



Mechanical Issues

The 'how'

Basic grammatical issues

- Prepositions
- Subject – verb agreement
 - Especially with prepositional phrases and contractions
- Capitalization and punctuation
 - This can become very complicated (The Oxford comma, comma vs. semicolon)
 - Punctuation with quotation marks
- Spelling
- Sentence structure
 - Not a grammatical issue per se, however still very important

Specific issues

- Mass vs. count nouns
- Its vs. it's
- Than vs. then
- Words that sound similar
 - Lose, loose
- Homonyms
 - There, they're, their
 - Your, You're
 - To, Too, Two

Some general guidelines

- Vary your sentences
- Don't repeat words in proximity
- Attempt to avoid alliteration
- Don't embellish, exclaim, yell, or otherwise violate the rules of writing, unless absolutely necessary.
- Gender neutrality
 - What is it?
 - Traditionally grammatical, and standard
 - Can be exclusionary
 - Needs to be considered, you can incorporate it or not, but be aware:

Gender neutrality

- Someone left his headlights on, this guy has good taste in music
 - Traditionally grammatical, 'masculine includes the feminine'
- Consistent adherence to this rule can be alienating
 - We consider inclusion much more now and the approach to this rule is changing
 - You need to understand you are writing for readers
 - If you appear to deliberately, purposefully avoid the feminine, that could distract from your point, annoy the reader, and have them question you as a writer
 - The issue is effective writing, and understanding the audience
- How do we achieve this?

Gender neutrality

- How do we achieve it?
- Consider the following sentences:
 - Someone has left his or her machine logged in
 - As a sentence, it's passable, however expanding it will be cumbersome
 - When the user enters his or her password, his or her stored profile is retrieved, displaying the theme he or she made when setting up his or her account initially
 - Can you rewrite this?
 - Someone left her machine logged in
 - Sometimes the purposeful use of the feminine will be used to introduce some balance if the subject is unknown. If it's a narrative with multiple people, then it's very easy to introduce equality and representation.

Gender neutrality (Continued)

- Consider the following sentences:
 - Someone left their machine logged in
 - Most common method of expression
 - Not grammatically correct; pronoun and antecedent don't agree
 - Some people left their machines logged in
 - Pluralizing everything can work, however it may be incorrect
 - A machine was left (is still) logged in
 - Passive voice, distances and impersonalizes the reader
 - Everyone please remember to log out when you leave
 - Sometimes, a total rewrite is the best choice

The writing process

- Know your audience
- Writing != transcribed speech or presentation
- Different types of writing
 - Analyze
 - Describe / explain
 - Define
 - Evaluate
 - Persuade / argue

The writing process

- Planning and organization
 - Good writing reflects good thinking
 - Makes your writing more credible
- Top-down vs. bottom-up
- A lot of revising
 - If you're familiar with code, it's a very similar process
 - Expect drafts and feedback
 - Help, not criticism

The writing process

- Think about what you're writing
 - Don't just start typing
 - Jot down ideas, inclusions, thoughts, alternatives
 - For larger documents, an outline is mandatory
 - Much of the writing will already be complete
 - It will help with organization and content
 - All you have to do is fill in the blanks
 - Quick proofread, surface edit (grammatical issues, omitted words, etc.)
 - Detailed proofread, deep edit (meanings, concepts, rewrites, etc.)

The writing process

- Some editing
 - More granular process than re-writing drafts
 - It's nothing personal, it has to be done
- Writing to learn
 - Comparable to rapid prototyping
 - Revise as new ideas come in
 - Word processors make this easy
 - Requires understanding of language
 - If this is painstaking, a top-down approach may be more appropriate

For today

- Prepare a personal statement, as though you are applying for a job or graduate school (800 words max)
 - What is your proudest achievement, and how has it impacted you?
 - What are your short-term and long-term career goals, and how will a degree from our university help you achieve these goals?
 - Describe a challenging experience, such as a personal or professional setback.
 - Describe a person you admire.
 - Describe a situation where your personal or professional ethics were challenged.
 - What do you consider to be the single most important societal problem? Why?
 - Why are you a good candidate to receive this award?
 - Choose a book or books that have affected you deeply and explain why.