

## Forty-Four Editing Reminders

### CONTENT AND PARAGRAPHS

1. Don't write long introductions: In the first paragraph, set up the Big Picture.
2. In the Setup, briefly set up your Main Sub-points (Main Sub-points 1, 2, 3, etc.).
3. In the Development, develop your ideas in the order set up in the Setup (Main Sub-point 1, 2, 3, etc.).
4. Don't write long Wrap-ups that exactly repeat your Setup: Finish up in new words, in as few words as possible.
5. In formal writing, don't write too many one- or two-sentence paragraphs.
6. Don't call your essay by the title of what you're writing about—don't call it *Hamlet* if you're writing about *Hamlet*.
7. Make your title refer to your Big Picture: An Analysis of Character Types in *Hamlet*.

### SENTENCES

8. Keep your sentences parallel:

WRONG: I like to run, to jump, and swimming is one of my favorite activities.

RIGHT: I like to run, to jump, and to swim.

### WORDS

9. Remember the difference between **than** and **then**:

**Than** = the comparison; **then** = next

She's older than I am.

Then he decided to visit his brother.

10. Remember the difference between **affect** and **effect**:

**Affect** is usually the verb. **Effect** is usually the noun.

**Affect** = change. **Effect** = result.

WRONG: How does this effect you?

RIGHT: How does this affect [change] you?

WRONG: What is the affect?

RIGHT: What is the effect [result]?

WRONG: How does the affect effect you?

RIGHT: How does this effect affect you?

11. Remember the difference between **to** and **too**:

**To** = showing location; to do something

I'm going to the store.

I'm going to work hard.

**Too** = also; in addition; a lot of something

I want to do that, too.

It was too hot to go to town.

12. Remember the difference between **it's** and **its**:

**It's** = It is (It's raining) or It has (It's been raining).

**Its** = the possessive (Its color is green).

13. Remember the differences among **there/their/they're**:

**There** = place. I'm going there.

**Their** = possessive. I'm going to their house.

**They're** = contraction. They're going to their house, over there.

14. Don't forget **-d** on the end of **supposed** and **used** and other past tenses:

WRONG: I'm suppose to go.

RIGHT: I'm supposed to go.

WRONG: I use to do that.

RIGHT: I used to do that.

15. Don't forget **-s** on the end of plural words that end in **-st**:

WRONG: I saw two psychologist.

RIGHT: I saw two psychologists.

WRONG: I read about the early colonist in America.

RIGHT: I read about the early colonists in America.

16. Don't write the following as one word:

WRONG: alot

RIGHT: a lot

WRONG: eventhough

RIGHT: even though

WRONG: highschoool

RIGHT: high school

WRONG: inorder

RIGHT: in order

WRONG: infact

RIGHT: in fact

WRONG; incase

RIGHT: in case

## PUNCTUATION

17. Don't forget to put a comma after an introductory fragment:

**F,S (Fragment, Sentence)**

AFTER I ATE SUPPER, I washed the dishes.

18. If the fragment at the end of a sentence completes the meaning, don't put a comma in front of it:

**SF (Sentence Fragment)**

I washed the dishes AFTER I ATE SUPPER.

19. If the fragment at the end of the sentence DOES NOT complete the meaning, put a comma in front of it:

**S,F (Sentence, Fragment)**

I washed the dishes, WHICH IS ALWAYS BORING.

You washed the dishes, DIDN'T YOU? (question at end)

20. If you connect two sentences by a conjunction, put a comma in front of the conjunction (**FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so**):

**S,CONJ S (Sentence, Conjunction Sentence)**

I ate supper, AND I washed the dishes.

21. If you don't have a complete sentence after the conjunction, don't put a comma in front of the conjunction:

I ate supper AND washed the dishes.

22. If you connect two sentences with a transition, put a period or semicolon in front of it and a comma after (remember that **hence, next, now, then, and thus** don't need commas):

**S./;TRANS,S (Sentence./; Transition, Sentence)**

I ate supper. CONSEQUENTLY, I washed the dishes.

I ate supper; CONSEQUENTLY, I washed the

23. To avoid a run-on, put a period or semicolon (but never a comma) between two sentences:

**S./;S (Sentence./; Sentence)**

I ate supper. I washed the dishes.

I ate supper; I washed the dishes.

24. Don't put commas around a fragment if the sentence subject isn't identified:

**S-F-S (Sentence-Fragment-Sentence)**

The man WHO WASHED THE DISHES ate supper with me.

Here the subject, **The man**, is not identified with a name like Bob, so you don't use commas.

25. Put commas around a fragment if the sentence subject is identified:

**S-,F,-S (Sentence-,Fragment,-Sentence)**

**Bob**, WHO WASHED THE DISHES, ate supper with me.

Here the boldfaced part is the basic sentence—**Bob ate supper with me**. The capitalized part is the fragment—WHO WASHED THE DISHES.

Because the subject has a name, **Bob**, you use commas.

26. Don't write fragments when you should write sentences:

I washed the dishes. WHICH IS REALLY BORING.

Fix this one by connecting the fragment to the sentence with a comma:

**I washed the dishes, which is really boring.**

I went to the movies. BECAUSE I LIKE WILL FERRELL.

Again, connect the fragment to the sentence, but this time don't use a comma because the fragment completes the meaning:

**I went to the movies because I like Will Ferrell.**

But:

I went to the movies. ALTHOUGH MY SISTER DIDN'T GO.

This time you do need a comma; the fragment adds tacked-on information that doesn't complete the meaning:

**I went to the movies, although my sister didn't go.**

27. Put quotation marks around titles of short stories, short plays, and short poems; articles in newspapers, magazines, and journals; book chapters; episodes of TV shows; and songs.

I like Hemingway's "The Three-Day Blow."

I read “Obama Names Court Nominee” in *The New York Times*.  
I saw a *60 Minutes* episode called “Welfare Fraud in Chicago.”  
Chapter Three of the book *Writing to Learn* is called “A Liberal Education.”

28. Italicize (or underline if you’re writing in longhand)) titles of books, long plays, long poems, newspapers, magazines, journals, movies, TV shows, and CDs.

29. Don’t italicize (or underline) or put quotations around your own title.

30. Put quotation marks OUTSIDE the period and comma:

WRONG: I read “The Three-Day Blow”.

RIGHT: I read “The Three-Day Blow.”

WRONG: I read “The Three-Day Blow”, which is by Hemingway.

RIGHT: I read “The Three-Day Blow,” which is by Hemingway.

31. Put quotation marks INSIDE the semicolon and colon:

WRONG: I read “The Three-Day Blow;” it is by Hemingway.

RIGHT: I read “The Three-Day Blow”; it is by Hemingway.

WRONG: I read “The Three-Day Blow:” Have you?

RIGHT: I read “The Three-Day Blow”: Have you?

32. Don’t put a comma before a title, as in:

I read Hemingway’s, *The Old Man and the Sea*.

Or:

I read Hemingway’s, “The Three-Day Blow.”

33. Don’t put a comma after a conjunction (FANBOYS: **for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so**) in sentences like these:

WRONG: But, what I didn’t like was the movie.

RIGHT: But what I didn’t like was the movie.

WRONG: And, I hope that you’ll write me a letter.

RIGHT: And I hope that you’ll write me a letter.

34. Don’t put a comma after these words (which start fragments)—**although, even though, though, since, while, if, as, because, before, and after**—in the following sentence pattern:

WRONG: Although, I’m glad that you spoke up, you’re wrong.

RIGHT: Although I’m glad that you spoke up, you’re wrong.

35. Sentence interrupters: Be sure to put the commas on either side of the fragment inserted into the sentence in situations like these:

My brother, FRANK, is here.  
My brother, ON THE OTHER HAND, is here.  
Mrs. Smith, MY SECRETARY, is a good typist.  
You, OF COURSE, are a good student.  
One thing I'd like to talk about, IF I HAVE TIME, is sex.

36. Don't put a comma before a verb when there's no other comma in the sentence:

WRONG: What I really wanted to tell you, WAS I like you.  
RIGHT: What I really wanted to tell you was I like you.  
WRONG: All I can see, IS that gas station up ahead.  
RIGHT: All I can see is that gas station up ahead.

37. Don't put a comma or a colon after **such as** (but do put a comma before it):

WRONG: I like many books, such as, *War and Peace*.  
RIGHT: I like many books, such as *War and Peace*.  
WRONG: I like many books, such as: *War and Peace*.  
RIGHT: I like many books, such as *War and Peace*.

38. Don't put a colon after a **preposition (to, with, by, in, out, of, under, over, etc.)**:

WRONG: This novel is by: Ernest Hemingway.  
RIGHT: This novel is by Ernest Hemingway.

39. Don't put a colon after verbs of being (**am, is, are, was, were, will be, shall be, etc.**):

WRONG: The three cities I saw are: Paris, New York, and Chicago.  
RIGHT: The three cities I saw are Paris, New York, and Chicago.

40. Use the apostrophe to show possession or contraction:

WRONG: Bobs house. Im going to Bobs.  
RIGHT: Bob's house. I'm going to Bob's.  
WRONG: I cant do that. It wont work. Don't do that.  
RIGHT: I can't do that. It won't work. Don't do that.

## GRAMMAR

41. Don't write dangling modifiers. CURE: Put in a subject:

WRONG: DRIVING DANGEROUSLY, the bus went out of control.  
RIGHT: BECAUSE THE BUS DRIVER WAS DRIVING DANGEROUSLY, the  
WRONG: DRINKING ORANGE JUICE DAILY, my cold went away.  
RIGHT: SINCE I DRANK ORANGE JUICE DAILY, my cold went away.  
WRONG: WHILE EATING LUNCH IN THE CAFETERIA, the computer broke  
RIGHT: WHILE THE WOMAN WAS EATING LUNCH IN THE CAFETERIA,

42. Pronoun agreement: Make the pronoun (**he, she, it, their**) agree with the **SUBJECT**:

WRONG: Each **PERSON** should do **their** work.

RIGHT: Each **PERSON** should do **his** work.

RIGHT: Each **PERSON** should do **her** work.

RIGHT: All **PEOPLE** should do **their** work.

WRONG: Every **MAN** knows **their** job.

RIGHT: Every **MAN** knows **his** job.

RIGHT: All the **MEN** know **their** jobs.

WRONG: Each **WOMAN** knows **their** job.

RIGHT: All the **WOMEN** know **their** jobs.

43. Starting a sentence with **There is** or **There's**::If you have a plural subject after these, shift to **There are**:

WRONG: There's a DESK and COMPUTER in my office. (**two** things in the office)

RIGHT: There are a desk and computer in my office.

## TENSES

44. Don't jump from **past tense** into **present** or from **present tense** into **past**. Be consistent and stay in the tense you started in.

WRONG: I saw [PAST] my friend, and he waves [PRESENT].

RIGHT: I saw my friend [PAST], and he waved [PAST].

WRONG: I see [PRESENT] my friend, and he waved [PAST].

RIGHT: I see [PRESENT] my friend, and he waves [PRESENT].

**Remember:** When you write about the arts (fiction, poetry, drama, movies, dance, visiting an art gallery, etc.), stay in present tense.