



*New
Course*

Written Communications Skills Workshop

Sponsored by the Office of Intramural Training
and Education
Friday, June 6, 2008

Instructor: Maggie Meitzler

Writing Skills Workshop
Syllabus
June 6, 2008

1:00–2:30 p.m.

- **Overview of the Workshop**
- **How To Use a Grammar Book**
- **Grammar:** Focusing on the most frequently made errors. Exercises in subject/verb agreement, wordiness, parallelism, active versus passive voice, agreement of pronoun and antecedent, split infinitive, double and triple negative
- **Punctuation:** Commas, semicolons, colons, and more
- **Word Usage:** Use and misuse

2:30–2:40 p.m.

Break

2:40–4:00 p.m.

- **E-mail (A solitary sport):** Writing the perfect e-mail:
 - Spelling: Is it important?
 - Tone: Who is your audience?
 - Organization: Logical flow of ideas
 - Editing and re-editing: The “cooling off period”
- **Short documents:** Organizing and writing a cover letter and abstract for a scientific paper

Subject/Verb Agreement Exercise

Rule: The number of the subject determines the number of the verb (singular subject = singular verb, plural subject = plural verb). Words that intervene between subject and verb do not affect the number of the verb. In the following sentences, circle the subject and the correct verb. (See pages 72–75 of *Writing: Grammar, Usage, and Style*.)

1. The sections on pathology, signs and symptoms, and diagnosis **contain/contains** most of the useful information in this book.
2. Important questions concerning tumor biology, treatment timing, dose intensity, consequences on quality of life, and the cost or benefit of therapies **is/are** posed.
3. The authors conclude that national efforts to reduce smoking throughout the population **is/are** critical to reducing overall cancer deaths.
4. In both treatment arms, either doxorubicin or dactinomycin **was/were** given every 6 weeks.
5. Data from our latest study **indicate/indicates** that neither the length of storage nor multiple freeze-thaw cycles **alter/alters** the ability to detect antibody.
6. Characterization of enzyme activity **indicate/indicates** that hyaluronidase may be produced by the tumor itself.
7. In summary, our analysis of treatment regimens for osteogenic sarcoma and Ewing's sarcoma patients **suggest/suggests** that increasing doxorubicin dose intensity is associated with favorable clinical response.
8. In RPMI-1640, the capacity for artificial IV metastases of B16 control cells **was/were** increased ($P < 0.1$).
9. A number of patients **was/were** at the Center after treatment.

10. The number of patients **was/were** 360 at the Center after treatment.
11. These observations would suggest that EBV infection or altered c-myc expression **is/are** associated with at least some forms of AIDS-associated lymphoid neoplasia.
12. Figure 4 and Table III **show/shows** that the effect of protein decreases the V_{max} without affecting the K_m .
13. The availability of purified melanoma antigens and genes encoding melanoma antigens **provide/provides** new strategies for vaccination.
14. The esophagus, stomach, and duodenum of each rabbit **was/were** examined.
15. Ten micrograms of DNA **was/were** digested with the restriction enzyme.

Subject/Verb Agreement (cont.)

In the following sentences, circle the subject and the correct verb.

- 1.** The signal transducer and activator of transcription (STAT) proteins is a family of transcription factors with seven members: STAT1, 2, 3, 4, 5A, 5B, and 6.
- 2.** ES cell chromatin proteins has been reported to be in a hyperdynamic state.
- 3.** Data suggests that while transcription initiation occurs at both active and inactive genes, elongation is strongly correlated only with the set of genes that is active based on transcript detection.
- 4.** It has been proposed that Fas-mediated apoptosis of inflammatory cells are a fundamental mechanism involved in the resolution of eosinophilic airway inflammation.
- 5.** It has been nearly two decades since the discovery that T helper lymphocytes includes two subsets (Th1, Th2) with different effector functions mediated by unique patterns of cytokine production.
- 6.** Thus, there is a class of genes for which there is ample evidence of transcription initiation (promoter occupancy by histone H3K4me3, histone H3K9, 14Ac, and initiating Pol II) but for which there are little evidence of transcript elongation (histone H3K36me3, histone H3K79me2, and elongating Pol II) or transcript accumulation (RT-PCR).
- 7.** A recent study found that ligation of CTLA-4 on Th2 cells protect them from Fas-mediated interaction-induced cell death.
- 8.** In summary, we have found that transcription initiation and histone H3K4me3 modification occurs at the promoters of most protein-coding genes in human cells.
- 9.** When activated, the C3 component of complement attach to potential antigens on microorganisms.
- 10.** We describe the results of a genome-wide analysis of human cells that suggests that most protein-coding genes, including most genes thought to be transcriptionally inactive, experiences transcription initiation.

Parallel Construction Exercise

Rule: When coordinating two or more elements in a sentence, be sure to use parallel construction of items, i.e., that all the components have the same grammatical form. They should match. (See pages 78–83 of *Writing: Grammar, Usage, and Style*).

1. Cells were dissolved in solution, stirred until blended, and filtering was done last.
2. In this study, we observed that STAT1 expression was lower in samples from human head and neck cancers than in normal oropharyngeal mucosa, primarily as a result of promoter methylation.
3. The results show both that the histone H3K4me3 modification is evident at genes that produce detectable transcripts and at those who do not.
4. Although the randomly selected positive control genes had transcript levels averaging 69 molecules per cell, the transcript levels in the genes in the inactive set averaged 0.7 molecules.
5. Thus, current methods for inducing chronic airway inflammation fall into two model categories: when the mice are repeatedly challenged for weeks or even months, and genetically manipulated mice that develop a spontaneous Th2-type airway inflammation in the absence of allergen exposure.
6. Thus, the adoptively transferred mice had normal expression of Fas on their eosinophils (as well as on other nonlymphoid cells), whereas the donor mouse type used controlled the expression of functional Fas on T cells.
7. Our results show that nucleosomes with H3K4me3 are associated with the promoters of more than half of the transcriptionally inactive genes in three cell types, these inactive genes are not limited to those poised for activation, and transcription initiation without transcript accumulation is a likely reason for the association.
8. We washed out the lungs five times with solution I, instilled 8-10 ml of the fluorocarbon-albumin emulsion into the trachea, incubating the lungs in 154 mM NaCl at 37°C for 20 min.

Wordiness

Avoid using more words than necessary to state something: Be brief.

an increased/decreased number of	more/fewer
as a result of	because of
consensus of opinion	consensus
small in size	small
due to the fact that	because
is at present	is
in terms of	in, of, for
may or may not	may
enclosed please find	enclosed is
a number of	few, many, several (never "some")
at the present moment	now, at this time, currently
at this point in time	now, at this time
during that time	while
fewer in number	few
for the reason that	because
in order to	to
in the event that	if
in view of the fact that	because
it is often the case that	often
large numbers of	many
on the basis of	based on
have an effect/impact on	affect
the majority of	most
in those areas where	where
produce an inhibitory effect on	affect

Wordiness Exercise

Rule: Wordiness happens in first drafts of all written works. Usually, this problem is resolved during rewriting and editing. (See Chapter 12 and the list on page 131, *Writing: Grammar, Usage, and Style*).

1. Several potential mechanisms have been proposed by a number of researchers to explain how STAT1 modulates apoptosis, including the increased expression of cell cycle regulatory genes, which has been seen in many of the experiments that have been done.
2. It should be noted that these results indicate that attachment of C3d to HEL did not improve binding to the transgenic B cells, and the opinion is advanced that this is most likely because of the high affinity of their antigen receptors for HEL.
3. Because of the fact that multiple H3K4 methylases exist in mammalian cells, it is not clear, as of this date, whether there are multiple mechanisms involved in their recruitment to promoters, and thus it is possible that at least some promoters acquire H3K4me3 nucleosomes in a manner that does not depend on transcription initiation, either partially or completely.
4. Tissues were collected from participating study subjects according to a protocol approved by a University of Pittsburgh internal review board, and written informed consent was obtained from study subjects using a form that complied with the requirements of the Federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act's so-called privacy rule.
5. A long-standing consensus of opinion is that a second general mechanism that has the capability of being responsible for transcription initiation without transcript accumulation is posttranscriptional degradation (7–10).
6. We here describe the results of a study that has been conducted in an attempt to test the not unreasonable hypothesis that a genome-wide analysis of human cells would support the finding that most protein-coding genes, including most genes thought to be transcriptionally inactive, experience transcription initiation.

7. Interestingly, and in contrast to the findings of a number of earlier-reported studies, the mice that received FAS-deficient T cells, but not the controls, developed a persistent phase of inflammation that failed to resolve even 6 wk after the last challenge.

8. Although more study is needed, these results identify *DPC4* as having the capability of being a candidate tumor suppressor gene whose inactivation may in some cases play a role in pancreatic and possibly other human cancers.

9. Nevertheless, many of our fellow colleagues feel that the development of our novel animal model of asthma has the potential to offer a new opportunity to study the mechanisms involved in chronic Th2 inflammation as well as the pathological outcomes of this long-term inflammation.

10. Because it has long been recognized that it would be valuable to achieve an understanding of the nature of the chromosomal errors introduced by the absence of SYCP3 and how these errors evade the meiotic quality assurance systems, thereby generating aneuploid offspring, we engaged in a study of those errors.

Organization Exercise

Rearrange the components of the following e-mail announcement. Renumber paragraphs in the order they should appear for logical flow (what the reader would expect).

To: NIH campus

Subject: Healthier Lifestyles Event: Free Food!

1. This endeavor also serves to support the Surgeon General's Initiative, the Healthier Feds Program, and the Office of Healthy Foods programs to increase awareness of physical activity in all populations.
2. Individuals with disabilities who need sign language interpreters and/or reasonable accommodation to participate in this event should contact the Office of Communications at 301-496-2500 and/or the Federal Relay at 1-800-877-8000. Requests should be made at least 5 days in advance of the event.
3. Join the Physical Therapy staff in supporting healthier life styles throughout the lifespan by participating in the celebration of National Physical Therapy Month, "Join the Fight Against Fast Foods," Wednesday, July 9, 2008, 11:00–1:00 p.m., in the CRC Hatfield Building 10, second floor cafeteria.
4. For further information please contact:

Fred Jones, Events Coordinator
Phone: 301-496-4700
E-mail: fred.jones@nih.gov
5. Healthy lifestyle materials on nutrition, physical activity, proper shoe wear, and bike fit will be provided to the NIH community for persons interested in making choices of physical activity during busy work schedules! Many prizes will be raffled off.

Thank you.

Editor-in-Chief
Methods of Medicine
100 Publishing Fast Lane
Next Issue, OK 10001

June 6, 2008

Dear Editor:

1. Our paper will be of particular interest to your readers because, we have tried to report a new and more precise computer model for estimating the structure of cancer cells. This paper will be of very special interest to oncologists and statisticians.
2. Correspondence and telephone calls; regarding this paper should be direct to me at the following address and telephone number, or in my absence to Tom Baker at the same address and telephone number.
3. If this paper are accepted for publication, please publish Supplemental Figs. 1-7 (two in 4-color) as supporting online material in the online version of the journal: *Methods of Medicine Online*. The three files for this material is being sent under separate cover (CD), in EPS format (6 MB each).
4. We suggest the following reviewer, an oncologist and a statistician, respectively: Mary Tamm, of Stanford University, and Louise Jameson of the Centers for Disease Control. Neither researcher have been involved in any part of the work submitted here.
5. Enclosed, is our paper, "A Mathematical Model of Cancer Cells," by M. McDermott, J. Strom, M. Caine, D. Tenant, C. Eccelston, T. Baker, S. McCoy, and P. Davidson (Bethesda Oncology Group [BOG]). Please consider this paper for publication as a: "Research Report" in the *Methods of Medicine*.

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Thank you, for your attention to our papers.

Sincerely,

Mark McDermott, PhD
Chief of Oncology Research

cc: Hardcopies and CD of supplemental figures 1-7 (Figs. S1-S7)

Abstract

To determine

we

We found that

These findings demonstrate/suggest that

Suggested Reading

Grammar Books

A Writer's Reference, 5th ed., by Diana Hacker. This is highly praised by copyeditors for depth of information. Bedford/St. Martin's, Boston, MA.

CliffQuickReview. Writing: Grammar, Usage, and Style. Jean Eggenschwiler and Emily Dotson Biggs. Wiley Publishing, Hoboken, NJ.

The Elements of Style, 4th ed. (aka Strunk and White). A well-written and long-respected pocketbook on grammar. A tradition on high school and college campuses since 1959. Longman, New York.

English Grammar in Use, 3rd ed., by Raymond Murphy. A self-study reference and practice book for intermediate students of English. Cambridge University Press, New York.

English Grammar for Dummies, by Geraldine Woods. Wiley Publishing, Indianapolis, IN.

Fun Books on Grammar and on Punctuation

Eats Shoots and Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation, by Lynn Truss. This is an easy and fun way to learn the correct use of punctuation. Although the author is British, the differences between British and American usage are well defined. Penguin Group, New York.

The Well-Tempered Sentence, by Karen Elizabeth Gordon. A punctuation handbook for the innocent, and the eager, and the doomed. Houghton Mifflin, Boston, MA.

The Delux Transitive Vampire, by Karen Elizabeth Gordon. A fun way to learn correct use of nouns, pronouns, and verbs, with hilarious examples that are sure to make you laugh. Pantheon Books, New York.

Sister Bernadette's Barking Dog: The Quirky History and Lost Art of Diagramming Sentences, by Kitty Burns Florey. Harcourt, New York.

Style Guides

All style guides contain sections on grammar, writing, and usage. They are excellent sources of good examples and up-to-date trends in usage.

AMA Manual of Style: A Guide for Authors and Editors, 10th ed. JAMA & Archives Journals, American Medical Association. Oxford University Press, New York. See pages 315–425 for serious writing guidance.

Scientific Style and Format: The CSE Manual for Authors, Editors, and Publishers, 7th ed. Council on Science Editors. The Rockefeller University Press, New York. See pages 105–134 for grammar guidance.

The ACS Style Guide. Effective Communication of Scientific Information, 3rd ed. American Chemical Society. Oxford University Press, New York. See pages 47–104 for grammar, punctuation, and style guidance.

APA Style Guide, 5th ed. American Psychological Society, Washington, DC.

The Chicago Manual of Style. The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors, and Publishers, 15th ed. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL. Standard guide used by publishers for general style and usage. See pages 145–275 for grammar, punctuation, and style guidance.

Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals: Writing and Editing for Biomedical Publication (<http://www.icmje.org/>). This general information for authors offers concise guidance for writing a scientific/medical manuscript.

Books on Scientific Writing

How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper, 6th ed. Robert A. Day and Barbara Gastel. Greenwood Press, Westport, CT.

Essentials of Writing Biomedical Research Papers, 2nd ed. Mimi Zeiger. McGraw-Hill, New York.

E-mail

Send: The Essential Guide to Email for Office and Home, by David Shipley and Will Schwalbe. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2007.

Web Sites for Grammar Help: A Sampling

There are numerous online tutorials and sites for guidance on writing. Do a quick search to find the ones that are right for you. Search on your specific problem (e.g., problems with prepositions). The best sites are usually sponsored by universities. See below for a sampling of specific sites for specific writing problems.

Articles (a, an, the)

<http://depts.gallaudet.edu/englishworks/grammar/aanthe.html>

Prepositions

<http://depts.gallaudet.edu/englishworks/grammar/main/prep.htm>

List of prepositions: <http://www.abcteach.com/abclists/prepositions.htm>

How to Write Good

1. Always avoid alliteration.
2. Prepositions are not words to end sentences with.
3. Avoid cliches like the plague—they're old hat.
4. Parenthetical words however must be enclosed in commas.
5. It is wrong to ever split an infinitive.
6. Contractions aren't necessary.
7. Do not use a foreign word when there is an adequate English *quid pro quo*.
8. One should never generalize.
9. Eliminate quotations. As Ralph Waldo Emerson once said: "I hate quotations. Tell me what you know."
10. Don't be redundant; don't use more words than necessary; it's highly superfluous.
11. Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.
12. One-word sentences? Eliminate. Always!
13. Analogies in writing are like feathers on a snake.
14. The passive voice should not be used.
15. Don't repeat yourself, or say again what you have said before.
16. Don't use commas, that, are not, necessary.
17. Do not use hyperbole; not one in a million can do it effectively.
18. Never use a big word when a diminutive alternative would suffice.
19. Subject and verb always has to agree.
20. Be more or less specific.
21. Placing a comma between subject and verb, is not correct.
22. Use your spell checker to avoid misspelling and to catch typographical errors.
23. Use the apostrophe in its proper place and omit it when it's not needed.
24. Don't never use no double negatives.
25. Proofread carefully to see if you any words out..
26. A writer must not shift your point of view.
27. Place pronouns as close as possible, especially in long sentences, as of 10 or more words, to their antecedents.
28. Everyone should be careful to use a singular pronoun with singular nouns in their writing.
29. If you reread your work, you can find on rereading a great deal of repetition can be by rereading and editing.
30. And always be sure to finish what

*The source of this list is unknown, but some of the rules came from William Safire's *Rules for Writers*.

Notes:

More Notes: