**11/15/2013**

**GOOD SENTENCES**

**CLEAR WRITING IS CLEAR THINKING.**

**AGREEMENT RULES**

**Rule #1)** **Find the real subject. Ignore phrases between the subject and the verb.**

One of the kids (is are) sick today.

Joe, who is one of the nicer people, (is are) happy to do good deeds for people.

My kids, unlike my lovely wife, (is are ) too young to remember President Nixon.

One car among the hundreds at the show (has have) an original “slant six” engine.

**Rule # 2)** **The following words are singular:**

**Each, either, neither**

**anyone, anybody, someone, somebody**

Somebody (is are) in the basement!

Each one (has have) its own label.

**(Now try Rule #1 and Rule #2 combined):**

One of my cats (is are) completely insane.

Each of my cats (has have) psychological issues.

Anybody among the thousand in the audience (is are ) welcome to sing on stage.

**Rule #3) *Here, there* and *where* are never the subject. Find the real subject and match it with**

**the verb.**

Oh, here (is are) my pencils!

Where on Earth (is are) your shoes, young man?

There (is are) the chairs; bring them up please.

**Rule #4) If two subjects are joined by *or* or *nor*, take the one closest to the verb and make it agree**

**with the verb.**

Bob or his cousin Gina (is are) singing at the wedding.

Neither my wife nor I (is are am) very good at singing.

Neither Mr. Welden nor his many children (has have) any baseball skills.

**AGREEMENT**

**Pick the correct word.**

1. My parents and yours (is are) completely different.
2. The leftovers or the garbage can (is are) emitting a foul odor.
3. Neither movies nor a walk (sounds sound) like a good idea.
4. If anyone wishes to go to the game, (he they) must buy a ticket before tomorrow.
5. All of the books (was were) ruined by the rain storm.
6. Where (is are) the pencils?
7. The best one of all the entries (was were) selected by the judges.
8. There (is are) my books, under the table.
9. Sixty pounds (is are) too much to carry by yourself.
10. Either Greg or his father always (plow plows) our driveway.
11. The hardest thing about relatives (is are) that they stay too long.
12. Melissa, as well as her brothers, (has have) developed flu symptoms.

**Fix any error in agreement.**

1. Neither of my cars is very good in the snow.
2. In fact both of them are ready for the junk yard.
3. Each of them has bald tires and no heat.
4. If there’s some rocks on the side of the road, I’ll throw them in the back for extra weight.
5. I’m not sure though, whether rocks or a big bag of sand are more practical.
6. Is there any ways to know?
7. Every one of the theories I’ve heard sound reasonable.
8. Hopefully, the snow and cold are going away soon.

**PARALLEL STRUCTURE Phrase a series of items in a grammatically consistent way.**

In the following sentences, number the parallel ideas. If one element is not parallel in form to the other one or two, write its number and the correct form on the line. Write C before the number of a correct sentence.

EXAMPLE : 1 2 3

*Mr. Brown's lecture was timely, informative, and many people attended it.*

3*. well attended*

Fix these so that there is parallel structure:

1. The Indians frequently moved an entire village by building a travois, hitching it to a horse, and then they piled their possessions on this simple contraption.

2. For a number of years Milton was blind, poor, and with no friends.

3. The Arabian horse has a beautiful wedge-shaped head, wide-set eyes, and its ears are very flexible.

4. A diving bell enables a person to descend below the surface of the water, to remain there for some time, and often recovering treasures from sunken ships.

5. Mr. Finn was aware of Sam's lack of experience and that he was not yet ready for promotion.

6. One must always do his best when working, playing, or when he studies.

7. One day Larry suggested painting our sailboat and to start practicing for the race.

8. The students complained that the waiting room was always cold, the buses were always late, and about the lack of seats on the bus at all times.

9. The heavily laden llama took a few steps, lay down, and then refusing to move until his burden was lightened.

10. After his speech Dan was criticized for lacking enthusiasm, for mumbling, and that he mispronounced athletics.

11. Columbus's three major problems were gaining the financial support of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, to obtain three ships, and to gather a crew of eighty-eight men.

12. The word *kind* implies sympathy, humaneness, and being interested in another's welfare.

**CLEAR SENTENCES:**  Make your sentences say exactly what you want them to say

*What is the football player's name wearing number 62?* (Is the name of the football player wearing the number? That's what the sentence seems to say.)

*Fran tripped and cut her leg with the tip of her ski but it didn't break*. (Fran's leg or the ski?)

**REFERENCE OF PRONOUNS**

**ANTECEDENT OF PRONOUN.** The word to which a pronoun refers is called the “antecedent."

**AMBIGUOUS REFERENCE**. Do not use a pronoun if there is the slightest doubt about its antecedent. Reword or rearrange the sentence, or supply a needed noun.

CONFUSING: *When Norma's dog, Fifi, had been lost for hours, she was so worried she asked the police to find her.*

REWORDED: *When her dog, Fifi, had been lost for hours, Norma was so worried she asked the police to find her.*

CONFUSING: *Tom laid a package on the hall table which the postman had just handed him.*

REARRANGED*: On the hall table Tom laid a package which the postman had just handed him.*

**QUOTATION FOR CLARITY** Quote the words of the speaker if the direct quotation makes the meaning clearer.

CONFUSING: *Debby told her sister that the flowers were for her.*

CLEAR*: Debby told her sister, "The flowers are for you."*

CLEAR*: Debby told her sister, "The flowers are for me."*

**IMPLIED REFERENCE**. Don’t let a pronoun refer to a word that is not expressed or clear.

*At the sound of the trumpet forty chariots dashed along the course, and each charioteer, urging his horses forward, tried to pass them*. Instead of them use “his rivals”.

**INDEFINITE IT, YOU, THEY**. In formal speech and writing avoid the indefinite use of *it, you*, and *they*.

*In Indian gardens they grew pumpkins, squash, and beans as well as corn. (*Avoid the vague *they.)*

**WHICH**. Do not use which in referring to a whole statement if that statement contains a noun to which the pronoun may erroneously refer.

CONFUSIN*G: The Eskimo umiak is made of bone or wood and sealskin, which is done without using nails.*

CLEAR: *The Eskimo umiak, made of bone or wood and sealskin, is built without using nails.*

**THAT, THIS.** Be sure that the antecedent of the pronoun this or that is clear.

*George Calvert died before the Maryland Charter went into effect. This was partly the results of the extremely cold winter in Newfoundland*. Replace “this” with “His death”

***Writing Clear Sentences: Vague or Ambiguous Pronouns***

Revise each sentence to express its idea clearly and definitely. Get rid of every vague *you, they*, or *it.* Either replace the pronoun with a more specific word, or rephrase the sentence to eliminate the problem.

***EXAMPLE:*** *Of all the Alpine peaks, the Matterhorn impresses you the most.* Instead of “you” use “tourists”

1. In *Travels with a Donkey*, by Robert Louis Stevenson, it tells about the author's wanderings through the south of France.

2. Tina is studying to be a teacher, and she likes it very much.

3. Summer is my favorite season, because then you go sailing and swimming.

4. In the Southwest they have some houses that are made of adobe.

5. If divers come up out of the water too quickly, it may give them diver's palsy.

6. Rita wore a cameo on a chain around her neck, which her uncle had sent her from Italy.

7. They have a wide desert in Australia, which divides the continent into two parts.

8. Charlie is too short to shoot baskets, but he likes it just the same.

9. In my sister's office they have a machine that photographs letters.

10. I enjoy quiz programs on television, because you always learn something from them.

11. In the poem “The Raven,” they say that the raven kept repeating the word “nevermore.”

***More Checking Antecedents***

Correct the following sentences. Make sure that the antecedent of every pronoun is clear.

1. When she reached her seventy-fifth birthday, Anne helped her mother bake an enormous cake for her grandmother.

2. Mrs. Matson told Mrs. Bond that her collie is digging up her pansies.

3. Fred tried out Peter's hockey stick and decided he needed a new one before the skating season started.

4. I would rather read novels than poems because some of them are difficult to understand.

5. After we had pasted for about an hour, Mother came in to see how they looked.

6. When I see a bully punching a small boy, I want to join in and help beat him up.

7. Connie pushed her feet back into her sneakers before her mother had a chance to rinse them off.

**DANGLING AND MISPLACED MODIFIERS** Put a participle, infinitive, or any other modifier close to the word it modifies, or revise the sentence to eliminate the problem.

**PROBLEM** *Staying close to the bottom of the ocean, fishermen rarely see ribbon fish.* Who stays close?

**IMPROVED** *Because ribbonfish stay close to the bottom of the ocean, fishermen rarely see them.*

**OR** *Staying close to the bottom of the ocean, ribbonfish are rarely seen by fishermen.*

**PROBLEM**  *To build the frame of a kayak, walrus bones are used by the Eskimos.*  (*To build* seems to modify *Eskimos*.)

**IMPROVED**  *To build the frame of a kayak, Eskimos use walrus bones.*

**PROBLEM** *Bright and shiny, Teddy treasured his new dime.*

**IMPROVED** *Bright and shiny, Teddy's new dime was one of his treasures.*

**PROBLEM**  *Listening to the forecast, the weatherman predicted rain for tomorrow.*

**IMPROVED**  *Listening to the forecast, I heard the weatherman predict rain for tomorrow.*

**ELIMINATING DANGLING AND MISPLACED MOIFIERS** Improve the following sentences.

1. At certain seasons cargo ships anchor in California harbors packed with Alaska salmon.

2. Having become waterlogged, Raoul pulled his balsa boat up onto the shore to dry.

3. Running for the bus, the box broke and the oranges rolled over the grass.

4. Looking for a shelter from the rain, the drugstore seemed an ideal spot to Les.

5. Liking winter sports, my uncle's ski lodge in the White Mountains is the center of attraction for me on holiday weekends.

6. Tommy was out of the pet shop before his mother had paid the owner, clasping the wriggly puppy in his arms.

7. Groping my way up the narrow stairs, a door on the landing opened stealthily.

8. Having had no instruction in horseback riding, Genevieve's unexpected gallop through the woods was terrifying.

9. Tied up at the weather-beaten wharf, Joey saw big ships, little ships, fishing boats, and freighters waiting to sail out to sea.

10. To learn the will of the gods, the oracle at Delphi was consulted by the ancient Greeks.

11. Lighting on Thoreau's palm, the piece of cheese was nibbled by the wild field mouse.

12. Alert and easily trained, some fire stations are still guarded by Dalmatians.

13. While climbing Rag Mountain, bobcats and bears may be encountered by tourists.

14. Hanging from a palm tree, we saw three tiny monkeys.

15. Safe and warm, the Indian mother worked while her papoose rested in his cradleboard.

**MORE SUBTLE PROBLEMS WITH DANGLING OR MISPLACED MODIFIERS**

**PROBLEM** *English ships established a trade with the North American Indians in beaver pelts.* (Were the Indians dressed in beaver pelts?)

**PROBLEM**  *Montezuma's indecision cost him his life and his empire finally.* (Does *finally* modify *empire*?)

**PROBLEM**  *Dad asked Phil at least once a week to cut the grass.*

**IMPROVED** *At least once a week, Dad asked* **Phil** *to cut the grass.*

**IMPOROVED**  *Dad asked Phil to cut the grass at least once a week.*

**LONG INTERRUPTERS** Ordinarily do not interrupt the natural order of a sentence by long, wordy modifiers.

**PROBLEM** *The first settlers in Hawaii, when they saw the green hills, wide valleys, running streams, and fertile soil, must have forgotten their past hardships.*

**IMPROVED** *The first settlers in Hawaii must have forgotten their past hardships when they saw the green hills, wide valleys, running streams, and fertile soil.*

**CORRELATIVE CONJUNCTIONS** Some conjunctions—for example, either . . . or, neither . . . nor, both . . . and, not only . . . but also—go in pairs. Place these paired conjunctions just before the words they connect.

*Larry not only was secretary of our club but also treasurer.*

**MORE PRACTICE**

1. Jennifer made a necklace for her aunt who runs an antique shop in California while at camp in Maine.

2. Carla cut the cake she had baked for the postponed party reluctantly.

3. Jack has been wondering how to earn enough money for the trip to Toledo all week long.

4. Myra almost peeled enough apples to make two large pies.

5. Be sure to cut down any bushes that have grown too high as you clear a path to the house.

6. When they boarded the train, Sam placed the tennis racket in the luggage rack over his head with which he hoped to beat Larry Martin.

7. Bart not only likes pizza but also lasagna.

8. Teddy has been learning how to take care of the polliwogs he catches in the brook in Ms. Gleason's kindergarten.

9. Mark assembled the model airplane for his cousin that he had smuggled into the house as a birthday gift.

10. Sandra hopes either to get a job as an X-ray technician or a medical secretary.

11. Pete and Don kept hearing strange noises the two first nights they camped out

12. Don't try to catch the eye of a boy or a girl who is playing in the orchestra for any reason.

13. Aunt Lena neither likes my dog nor my cat.

14. The hornbook was used in England by children to learn to read and write without a doubt.

**AWKWARDNESS**  Improve awkward, clumsy sentences. Your sentences should sound natural, smooth, and idiomatic.

**AWKWARD** *The reason Robert Burns suffered from severe headaches and fits of gloom may have been due to the hardships of his early years.]*

**MORE NATURAL** *The hardships of Robert Burns' early years may have been responsible for his severe headaches and fits of gloom.*

**WRONG ELEMENT** Don't use the wrong grammatical element.

**PHRASE FOR NOUN** *The summer homes of the Eskimos are in skin tents*. (Remove the word “in.”)

**CLAUSE FOR NOUN**

*Another favorite dish of Dad's is when Mother makes chicken stew with dumplings*. Remove *when Mother makes.*

**CLAUSE FOR PHRASE**

*Horace Mann was anxious that he might provide better schools for the children*. Use *to* rather than *that he might.*

**INFINTITVE PHRASE FOR GERUND PHRASE**

*Daniel Boone enjoyed to go long hunting trips by himself.*  Use *going* rather than *to go*.

**AVOIDING AWKWARNESS**  Improve the following sentences.

1. My grandmother enjoys it to knit sweaters for my sister and me.

2. When Balboa saw the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean was the most thrilling experience of his life.

3. The reason a steel ship floats is due to the displacement of a quantity of water equal to the ship's weight

4. Mother wants that you should return her book to the library.

5. My cousin is considering to become a camp counselor next summer.

6. Our next-door neighbor is increasing in his negligent habit not to cut the hedge between his house and ours.

7. The place most people like best is at home.

8. The decision the junior class has to make is if they will have a picnic or a cookout.

9. The recent hurricane damaged our big elm tree, but it was able to be saved by the tree surgeon.

**SENTENCE SHIFTS**

**SHIFTS IN CONSTRUCTION** Do not needlessly shift subject, voice, tense, mood, or number.

**SHIFT IN SUBJECT AND VOICE**  *John Chapman took the cultivation of apples seriously and for this reason apple seeds were sown throughout the Midwest.* (Try *for this reason, he sowed…)*

**SHIFT IN TENSE** *The leaves on the trees started to come out and the nesting season for the birds begins.*

**SHIFT IN MOOD** *Keep your eyes open for interesting shells and pieces of driftwood; then you should try to make them into attractive gifts.*

**SHIFT IN NUMBER** *The Medfield cheerleaders wear a white sweater and a red skirt*

**UNFINISHED CONSTRUCTION, MIXED CONSTRUCTION**  Don't begin a grammatical construction and leave it unfinished. Don't mix in one sentence two ways of saying a thing.

**MIXED** *I cried, not because I was sad, but because of happiness.*

**RIGHT** *I cried, not because I was sad, but because I was happy.*

***Being Consistent***  Improve the following sentences. Express each thought clearly and precisely.

1. At first Rover didn't like his new dog food, but it was finally eaten by him

2. Television provides a person educational opportunities and helps you enjoy much of your free time at home.

4. If a person wants to strengthen his feet and ankles, you should curl your toes inward and then outward about fifty times a day.

6. Public speaking trains the mind, develops your voice, and helps one to overcome his nervousness before an audience.

7. After graduation George Washington Goethals was invited to remain at West Point as an instructor, but he prefers to work at first as an Army engineer.

9. If anyone is planning to move to Arizona, its climate should be studied first.

10. Even if you don't care for spaghetti, one should try to eat it if one's hostess serves it.

11. Wait until the pudding is cool. Then you should put it in the refrigerator.

**ACCURATE CONNECTIVES** Use the conjunction that expresses your idea exactly.And equals plus; but equals minus. Don't use one when you mean the other. Don't use either when you need a subordinate conjunction or a relative pronoun.

*A camel likes to drink water and doesn't like to get wet*. Use ***but*** rather than ***and***.

*Pillow trees can root from twigs, and they spread very quickly.* Add ***Because*** at the beginning of the sentence and take out ***and.***

*Many German shepherds have been trained as Seeing Eye dogs, and they guide their masters safely along busy city streets*. Use ***who*** instead of ***and they***.

**WHEN, WHERE** Use when for time and where for place.

**WRONG:** *A buffer state is when one country through its position between two other nations form an obstacle to aggression.*

**CLEAR:** *A buffer state is a small neutral state lying between two larger potentially rival powers*.

**BECAUSE, THAT**  Do not use the subordinate conjunction *because* to introduce a noun clause.

*The reason camels do not sink into the deep sand of the desert because their feet are that broad and flat*. Rather than ***because*** use ***that.***

***Using Accurate Connectives***

2. We do not know the ending of the pilgrimage to Canterbury, and Chaucer never finished his Canterbury Tales.

3. Florida was named after the Spanish festival of flowers, and I didn't know this until recently.

4. The ship's captain threatened to leave Balboa on a lonely island to starve, and the crew begged for the stowaway's life.

5. Biology is where you study living organisms and vital processes.

6. I read in Science News Letter where the American Indians have been called the greatest natural horsemen the world has ever known.

7. Mardi Gras is a carnival day and it is especially popular in New Orleans.

8. The Observer has an editorial page and on this page can be found editorials, letters to the editor, and a short essay or two.

9. A cartographer is when a person makes maps.

**CLEAR THINKING**

**ACCURATE WORDS** Think what your words mean. Choose words that express your ideas clearly, exactly, and complete.

*One of the problems of Lexington residents is the lack of poor schools.*  (A ***lack*** of ***poo***r schools is good, no?)

**LOGICAL STATEMENT** Be logical. Make complete comparisons. Do not say a thing is what it isn't.

*The setting of The Cruel Sea is in the Atlantic Ocean*. (The setting isn't in the ocean; it is the ocean.) Take out the word “in”

*Cobalt is* ***the******mineral****’s name used in many magnetic alloys.*

Is the **name** used in magnetic alloys? Try *Cobalt is the* ***name of the mineral****….*

*The meow of a Pallas's cat resembles a small dog.*

Don't compare a sound with an animal. Try …*resembles the* ***bark*** *of a small dog*.

*Prince has the qualities I look for in a dog intelligent, brave; and loyal*.

*Intelligent, brave*, and *loyal* are not names of qualities. Replace *intelligent, brave*, and *loya*l with *intelligence, courage* and *loyalty.*

**REPETITION FOR CLARITY**  Repeat any words needed to make your ideas clear.

*Our scoutmaster has taught us to swim and sail boats*. Better: *…to swim and to sail boats*.

***Saying What You Mean***

In each of the following sentences, decide or guess what the writer meant to say and then express the idea clearly and exactly.

1. Before roads were cleared through the forests, the best way to travel was water.

2. It is true that Louis Pasteur helped disease.

3. Last week three stolen bicycles were found in the Aberjona, the name of the river that divides our town.

4. Lucy couldn't find time Saturday to study and tidy up her room.

5. Sally promised to dust and prepare the refreshments if I vacuumed the living room.

6. An obstacle to my becoming a good trumpeter is time to practice.

7. Your request for information about points of interest in Quebec has been sent to you.

8. Are the houses on Lantern Lane closer together than other streets?

9. The setting of Green Mansions takes place in the primitive, tangled, mysterious forests of South America.

10. Terry Thomas is a kind, understanding girl who is always willing to sacrifice her fun and help your baby-sitting problems.

**WORDINESS, REDUNDANCY, AND OTHER NONSENSE**

Make your points as simply and directly as possible. Sometimes, less (fewer words) means more (clarity).

1. He dropped out of school on account of the fact that it was necessary for him to help support his family.

2. It is expected that the new schedule of departures and arrivals will be announced by the bus company within the next few days.

3. There are many ways in which a student who is interested in meeting foreign students may come to know one.

4. It is very unusual to find someone who has never told a deliberate lie on purpose.

5. Trouble is caused and created when people disobey the rules that have been established for the safety of all.

6. Some people in society believe in capital punishment, while other people of a different opinion are against it; there are many opinions on this subject.

7. The reason I went to that place is because I hoped and wished that a certain girl named Tanya might possibly be located at the same place.

**Try having a little fun by going in the opposite direction: Modify the sentences below, with the goal of creating the wordiest, ugliest, word-fluffiest piece-of-junk sentences you can.**

The teacher assigned twenty pages of reading.

My dog has fleas.

***Writing Clear, Concise Sentences***

Rewrite the faulty sentences, correcting all errors in grammar and sentence structure. If necessary, divide a sentence into two or three sentences. Prepare to give a reason for each change you make.

1. We saw some mountain laurel driving along Sunset Road.

2. Tacked on the attic wall, Ted discovered an old pirate's map.

3. Dad told Alf that since he had used the gas, he should replace it.

4. Two memorable scenes are the description of the dog show and when the boys fight for the possession of the stray hound.

5. There should be more schools similar to the High School of Music and Art for those students who have special talents, secondly, to limit the classes to twenty-five, and finally require all academic students to take at least one vocational class.

6. The pizzas at Tony's are better than any restaurant.

7. Oatmeal boils quickly on a gas stove and you have to watch it, if the cereal might spill over the sides putting out the flame, which might have serious results.

8. Metaphor is when you transfer a word from an object to which it properly belongs to another object but doing it in such a way that a comparison is made though not expressed.

9. In the late fall of 1825, they officially opened the Erie Canal

10. The Spanish influence has never been wholly lost in California, which shows in the names of the cities and the style of the building.

11. The trouble with Bill is due to the fact that he puts off doing his homework until it is too late for him to do all of it and still get to bed on time.

12. The reason I like cooking lessons better than sewing is because you can eat the things you make in cooking class.