

1. Practice Good Comma Usage

- a. The **INTRODUCTORY COMMA** offsets any information that introduces a sentence.
To demonstrate the danger of drunk driving, the presenter showed graphic images.
- b. The **SERIAL COMMA** comes before the *and* (*or*, *but*) in a list.
The four basic language skills are reading, writing, listening, and speaking.
- c. The **JOINING COMMA** joins two complete sentences with *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, and *so*. If you use a comma without one of these joining words, you will have a comma splice.
The experiment was well-designed, but it did not yield conclusive results.
- d. The **ASIDE COMMA** offsets non-essential information inserted within a sentence.
Global warming, a growing issue, is the central theme of the conference.

2. Write for Your Audience

- a. Use appropriate transitions between ideas, sentences, and paragraphs.
- b. Make connections – don't assume that your readers see the connection between A and B or your logic
- c. Define jargon – once you've defined it, you can use the term/acronym alone from thereon.
X Orthography influences second language speech processing.
Orthography (i.e., a writing system) influences second language speech processing.

X The CYC program at UVic and the ECE program at Camosun attract different students.
The Child and Youth Care (CYC) program at UVic and the Early Child Education (ECE) program at Camosun attract different students.

3. Be Consistent with Person and Number

Traditionally, third person (*they*, *he*, *she*, *it*) is appropriate, with first person (*we*, *I*) becoming more acceptable in some disciplines (check with your instructor). Do not use second person (*you*) unless specified by your instructor. Also, be sure that your nouns and pronouns agree in number (*singular or plural*).

X This article discusses how university students can best manage your studies.
This article discusses how university students can best manage their studies.

X The government is concerned with the impact of global warming on their policy.
The government is concerned with the impact of global warming on its policy.

1. Avoid Over-generalizations and Stereotypes

Do not make assumptions about groups of people based on their ethnicity, economic background, gender, education, religious beliefs, age, and so on. These types of assumptions may get you into trouble. Avoid using words such as *all*, *never*, and *every*.

X Chinese students are good at math and science

People commonly believe that Chinese students are good at math and science

2. Construct Parallel Sentences and Paragraphs

Parallel sentences contribute to the flow of a paper while non-parallel sentences make a paper awkward and difficult to read. Parallel structure demonstrates that concepts and ideas have the same level of importance and results when all the grammatical elements (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, clauses, and so on) in a sentence match. These elements are usually joined by *and*, *or*, or *but*.

X In May, Jill analyzed her data, compiled the results, and she finished her first draft.

In May, Jill analyzed her data, compiled the results, and finished her first draft.

X Joel wrote his final exam quickly and with ease.

Joel wrote his final exam quickly and easily.

3. Use Strong Language

- a. Avoid weak subjects and verbs (*there are*, *it is*). They do not focus the readers' attention on the real subjects and actions within sentences, and they often force you to use extra words.

X ~~It is~~ crucial for the variable to be taken into consideration

Researchers must consider the variables.

- b. Avoid wordiness. It can detract from the strength of your point by losing your reader in unnecessary words.

X ~~The purpose of~~ this research is to evaluate the effects of...

This research evaluates the effects of...

- c. Avoid words such as "attempt," "try," and "aim." Using them not only makes your writing wordy, it also implies a lack of confidence in your writing. It says you have tried, but the readers are left wondering if you succeeded. Consider the following example; which sounds stronger?

X This paper ~~attempts to~~ answer the question...

This paper answers the question...

- d. Avoid the passive voice (unless it is a common practice in your discipline). Passive voice often sends the message that you are not confident in your writing. You should not use passive voice to avoid taking responsibility for ownership of your ideas. Ideas come across more clearly if the subject of the sentence (who) does the action (what). The subject should come before the action.

X The experiment was conducted in a controlled environment by the researchers.

The researchers conducted the experiment in a controlled environment.