EDITING SKILLS

RES101 Academic Research & Writing
RES401 Postgraduate Research & Writing
What does it say?

Paraphrase the following sentence, write the first thing that comes into your mind, don’t be too concerned about being right or wrong:

“I didn’t say he stole the money”
DEBRIEF

• What did you think the sentence meant?

• It is so important to re-read your essay, identifying sentences that can be misinterpreted and rewording them.

• Information that is misinterpreted by the reader can confuse, mislead and frustrate the reader.

• They can even lead to the reader taking action on information that is not correct.
Editing your Essay

• Great content and research with poor editing can lower what would have been a good grade.
• It is important that you edit information with appropriate sentence structure and punctuation to present your arguments: logically, clearly and persuasively.

• This session focus on editing sentence structure and punctuation.
Active versus Passive Voice

• In **active** voice sentences, the subject *does* the action:
  • Liz played the piano.

• In **passive** voice sentences, the subject *receives* the action:
  • The piano was played by Liz.

The sentence that uses the **active** voice is stronger, more direct, uses fewer words, is clear, concise and to the point.

The sentence that uses the **passive** voice is weaker, less direct and vague. It takes the focus away from the person taking the action, however, it isn’t incorrect, just unclear.
ACTIVITY: Active versus Passive Voice

Rewrite the *passive* voice sentences as *active* voice sentences:

- The dog was hit by the car.
- The house will be built by the construction crew in five months.

Rewrite the *active* voice sentences as *passive* voice sentences:

- Julie answered the question.
- The dolphins had learned many tricks.
Answers: Active versus Passive Voice

Rewrite the *passive* voice sentences as *active* voice sentences

- The dog was hit by the car.  **[The car hit the dog]**
- The house will be built by the construction crew in five months.  **[The construction crew will build the house in five months]**

Rewrite the *active* voice sentences as *passive* voice sentences

- Julie answered the question.  **[The question was answered by Julie]**
- The dolphins had learned many tricks.  **[Many tricks had been learnt by the dolphins]**
Reduce Unnecessary Words

Often people will use several, small ambiguous words to express a concept rather than choosing clear and concise words.

Edit the following sentences making them clear and concise:

• The politician talked about several of the merits of after-school programs in his speech (14 words).

• Wordy: Suzie believed but could not confirm that Billy had feelings of affection for her (14 words).

• The politician endorsed after-school programs in his speech. (8 words)

• Suzie suspected that Billy liked her. (6 words)
Reduce wordiness by editing unnecessary words:

• Eric Clapton and Steve Winwood formed a new band of musicians together in 1969, giving it the ironic name of Blind Faith because early speculation that was spreading everywhere about the band suggested that the new musical group would be good enough to rival the earlier bands that both men had been in, Cream and Traffic, which people had really liked and had been very popular. (66 words)

• Eric Clapton and Steve Winwood formed a new band in 1969, ironically naming it Blind Faith because speculation suggested that the group would rival the musicians’ previous popular bands; Cream and Traffic. (32 words)
Capitalise Letters

- To start a sentence - In the beginning...
- When using ‘I’ - I said I would be there.
- People’s names - Steve, this is Claire.
- Names of Places - Pacific Ocean.
- Days of the week, months, holidays - In 2050, Christmas Day (25th December) will be a Sunday.
- Titles - World Health Organisation, Red Cross.
- Countries, nationalities, languages and religions - Mexico, Swedish, French, Buddhism, Christianity.
PUNCTUATION

Let's eat grandpa.
Let's eat, grandpa.

Common Punctuation issues…

- When to use a Full Stop.
- When should you use a Question Mark?
- When to use a Comma.
- When to use an Apostrophe‘.
- When to use a Semicolon.
Grading Essays

• One of the key areas that students lose marks is in these common areas of punctuation and grammar.

• This may sound simple, but many times there have been gaps in Education where punctuation use has been missed.

• That is why we are reviewing these key skills here.
Full stop (.)

- To mark the end of a sentence
  - *The cat is completely black.*

- To indicate abbreviated words
  - *Exod. 3:45*
  - *The teacher will be John Smith (B. Sci.)*.

- In email and internet addresses
  - *asleep@lunchtime.com*

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Question Mark

- A question mark is used at the end of a sentence when it is a question

  - *Have the students completed the exam?*
  - *What are you eating? Why?*
  - *It’s going to rain, isn’t it?*
Exercise – Full Stop or Question Mark?

- What time does the bus arrive
- My favourite food is pizza
- Do you know how to ride a bicycle
- What is your favourite season
- My brother plays football
- I love to read
- Where are you going on holidays
Answers…

• What time does the bus arrive?
• My favourite food is pizza.
• Do you know how to ride a bicycle?
• What is your favourite season?
• My brother plays football.
• I love to read.
• Where are you going on holidays?
Comma (,)

Commas are used in long sentences to separate information into readable units:

1. To separate in a list or series
   - Dad bought apples, pears, grapes and plums.
   - The dog stopped, barked loudly and then ran away.

2. After an introductory element
   - If you are ill, you ought to see a doctor.
   - However, if you are not ill, don’t go to the doctor.

3. Use commas to prevent confusion
   - To George, Harrison had been a sort of idol.
Comma (,)

Pairs of commas help in the middle of a sentence to set off a string of words which is either a parenthesis, or in contrast, to whatever went before.

- Yet in representing ourselves to ourselves, as film and television do, these media are constantly introducing and reinforcing the assumptions

- John and Inga, the couple from next door, are coming for dinner tonight.

(You can test this by removing the aside sentence and the sentence should still make sense)
Apostrophe (‘)

• Contractions - Shortened version of a word. The apostrophe shows that something has been left out:
  • Don’t (do not), Doesn’t (does not), Who’s (who is), It’ll (it will), It’s (NOTE: Only use the apostrophe when it’s is short for it is).

• Possessive/Ownership - To indicate ownership with nouns
  • the dog’s tail (belonging to a single dog).
  • The women’s magazines.
  • boys’ football boots (belonging to more than one boy).
  • God’s people.
When to use a Semicolon ;

• The most common use of a semicolon is to link two independent statements:

  “The man driving the Rubbish Truck drove past my house; he had a long beard.”

This statement could have been written as two separate sentences, but the second sentence would have been very short and there was a direct link between the two.

• Use a semicolon when you want to form a bond between two statements, typically when they are related to, or contrast one another.

• Don’t use it with conjunctions: and, but, or, nor, for, so and yet. A ‘comma’ would be used in these cases except before ‘and’.
Questions?