-sex couple ran a marathon.  Or: The couple ran a marathon. | | She is open about her sexual preference. | She is open about her sexual orientation. | |

# Punctuation Conventions

| Issue | Guidance | Explanation | Examples |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Comma with adverbials | Adding a comma here would add clarity. | Consider using a comma to set off an adverb or adverbial phrase. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | In recent years the technology has improved. | In recent years, the technology has improved. | | The waiter spilled food on a child; naturally the family was mad. | The waiter spilled food on a child; naturally, the family was mad. | |
| Oxford comma | A comma before “and” could make the items clearer. | When listing items, you can avoid confusion by using a comma before the last item. Whether or not you choose to use to use a comma in this position (sometimes called the Oxford comma), be consistent. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | We sell books, videos and magazines. | We sell books, videos, and magazines. | | The red, yellow and green peppers are fresh. | The red, yellow, and green peppers are fresh. | |
| Unnecessary Comma | Double-check whether a comma is necessary here. | When a dependent clause with a subordinating conjunction follows the main clause, it should not be separated by a comma unless necessary for clarity. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | You should send them a brief note, if you want to be polite. | You should send them a brief note if you want to be polite. | | She became quiet, as soon as she saw the footage. | She became quiet as soon as she saw the footage. | |
| Punctuation required with quotes | Double-check quotation mark placement for consistency. | Quotation marks can be placed inside or outside of punctuation marks. Position them consistently to improve readability. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Punctuation inside quotation marks: He told me, “I dislike eggs”. | He told me, “I dislike eggs.” | | Punctuation outside quotation marks: The woman said, “I just got home.” | The woman said, “I just got home”. | |
| Space between Sentences | The number of spaces here doesn't match your settings. | Use the same number of spaces between all sentences to improve readability. Choose either one or two spaces, and be consistent. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | One space preferred: We came. We saw. We conquered. | We came. We saw. We conquered. | | Two spaces preferred: We like comedy movies. However, he likes romances. | We like comedy movies. However, he likes romances. | |

# Resume

| Issue | Guidance | Explanation | Examples |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Avoid first person references | Avoiding the first person makes a resume more impactful. | First person references in a resume may be considered redundant. Removing them strengthens the focus on your accomplishments. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | I have a successful record of accomplishment. | Have a successful record of accomplishment. | | I am the treasurer and webmaster. | Treasurer and webmaster. | |
| Superfluous expressions | A concise resume is more memorable. | Removing buzzwords and redundancies can make your resume more concise and memorable. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Recycling project tasks include creating informational and communication materials for construction recycling. | *There’s no suggested revision. Consider rewriting to remove the unnecessary words, “tasks include:”*  Recycling project: creating informational and communication materials for construction recycling. | |
| Unsuitable expressions | Original language adds impact to a resume. | Replacing overused expressions can make your resume more specific and original. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | A reliable person with practical approach to work. | A dependable person with practical approach to work. | | Quick learner; motivated to quickly resolve challenges. | Adaptive learner; motivated to quickly resolve challenges. | |
| Vague quantifiers | Specific numbers or examples add impact to a resume. | Replacing imprecise quantifiers with more specific ones can improve your resume by making it more descriptive. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Developed numerous database applications to automate data conversion tasks. | *There’s no suggested revision. Consider substituting “numerous” with a specific number:*  Developed 18 database applications to automate data conversion tasks. | |
| Vague verbs | More precise verbs make a resume more impactful. | Using clear and concise verbs can make your resume more powerful and expressive. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Led a 40-person team and carried out research. | Led a 40-person team and conducted research. | | Worked alongside other engineers in developing new navigation systems. | Collaborated with other engineers in developing new navigation systems. | |

# Sensitive Geopolitical References

| Issue | Guidance | Explanation | Examples |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Geopolitical references | It's best to stick to official place names. | Using incorrect names for geopolitical entities can be confusing and sometimes offensive. Replace such terms with their correct official names. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The Republic of Canada was beautiful in the summer. | Canada was beautiful in the summer. | | She visited the Near East on holiday. | She visited the Middle East on holiday. | |
|  | Usually the most politically neutral place name is best. | Regions subject to political dispute may have multiple names. Use the most neutral name unless discussing the political issue or targeting a specific audience. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The East Sea in Japan is cold. | The Sea of Japan (East Sea) in Japan is cold. | | We love visiting the Tunb in July. | We love visiting the Tunb Islands in July. | |
|  | Try to avoid geopolitical terms that may imply bias. | Some terms may imply positive or negative bias towards geopolitical entities or peoples. Consider replacing them unless the context is a neutral discussion of the terms. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | They collect figurines from the Orient. | They collect figurines from East Asia.  Or: They collect figurines from Asia. | |
|  | “Dialect” might imply inferiority and be offensive. | Avoid implying that a distinct language is simply a dialect of another or that a language variety is inferior to the standard. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | They spoke Catalan and other Spanish dialects. | They spoke Catalan and other minority languages of Spain.  Or: They spoke Catalan and other regional languages of Spain.  Or: They spoke Catalan and other languages of Spain. | |
|  | It's best to use current geopolitical terms. | Terms for currencies, geographic features, and groups of people often change. Use modern terms except in historical contexts. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The Czechoslovak koruna was in use in 2010. | The Czech koruna was in use in 2010.  Or: The Euro was in use in 2010. | | We love visiting Lake Idi Amin in the summer. | We love visiting Lake Edward in the summer. | |
|  | It's best to use current place names. | Some cities, regions, and countries have had official name changes or have common alternative names. Use official modern names except in historical contexts. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Leningrad is warm in August. | St. Petersburg is warm in August. | |
|  | Some technological terms may be offensive to a reader. | Avoid technological terms that evoke geopolitical or humanitarian issues. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The slave database network connection was poor. | The secondary device database network connection was poor.  Or: The detail database network connection was poor. | | There was no network in the demilitarized zone. | There was no network in the perimeter network. | |
|  | It's best to use the current version of this term. | Some place names have English transliterations that have changed over time, and use of the old names is considered unacceptable for political or other reasons. Use the official modern name except in direct quotations. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The company is opening a new office in Chungking. | The company is opening a new office in Chongqing. | |
|  | Double-check that the place name works in your context. | Names of geopolitical entities that no longer exist should be limited to appropriate historical contexts. Use current names to refer to the geopolitical entities in these geographic locations in modern contexts. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | The GDR is beautiful in the summer. | Eastern Germany is beautiful in the summer. | |
|  | The official name of the language would be clearer. | Use official language names to avoid confusion, sensitivity, or offense. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | He learned to speak Farsi in grade school. | He learned to speak Persian in grade school. | | We thought being fluent in standard Spanish would be fun. | We thought being fluent in European Spanish would be fun.  Or: We thought being fluent in Spanish would be fun. | |
|  | Double-check that this term refers to what you intend. | The region or entity that a name refers to may change over time due to political or sociocultural shifts. Ensure that in modern convention the term you have used refers to the place or entity you mean. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | In 1963, Akmolinsk was famous for its prosperity. | In 1963, Tselinograd was famous for its prosperity. | |

# Vocabulary

Available in Word and Outlook only with a Microsoft 365 subscription.

| Issue | Guidance | Explanation | Examples |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Clichés | Overused expressions lessen the impact of your writing. | To keep readers engaged, consider avoiding words and phrases that are overused and predictable. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Today the hard drive on my old computer bit the dust. | Today the hard drive on my old computer died. | | I felt dreadful and was sick as a dog. | I felt dreadful and was sick. | |
| Collective nouns | A different noun would be more descriptive and creative. | Some collective nouns are imprecise. Consider a more expressive collective noun. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | He walked alongside the cluster of lions. | He walked alongside the pride of lions. | | We can see collections of oysters. | We can see beds of oysters. | |
| Locale-specific words | Try avoiding terms not used in your reader's region. | Certain words and phrases are rarely used in Australia; others have meanings that only exist in other English-speaking areas. Consider using terms more likely to be understood by their intended audience. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Check the hood of your car for damage. | Check the bonnet of your car for damage. | | He repairs windshields at a discount. | He repairs windscreens at a discount. | |
|  |  | Certain words and phrases are rarely used in Canada; others have meanings that only exist in other English-speaking areas. Consider using terms more likely to be understood by their intended audience. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | It depends on how far the fire station is. | It depends on how far the fire hall is. | | See if there are any spots left in the parking garage. | See if there are any spots left in the parkade. | |
|  |  | Certain words and phrases are rarely used in the United Kingdom; others have meanings that only exist in other English-speaking areas. Consider using terms more likely to be understood by their intended audience. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | When do you have to take the exam? | When do you have to sit the exam? | | For how long have you worn bangs? | For how long have you worn a fringe? | |
|  |  | Certain words and phrases are rarely used in the United States; others have meanings that only exist in other English-speaking areas. Consider using terms more likely to be understood by their intended audience. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Take that lift to the fourth floor. | Take that elevator to the fourth floor. | | Would you fancy a snack? | Would you like a snack?  Or: Would you enjoy a snack? | |
| Profanity | This language may be offensive to your reader. | Certain words may be considered offensive. Try substituting with less sensitive language or removing such words altogether. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | They don’t’ like being assigned to this shitty project. | *There’s no suggested revision. Consider rewriting by substituting “shitty” with a less sensitive word, like this:*  They don’t’ like being assigned to this boring project.  *Or, remove “shitty” altogether, like this:*  They don’t’ like being assigned to this project. | |
| Region-specific words | Avoiding regionally specific words would be clearer. | Words that are specific to certain regions of the US should be avoided in most cases. More widely used, better-known words should be used instead to avoid any confusion. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | They will drink from a bubbler. | They will drink from a water fountain.  Or: They will drink from a drinking fountain. | | They had a tag sale on Walnut Street. | They had a garage sale on Walnut Street.  Or: They had a yard sale on Walnut Street. | |
| Vague adjectives | More specific adjectives are clearer and add impact. | Replacing overused adjectives with more specific ones can convey your message more descriptively. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | Do not drive in bad conditions! | Do not drive in harsh conditions!  Or: Do not drive in adverse conditions! | | What actor played the main role? | What actor played the key role?  Or: What actor played the leading role? | |
| Vague or unnecessary adverbs | Replacing or removing the adverb here would be clearer. | Replacing a vague or overused adverb can improve descriptiveness. Removing the adverb can increase clarity. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | He blindly endangered millions. | He recklessly endangered millions.  Or: He endangered millions. | | They badly punish us. | They severely punish us.  Or: They punish us. | |
| Weak verbs | A more precise verb would be more concise and. | Avoid verbs that are overused or imprecise. Replace with verbs that are precise and enhance clarity and expressiveness. | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Original | Suggested revision | | She teaches our children. | She instructs our children.  Or: She tutors our children. | |