



TRiO Student Support Services
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You can go anywhere from here!

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Improving Your Writing: Some Practical Advice

- ✎ **You can improve your writing**—anyone can—but it will require work and time. Even a small effort toward improvement can have positive results. It's up to you.
- ✎ **Care about your writing.** Take it seriously. Good writing is important.
- ✎ **Be open to feedback.** Most writing can stand some improvement.
- ✎ **Read. Anything. Daily.** The more familiar you are with a language, the more comfortable you are with it. Distinguishing between proper and improper word choice, grammar and so on will become easier.
- ✎ **Improve your vocabulary.** Learn a few new words every week, month, or year. A wide vocabulary gives you a better command of a language; a bigger word menu provides you with more selection and more possibilities of expression when conveying ideas to others.
- ✎ **Practice writing.** Write letters. Write in a journal. Write whenever you can. Write about anything! By writing more, you'll become more comfortable with the act of writing.
- ✎ **Buy books about writing style, and read them.** Even a few pages every month can be helpful.
- ✎ **Revise your writing.** Revise. Revise. Revise. Revise for simplicity, clarity, and readability.
- ✎ **Make friends with a dictionary and thesaurus.** If you encounter an unfamiliar word, LOOK IT UP! If you use the same word repeatedly, FIND A NEW ONE! Take control of your language; don't let it control you.
- ✎ **Read your writing out loud.** Your ears can tell you a lot about your writing. For example, are you out of breath or confused at the end of a sentence that you've just read aloud? Does every sentence sound the same?
- ✎ **Simplify your writing.** Eliminate unnecessary words and phrases.
- ✎ **Think clearly when you are writing.** Don't let fuzzy thoughts become fuzzy words. And if thinking fuzzily helps you get started, return to that fuzzy first draft, and revise it for clarity! Don't let rough draft fuzziness become final draft fuzziness.

(over, please)

The Most Important Comma Rules

Conjunctions

Use a comma when joining two sentences with a conjunction.

Ex. → I went shopping, and I bought several things that were on sale.

Don't use a comma when there is no subject after the conjunction. Then it's not a case of joining two sentences.

Ex. → I went to the mall and saw several of my friends there.

Lists

When you have three or more items in a series, use commas to separate them. It is preferred that you place a comma in front of the and.

Ex. → Please go to my house, feed the dog, and pick up my mail.

Dependent Clauses

Use a comma after introductory dependent clauses.

Ex. → If you need help, let me know.

Ex. → When he's finished mowing the lawn, please pay him.

Do not use a comma when the main clause is followed by the subordinate (dependent) clause.

Ex. → Let me know if you need help.

Who, Which, and That Clauses

Use commas to set off who, which, or that clauses that are not relevant to the sentence.

Ex. → John, who is a friend of mine, just became president of the bank.

Do not use commas when the clause is vital to the meaning.

Ex. → Children who cry on planes are hated by all passengers.

Interrupters, Names of Address, and Appositives

Use commas to set off interrupters, names of address, and appositives.

Ex. → Fred, as you know, is my neighbor.

Ex. → What did you think of the speech, Jeanine?

Ex. → My cousin, the recent graduate, got her first job at a law firm.

