

Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation

Gail Buckley

www.PLRContentSource.com

***Without a Basic Foundation, Your Marketing Content
Could Be Deemed Unprofessional!***

Table of Contents

[Has the Internet Changed the Rules of Writing?](#) 3

[Basic Grammar Rules](#) 4

[Spelling Sets You Apart As a Writer](#) 9

<u>Punctuation Rules You Can't Live Without</u>	14
<u>Final Words About Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation</u>	20

Has the Internet Changed the Rules of Writing?

The Internet has definitely brought different rules to writing than were taught to us in high school English classes. When people read blogs, eBooks or web content on the Internet, they have a tendency to skim the words and overlook some mistakes.

Readers want short sentences and paragraphs and don't really care if a preposition hangs at the end of a sentence. Serious English students and teachers of English will cringe at the new rules, but if you're writing for an online audience, you'll want to know the basic facts.

Writing for the Internet means that you'll want to cut the fat out of your writing. You'll want to know what the rules of grammar, punctuation and spelling are, but how *not* to go overboard with them.

You should be consistent in your writing style - and that means you should also develop continuity in how you put together a phrase. People tend to follow a writing style that they like and are comfortable with.

Don't make readers cringe with your lack of rules, but don't make your sentences look like you went overboard in being a stickler for every rule in the book, either.

The Internet has definitely changed the rules and made them more relaxed. But there are some basic polishing maneuvers you can do to ensure your content

looks professional and puts you in a good light as an expert in your niche.

Basic Grammar Rules

Computers usually come prepared to help your writing ventures with built in grammar checks, but you should have a basic knowledge of the English language to make your writing flow and read smoothly.

The number one rule of grammar that you should remember is to **use complete sentences**. "When I read a book," is not a complete sentence because 'when' makes it an incomplete thought.

"I read a book," is a complete sentence that has a subject, 'I,' and a predicate that makes it a complete thought, 'read a book.'

Now thanks to relaxed online writing, there are times when it's perfectly okay to break this rule of proper grammar. Whenever you're asking your readers a question, either on your blog, in an email autoresponder, in an eBook or whatever, you might answer with an incomplete sentence like this:

Why do gurus think it's okay to lie to get your money?

Because you keep converting for them time after time.

Now technically that second sentence is incomplete. But it's okay to do this in certain circumstances. Just double check to ensure that after it's all written, it makes sense when read aloud.

Some of the most common grammatical mistakes writers make are the following:

- **Who or Whom?** – These two words are called “subjective pronouns,” and they have a tendency to confuse writers. A good way to remember the proper way to use who and whom is to think of which is the subject and which is the object.

Examples:

Who is that lady?

‘Who’ is the lady - definitely the subject of the sentence.

The ladies, four of whom were tall, entered the room.

In this sentence, ‘whom’ is the object.

Jerry made an appointment with a psychic, whom he met on vacation.

In this case, whom is interchangeable with ‘he.’

Martha is the one who interviewed best.

‘Who’ is Martha, the subject of the sentence.

When in doubt about when to use who or whom in writing, think about changing who to the subject of the sentence – or whether it works best as an object.

At first, you may have to think about the rules of when to use who and whom in a sentence, but eventually, it will become natural to the process of writing.

- **There, Their or They're?** - Sometimes it's difficult to know how to spell a word correctly, especially if they're all pronounced the same. These three words all have the same pronunciations, but they have entirely different meanings.

Examples:

'Are you going there today?' and 'There is a girl who knows her stuff.'

'There' should always be used when referring to a place. A little trick to remember is to think about replacing 'there' with 'here.' If it works, you've used it correctly.

The children have scattered their toys around the room.

Use 'their,' when referring to possession. Imagine replacing 'their' with 'our' or replacing 'they're' with 'they are.' If it works, you have used the correct form.

They're going to eat out tonight.

'They're' is a contraction that refers to the combination of the words 'they' and 'are.'

- **Me, Myself or I?** – 'I' and 'me' are personal pronouns. 'I' is used as the subject of a sentence and 'me' is used as an object after a preposition.

Examples:

Janie and I would like to see the house.

Walk to the store with Dylan and me.

'My mind becomes clearer when I talk to myself' or 'I, myself, never know the best time to call him.'

The simplest way to remember how to use 'I' or 'me' when writing or speaking is to delete the other person from the sentence and see how it sounds.

'Myself' is an often misused word that should, in no circumstances, be used in place of 'I.'

- **It's or Its?** - A common mistake in writing is to confuse the contraction, *it's*, with the possessive pronoun, *its*. An easy way to remember the rule of which to use is to know that *it's* is reducing two words, *it is*, to the contraction, *it's*.

When you're writing a sentence that might use *it's* or *its*, think about switching *it's* to *it is* and see if it makes sense.

Examples:

The tree is losing its leaves.

'Its' is used as a possessive form.

It's not a problem if you'll be here on time.

This form works when you replace 'it's' with 'it is.'

- **e.g., i.e., or vs?** – **Latin**, anyone? These Latin abbreviations are misused so many times in writing that it's difficult to keep them straight. But, if you know their meanings, it's easy to work with them.

Examples:

I enjoy some vegetarian foods, e.g., veggie sub sandwiches, salads, hummus and lentils.

Use 'e.g.' when you're giving examples that explain or add to your statement.

She wants highlights in her hair, i.e., color some strands of hair a slightly different color.

In this case, 'i.e.' is the shortened version of 'that is.'

Tonight, the game is going to be Texas A&M vs. Notre Dame.

'vs' is used in place of versus, which means 'against.'

• **Affect or Effect?** – It's simple to remember how and when to use these two words if you remember that 'affect' is a verb and 'effect' is a noun.

Examples:

The new tutor is having a wonderful effect on Laura's grades.

Or:

Dark, rainy weather can affect your mood.

- **All right or alright?** – When in doubt, use 'all right' in its two word form rather than the one word, 'alright.' Most grammatical style guides don't recognize 'alright' as a word, but it's becoming more common in writing. If you choose to use it in writing, keep in mind the general usage of the word.

Everything is going to be all right now that she's home from the war.

Using 'all right' in this sentence means that all will be good or perfect.

"It's not alright for her to speak to me like that."

'Alright' is meant to mean satisfactory or permissible and is okay to use in this sentence.

- **Advice or Advise?** – These two words are easy to remember how to use if you know that advice is a noun and advise is a verb.

Examples:

His counselor gave good advice about his college curriculum.

Or:

I wouldn't advise you to go down that path.

• **Latter or Later?** – Latter means the last thing on the list or the last item mentioned. Later means at a later time.

Examples:

We gave him three examples on the test and he picked the latter, which was correct.

Or:

Let's have the party at a later date.

• **Attain or Obtain?** – These two words are often misused when writing. They're so close in meaning that it's easy to do, but there are subtle differences in the meanings.

Examples:

He can attain any goal he sets if he only will apply himself to his studies.

You could just as easily use the word, 'reach,' in this sentence.

She wants to obtain enough business so that she can open a shop.

'Obtain' is used in place of 'get,' in this sentence.

Those are some of the most common grammatical mistakes that people make when writing. Now that writers have access to online references and helpful websites, there's really no excuse for poor-caliber writing.

It's better to pause and think about the proper rule or to research for a minute or two to find out the proper grammatical procedures rather than get it wrong and embarrass yourself.

Spelling Sets You Apart As a Writer

Computer spell check software is great, but it sometimes doesn't alert you to a misspelled word. And, you might be spelling a word correctly, but it isn't the word that you should be using in the context of the sentence.

For example, what if you wrote this sentence with a typo in it:

He tackled the breast and killed it.

Well obviously, you didn't mean to put that R in there – it should have said:

He tackled the beast and killed it.

But spell check wouldn't catch it because they're both words and both spelled properly. But one isn't correct and it could cause you a lot of embarrassment. So you can't rely on spell check to save you – you have to learn how to spell on your own.

Here are a few of the most commonly misspelled words:

- **You, Your or You're?** - These words are spelled correctly, but are used differently in sentences. Many people confuse the words your and you're and don't understand which to use.

To keep it simple, think before you write and in your mind try replacing 'you're' with 'you are.' If you can do that, you've got it right.

Examples:

I'd love to have your recipe for lasagna.

Clearly, you can't replace 'your' with 'you are' in this sentence.

Let me know when you're leaving on the cruise.

'You're' is definitely interchangeable with 'you are' in this sentence.

If the word 'you' is misspelled in a sentence, it's usually a typo that the spell check didn't catch, like 'yo' - so beware of that when typing the word and check to make sure it's spelled properly.

• **Loose or Lose?** – The English language is sometimes tricky, and these two words are good examples. *Loose* can be used in a sentence as an adjective, while *lose* is used as a verb.

Examples:

The picture fell off the wall because of a loose nail.

'Loose' is used as an adjective to describe the nail.

They might lose the game if their key player is ill.

This sentence uses 'lose' as a verb, describing what might happen if a player was ill.

- **Accept or Except?** – Use 'accept' when something is being received and use 'except' to indicate the exclusion of something.

Examples:

I'll accept your contract on the house if we can close in thirty days.

This sentence correctly uses 'accept' in the context of receiving a contract.

I have everything I need, except a warm jacket.

'Except' is used in this sentence to indicate that a warm jacket is missing.

- **Complement or Compliment?** - These two words are commonly misused in writing. A good rule to remember in this case is that 'compliment' is when you're praising something and 'complement' is used mostly when matching something.

Examples:

She enjoyed the compliments from the group after her speech.

Praise was given to the speaker after the speech.

The paint color complements the colors in the curtains.

This sentence indicates that the paint color and the colors in the curtains work together.

- **Assure, Ensure or Insure?** – It's difficult to remember how to use these three words unless you understand the more intricate part of their meanings. Each word essentially means the same thing – to secure or be certain of - but digging a bit deeper gets to the real meanings.

Examples:

I can assure you that I would be the best person for the job.

This sentence uses 'assure' to make sure that the person knows you're serious and adamant.

We're going to ensure that you make the meeting tomorrow by giving you a wake-up call.

'Ensure' in the second sentence means making something possible – or a 'sure thing.'

Did the company insure coverage of the totaled car?

The best way to think of insure is to associate it with insurance. It guarantees something. Some people use ensure and insure interchangeably.

- **Pique, Peak or Peek?** – Pique is an emotional high point and peak is the highest point of something, while peek means to look at something.

Examples:

Did the marketer pique your interest with his sales copy?

In this case, pique raised your emotions.

After he climbed to the peak of the rock formation, he took time to enjoy the view.

'Peak' is used in this sentence to show that he climbed to the very top of the rock formation.

I went and peeked at my Christmas present under the tree.

This sentence uses peeked to show someone looked at something.

- **Then or Than?** – They're both spelled correctly, but each is used in a different context. Don't confuse your reader by using them incorrectly.

Examples:

We went to dinner and then drove to the theater.

'Then' indicates what you did during the time after you went to dinner.

He's much more athletic than I am.

You're comparing something when you use 'than' in a sentence.

- **Copyright or Copywrite?** – Copyright is a word meaning exclusive rights to a product. Copywrite isn't a word, but copywriter is, so some people become confused about using copywrite to explain what a copywriter does.

Examples:

Be sure and put a copyright notice on your manuscript.

When you 'copyright' something, it means that you have exclusive rights to it and it can't be sold or marketed without your permission.

I'm going to hire a copywriter to copy write a sales page for my web site.

This sentence tells the reader that you're going to hire a professional copywriter to write specific information for a sales page. 'Copy' and 'write' is correctly used as two separate words.

- **Counsel or Council?** – These two words are often confused. Remember that 'Counsel' can be a noun or a verb and 'council' is used as a noun to help you know which to choose which to use when you're writing.

Examples:

She is going to counsel them about marriage before the wedding.

'Counsel' is used as a verb, meaning 'advise.'

My counsel says that the trial will begin next month.

'Counsel' is being used as a noun meaning a lawyer or group of lawyers.

The council meets on the last Thursday of the month and we will vote on the amendment then.

'Council' means a committee or board and is used as a noun.

- **Lie or Lay?** – These two words trip up lots of writers, and only until you know the true meaning of each will you understand which to use.

Use the word, 'lie,' as a verb when you're explaining a situation of reclining, staying or telling fibs.

Use 'lie' as a noun when you're using it to explain untruths or false stories.

Use the word, 'lay' as a verb when you want to describe something as being placed or arranged.

Use 'lay' as an adjective when you want to refer to someone as an amateur or non-professional.

Examples:

I'm going to lie down and take a nap before dinner.

In this sentence, 'lie' is used as a verb, meaning that you're going to recline.

She tells lies and then begins to believe they're true.

'Lies' in this case is used as a noun to describe untruths.

As soon as Bobby lays down his toy, we'll go to the park.

'Lay' is used as a verb, meaning that an object is about to be put down.

A lay-person can't practice law without a license.

Here, 'lay' is used to describe a person who is unqualified to practice law.

Spelling is truly a skill that can set you apart as a good writer. Thank goodness that we now have great spell-checkers that come with our computers, but they're not foolproof. If you really have a problem with spelling, go the extra mile and take time to edit or outsource your work to an editor for additional help.

There are some specific spell check software packages you can get that are geared toward normal grammar/spelling checks and some are targeted to medical writing, legal writing and more.

Punctuation Rules You Can't Live Without

If you're a novice writer, you should always proofread your work carefully before clicking on the button to share or publish it.

This includes blogs that you might have or those you choose to comment on. Misused punctuation can give a wrong first impression of what you're attempting to project about your writing skills.

This may add on to the time it takes to get a product out or to communicate with others, but eventually the rules will be embedded in your thinking process and you won't have to look up a rule before you write.

Here are some of the most common punctuation mistakes and some examples to demonstrate how it should be punctuated:

- **Commas** - Commas are used to separated thoughts or clauses within a sentence. The rule is that there must be a conjunction (such as 'and') joining the clauses.

Examples:

Correct: "I've studied hard, and I believe I'll pass the test."

Wrong: "I've studied hard, I believe I'll pass the test."

You can clearly see that if the conjunction 'and' wasn't present in the sentence it would sound unnatural.

Correct: I've studied hard. I believe I'll pass the test.

Another correct way to write the sentence is to place a period between thoughts:

- **Quotation Marks** – It's easy to see how writers can be confused about how to use quotation marks. There are so many ways it can be done.

You can use them singularly or double, direct or indirect quotes, preceding or following speaker tags or to set off words that have special meanings.

Examples:

The professor made a point in class when he said, "Remember the quote from Benjamin Franklin, 'Energy and persistence conquer all things'."

This sentence uses a quote within a quotation. Single quotation marks are used

for the inner quotation from Benjamin Franklin.

"Don't tell me that you're not coming," she said, "because that will ruin the party."

Using this form of quotation marks is called 'interrupted direct quotations.' You see this style commonly when reading novels.

The professor said, "If you'll study your lecture notes from this semester, you'll pass the test."

A comma separates the speaker tag and the quote in this sentence.

"That was an incredible movie! The actors were perfect in their roles."

You can enclose the entire quote with quotation marks because there is no interruption in the sentences.

She commented that the manual was too "technical" for her to follow.

'Technical' is a word that the writer wants to set apart in this sentence.

Keep in mind that you should use quotation marks sparingly in your writing because they can clutter up a page if there are too many and confuse the reader.

On the other hand, if quotation marks aren't used where they should be, this too can be confusing.

- **Quotation Marks for Emphasis** - If you're an Internet Marketer or writing for Internet Marketers, you'll want to know how to use quotation marks (and when not to) - especially when used for emphasis in sales copy.

Examples:

Correct: "You'll receive a **free** gift!"

Wrong: "You'll receive a "free" gift!"

Even though both ways are actually correct, it's much better to use bold face to emphasize the word 'free' rather than using quotation marks.

- **Hyphenation** – Hyphenation commonly occurs in compound words, especially when the words are being used as adjectives before a noun.

Don't confuse hyphens with dashes and the minus sign.

Examples:

By using the trial-and-error method in the experiment, he came to a conclusion.

Or:

We tackle those tasks on a day-to-day basis.

Notice that spaces aren't necessary between a hyphen and the words it's connecting.

Keep in mind that hyphens and dashes are mainly used to divide thoughts and/or make reading easier.

- **Colon or Semi-colon?** – These two punctuation marks are very confusing, but when used correctly in writing they can be very helpful. The purposes of these two punctuation marks are entirely different.

Use the colon before listing a group of items. The semi-colon is used to join two parts of a sentence (clauses).

Examples:

Please bring the following items to school with you: pencils, paper, pen and laptop.

Here, you're setting up the reader to know which items should be brought to school, and then the items are listed.

I don't know why I'm afraid of water; I've never had a bad experience.

In this sentence, you're stating a fact and then elaborating on the same subject. Actually, the two thoughts could work as separate sentences, too.

- **Parentheses** – A 'parenthetical' expression means that you're using parentheses to add a thought or tidbit to the sentence because it adds to or better explains the sentence.

You can also use parentheses to indicate separation, for example with numbers.

Examples:

My dog sleeps with me (she's somewhat spoiled) at the foot of the bed.

This parenthetical expression adds a bit of humor to the sentence without it being an actual part of the main idea in the sentence.

(1), (2), (3) or (a), (b), (c). Parentheses work well in instances when you're making lists.

- **Dashes** – The 'dash' is used to set apart and emphasize a word or group of words. They can also be used in sentences to set off words or names that contain commas between them.

Examples:

I wanted to be able to tell you a few things – how I'm making money, where I'm using my keywords – but I don't have enough time.

In the above case, you're separating the thought slightly and continuing on after the second dash.

Or:

The people on the committee – Joe Grimes, Ava Petrie, John Folsom and Grace Ward – have come to a conclusion about where we should have the picnic.

- **Apostrophes** – There are so many rules about when and when not to use apostrophes when writing. It's probably the most-used punctuation mark in the English language.

One of the ways an apostrophe is used is to form contractions. A contraction is a shortened version of a word or group of words by leaving out letters and replacing them with an apostrophe.

Examples:

Don't forget your coat when you leave the office today.

'Don't' is the contraction used for the words, 'do not.'

Or:

They aren't going to be here tonight.

'Aren't' is the contraction used for 'are not.'

Another way to use an apostrophe is to show possession.

Examples:

When Maya's house is finished, you can decorate it.

'Maya's house' shows that Maya possesses the house.

Or:

Charlie and Ben's vacation plans were discussed over lunch.

'Charlie and Ben's' shows that both have the vacation plans.

Keep in mind that you can use an apostrophe for plural nouns – except when they end in an 's.'

Examples:

The students' work to feed the hungry helped the community.

An apostrophe is used to show the plurality of the 'students.'

Or:

The Edwards' car was broken into when they were having dinner.

The apostrophe shows that the car belonged to the "Edwards" family.

If you have trouble using apostrophes with certain words or forms of words, it's a good idea to keep a list next to the computer when you're writing and refer to it if you're confused.

- **Slashes** – Although slashes (/) aren't commonly used when writing English, they are useful sometimes.

Examples:

When you cross over the border to Mexico, you'll need a picture form of identification and/or a passport.

The slash in this sentence offers an alternative. You can either use a picture form of identification and a passport or at least one of the identification forms.

Make sure that s/he has everything necessary for the big engagement party.

In this case, s/he means that you can interpret it as 'she' or 'he.'

The classes of 1964/1965 will have a reunion together.

The slash between the two years is used to separate a period of time.

We'll need a technical/creative writer to fill the job.

The slash here is used to show that the writer will need both skills for the job.

Other uses for slashes include using it to represent the word, per, in scientific units, fractions and in some abbreviations such as c/o (meaning 'in care of').

- **Ellipsis** – You've probably noticed the three periods in a row in writing, but may not have known that they're called 'ellipsis.' The use of an ellipsis in writing indicates that figures or words are missing and are mostly used with quotations.

Examples:

It doesn't matter if the children get out an hour early...we can arrange our schedules.

Here, it's used as a slight pause rather than making two complete sentences.

The Declaration of Independence begins, "When in the course of human events..."

Here, the ellipsis is used to indicate that the content goes on, but you're showing only the beginning portion of it.

Final Words About Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation

Grammar, spelling and punctuation in writing are important factors in setting you apart as a professional writer. If you don't want to be a 'professional' writer, ' but simply be able to write content for your own site, these three elements of writing can help you get your point across.

It's extremely important that you proofread your writing before hitting the button to share your work with others. Poor grammar, punctuation and spelling can hurt any efforts you might have put in to a website or sales copy, and you should strive to make it the best it can be.

Even though these three elements are completely separate entities, they work together to present a mechanically-correct document that you can be proud of. Proofreading your work before publishing may seem tedious and boring, but it's important to find and correct errors.

And don't forget that you can tweak everything online. So if you publish your sales copy and three days later you go back to reread it and find a glaring mistake, just edit the HTML file and upload a new one in its place!

You can also outsource your content to freelance editors at sites like Elance.com and have someone with a fresh eye review your work, since we often miss our own mistakes.

Become an effective proofreader by reading this guide and referring to it when you have questions. Reading your work aloud can help you find errors and will also help you develop a clear and flowing style of your own.

Eventually, you'll begin to recognize common mistakes and typos that you're likely to make and this will result in becoming more mindful of what you're

writing. Dictionaries, spell checks and thesauruses are great tools to call upon when in doubt.

There are many “style guides” and software that address the rules and foibles of grammar, spelling and punctuation in the English language. There’s no way we could include all of that in this guide, but we have addressed some of the common problems and hope this helps you in your own writing ventures.

As you perfect your own writing, you’ll notice the urge to email everyone else when you land on other sites and see a mistake. Don’t get too bogged down in being a free editor, but if you happen to see someone you admire making a common error, you might want to mention it in passing!



PLR CONTENT SOURCE

Your Source For High Quality, Private Label Rights
Content That You Can Actually Afford and Profit From

www.PLRContentSource.com