POFT 1307, Proofreading and Editing—Lecture Notes

Diagnostic Survey 1—Basic

Complete the Diagnostic Survey document with a pencil. Check your answers in the notebook. This will let you know how much you know, or how much you have forgotten, or never knew, about the things that we are going to be studying in this course. Be sure to follow the directions for each section. Complete the worksheets, check them against the answer key in the notebooks in the classroom, take them out of your book, staple together, and turn in to your instructor. Be sure that you have your name on the documents. Your instructor will look at your documents and make comments, if needed. You will receive a grade for this and all assignments.

Study and practice the proofreaders’ marks on the back cover of your Gregg Reference Manual. Inform your instructor that you are ready to take the test on the proofreading marks. This is a matching test.

Test 1: Proofreaders’ Marks Test

Basic Worksheets 2 -7: Learning Practice for Test 2

Worksheet 2

Now, let's specifically discuss Basic Worksheet 2, which provides a good opportunity to review how a typical worksheet is organized.

Part A covers the most basic rules governing the use of a period, a question mark, and an exclamation point at the end of a sentence. Note that each of the 12 items in Part A are clearly labeled so you can easily see what kind of sentence they are dealing with in each case. Also note that the rule numbers alongside the answer blanks fall in numerical order.

Part B is constructed exactly like Part A with one difference: The introductory labels have now been withdrawn; you must now determine on your own what kind of sentence you are dealing with in each case.

Part C deals with a special problem that involves only two rules (106-107).

Part D provides sentences to be rewritten. Rule numbers are provided alongside, but now the problems relate to a much wider range of rules. The final exercise (Part E) provides a short editing exercise with errors embedded in the copy. The errors all represent problems that you have dealt with in the preceding exercises in this worksheet. Moreover, they call for you to exhibit mastery of the full range of rules covered in this worksheet. However, in this final exercise no rule numbers have been provided; thus you will have to identify the problems and the related rules on your own. However, because of the careful progress in the earlier exercises from the simple to the complex, you should now be able to cope with the challenge posed by this final exercise in the worksheet.

NOTE: Finish the worksheet using a dark, readable pencil using correct proofreading symbols. The notebook for Proofreading and Editing has corrected copies of the assignment. Take time to edit with proofreading marks your copy of the document using a red pencil or pen. Be sure that you understand what you did wrong, so that you do not make the same error. These worksheets and corrections will help you study for your test. Be sure that your name is on your worksheet and turn it in to your instructor. It will be returned to you with comments and a grade. This procedure should be used for all worksheets in the course.
Basic Worksheets 3 and 4

Read the notes that follow, complete the worksheet, correct the worksheet, and turn it in to your instructor.

Punctuation mistakes can cause serious problems in written material. Most people use terminal punctuation correctly but have trouble with internal punctuation, especially the comma, because it is the most widely used punctuation mark. Because its uses vary so much, it is the most problematic. It is either overused or underused!

Commas serve several purposes: to separate, to introduce, or to enclose. It generally indicates a brief pause for the reader. Sometimes writers just use their “instincts” when it comes to using commas--but proofreaders need to be familiar with basic rules and primarily use a comma only when there is a specific rule for it.

Some of the basic rules address:

- items in a series
- direct address and appositives
- introductory words and independent clauses
- nonessential elements
- dates, titles, and geographic locations

The following are some of the most common comma errors:

1. Although you may have learned in English class that the comma before a conjunction in a series is optional, in business writing, a comma is always used. This is especially important in the transcription of medical records, which much be absolutely "clear" to the reader (usually the doctor who will use the record as a basis for future medical decisions).

Example: Folders, pens, and disks are in the cabinet.

2. Remember to separate with a comma two consecutive adjectives that modify the same noun. If you can substitute the word and in place of the comma, or if you can reverse the adjectives and it still makes sense, then use a comma.

Example: The report was printed in bold, easy-to-read type.

3. Separate appositives with commas unless the appositive is essential.

Example: Ms. Terry, the librarian, will hold the book for you. (Nonessential because the person's name is provided.)

Example: The play MacBeth will be performed this weekend. (Essential because it is needed to tell which play is meant.)

4. Generally do not use a comma after introductory words and very short phrases unless it could be misread.

Example: In the morning I have a meeting.

Example: Frequently I visit the museum.

5. An independent clause can stand alone as a sentence. A dependent clause contains a noun and a verb, but it cannot stand alone. Dependent clauses begin with words such as although, because, if, since, unless, though, when, and while. Use a comma after an introductory dependent clause.

Example: When I read the newspaper, I was surprised to see your name.
6. If a word or group of words is essential, it is crucial to the meaning of the sentence. In the following example, the italicized phrase is essential to the meaning.

Example: Everyone **who is tardy** will have his or her grade lowered.

7. If the word or phrase is not essential to the meaning, set it off with commas.

Example: Mr. Allen, **who is from Austin**, will deliver the speech.

Comma rules are difficult to remember! Always refer to your *Gregg Reference Manual* to help you make these decisions.

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**Basic Worksheet 5**

Read the notes that follow, complete the worksheet, correct the worksheet, and turn it in to your instructor.

What about other punctuation marks? Are there any punctuation marks that you rarely use because you were unsure how they should be used (such as the dash or the semicolon)? Pay close attention to the rules for these punctuation marks in your reference manual. Do you ever confuse the possessive form of its with the contraction it's?

**Basic Worksheet 6**

Read the notes that follow, complete the worksheet, correct the worksheet, and turn it in to your instructor.

Most people have little difficulty when it comes to capitalization. One of the most frequently confused rules, however, has to do with whether to capitalize the first word following a colon. This rule is simple though: If the word begins a complete sentence, capitalize it.

Another situation that is confusing is when to capitalize organizational names, such as Accounting Department or Board of Directors. The rule states that you should capitalize these names only if they refer to departments in one's own organization.

In general unless you can apply a definite rule for capitalization, do not capitalize. If your workplace has special rules for the use of capitals, however, follow its style.

**Basic Worksheet 7**

Read the notes that follow, complete the worksheet, correct the worksheet, and turn it in to your instructor.

The expression of numbers in business writing can be particularly troublesome. An important part of developing proofreading and editing skills is learning to find errors in number expression. Think about the tremendous amount of number information that occurs in a typical business; besides dollar amounts, businesses deal with telephone numbers, social security numbers, addresses, credit card numbers, product numbers, and many others.

An error of any number in a document can have devastating results. Not only could it cause the loss of a customer or client, but a careless error by an employee could result in termination of employment. The legal ramifications of number errors could be disastrous. Suppose a contractor presented a bid to a client in which the office assistant incorrectly typed $3,500 instead of $35,000.

Another confusion in business writing is when to use figures and when to spell numbers out. Usually numbers are expressed in figures in technical writing and on business forms, so that the numbers can be easily perceived. However, in formal documents such as social invitations and certain legal documents, numbers are spelled out. The general rule for business documents is: Write out numbers *one through ten* in words. Write numbers larger than ten in figures. However, you will notice that there are many specific
situations that require additional guidelines. This is one area where even a veteran proofreader will use the reference manual faithfully to find the specific rule for the situation!

Here are some tips when proofreading for number accuracy:

1. Whenever possible have another person read the original numbers aloud while you read the copy for accuracy.
2. Always check the accuracy of telephone numbers, dates, and addresses, as well as dollar amounts.

When checking figures in columns, look to see if decimals are aligned; and proofread across rather than down the columns, using a ruler or straightedge to keep your eye level.

**Evaluating your practice learning experiences**

Check each practice worksheet against the answer keys and grade each one. Look for any repeated errors that indicate certain rules you should review again. Make notes of any questions you need to ask your instructor. Remember that this practice is your answer to doing well on the test worksheets and in the course, in general. Your instructor will know you are working carefully and thoroughly through the practice worksheets.

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**Test 2: Basic Worksheet 8 (Editing Survey A) Complete this worksheet, turn it in to be checked, and then take the test that is exactly like this practice.**

**Basic Worksheets 9 -15: Learning Practice for Test 3**

**Basic Worksheet 9**

Read the notes that follow, complete the worksheet, correct the worksheet, and turn it in to your instructor.

Abbreviations are not suitable for all business communication. Avoid using abbreviations except on business forms, in catalogs, in tables, and in informal documents shared with colleagues. In correspondence and reports, do not use abbreviations except for personal titles, acronyms, and time designations.

Some discussion still exists about using periods in various abbreviations. The trend now is to eliminate periods unless the abbreviation could be mistaken for a word itself, such as *in* (*inch*). You will find variations in the use of periods, spacing, and capitalization of many abbreviations. Just remember to be consistent throughout any document. Whenever you are in doubt, check the dictionary; if two forms of the abbreviation are given, use the shortest form that is given without any sacrifice of clarity.

If your reader might be unfamiliar with an abbreviation, spell it out the first time it is used and place the abbreviation in parentheses—*National Business Education Association (NBEA)*. Then use the abbreviation for the rest of the document.

Space once after the period at the end of an abbreviation, but do not space after internal periods (*a.m.*).

Always use the two-letter U. S. Post Office abbreviations for states whenever the address includes a ZIP Code. When the ZIP Code does not accompany the address in a letter or report, spell the state out.

**Basic Worksheet 10**

Read the notes that follow, complete the worksheet, correct the worksheet, and turn it in to your instructor.

Plurals, particularly words of foreign origin, can be troublesome. For instance, *criterion* is singular, while *criteria* is the plural form of the word. Some abbreviations use the same form for singular and for plural
Basic Worksheet 11

Read the notes that follow, complete the worksheet, correct the worksheet, and turn it in to your instructor.

An apostrophe is used to form possessives (John's report) and some plurals (A's and B's). It is also used to indicate the omission of letters and figures (it's--it is), so don't always assume that an apostrophe means possession.

To form the possessive of personal pronouns, never use an apostrophe. Use the special possessive forms. Watch out for these:

- Each department uses its own forms. (NOT it's)
- The decision has to be yours. (NOT your's)
- The responsibility is theirs. (NOT their's)

Surnames are confusing when one tries to form the possessive. Decide whether it is a singular surname or plural. For instance:

- Mrs. Jones's article (sing.) or the Joneses' farm (plu.)

If a new syllable is formed in the pronunciation of the possessive, add an apostrophe plus s.

- Chris's automobile
- If the s makes the name hard to pronounce, add only an apostrophe.
  - Ms. Hodges' fax

Many students find possessives difficult. If that applies to you, spend significant extra time in this section. These corrections are often required on the test worksheets.

Basic Worksheet 12

Read the notes that follow, complete the worksheet, correct the worksheet, and turn it in to your instructor.

You may ask, "Why do we have to produce 100 percent accuracy in our written documents? Isn't 99.9 percent close enough?"

In answer to those questions, consider the following:

In each case if 99.9 percent is acceptable, then:

- 22,000 checks will be deducted from the wrong bank accounts in the next 60 minutes.
- 12 babies will be given to the wrong parents each day.
- 2,388,200 books will be shipped in the next 12 months with the wrong cover.
- 18,322 pieces of mail will be mishandled in the next hour.
- 20,000 incorrect drug prescriptions will be written in the next 12 months.
- 1,314 phone calls will be misplaced by telecommunication services every minute.
- 107 incorrect medical procedures will be performed by the end of the day today.
- 315 entries in Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language will turn out to be misspelled.

Source: Adapted from "Strive for Perfection--OR ELSE!", Working Communicator, Summer 1992, p. 6.
These are rather sobering statistics, do you agree? Suffice it to say, 99.9 percent is not accurate enough!

Although the spell checker won't find all kinds of errors, there is no excuse for not using it for each document you type. It is so easy to overlook a simple misspelled word!

Remember to always proofread your documents at least twice. The first time, try proofreading for misspelling, keyboarding, abbreviation, and word division errors. Some people even read the document backwards, from bottom to top, in order to concentrate only on mechanical errors. The second time you proofread the document, proofread it for meaning. Are you really saying what you mean to say?

Basic Worksheet 13

Read the notes that follow, complete the worksheet, correct the worksheet, and turn it in to your instructor.

A major challenge of the English language is that many words sound alike but have different meanings or spellings. These are called homophones. These can be particularly confusing to those people who use English as a second language. To be an expert proofreader, you need to be able to distinguish between those words of similar sound and spelling so that you will be able to detect and correct errors in their usage. Always consult your reference manual or a dictionary for accuracy in word choice.

Basic Worksheets 14 and 15

Read the notes that follow, complete the worksheet, correct the worksheet, and turn it in to your instructor.

Distinguish between compound nouns that are solid (checklist) or hyphenated (a follow-up on my memo) and verb phrases or clauses, which are always spaced (please follow up on my memo). A compound adjective is derived from an adjective phrase or clause and should be hyphenated (long-term loan derives from the phrase, loans made for a long term). Most of the time you should hyphenate the elements of a compound adjective that come before a noun. Of course, there always those exceptions! Study those rules in Section 8 of your reference manual, and always refer to them when in doubt. This is another section that traditionally gives students challenges and one to study thoroughly.

Evaluating your practice learning experiences

Check each practice worksheet against the answer keys and grade each one. Look for any repeated errors that indicate certain rules you should review again. Make notes of any questions you need to ask your instructor. Remember that this practice is your answer to doing well on the test worksheets and in the course, in general. Your instructor will know you are working carefully and thoroughly through the practice worksheets.

Test 3: Basic Worksheet 16 (Editing Survey B) Complete this worksheet, turn it in to be checked, and then take the test that is exactly like this practice.

Basic Worksheets 17 -21: Learning Practice for Test 4

In business communications, it is imperative to avoid poor sentence construction, sentence fragments, and run-on sentences. Sometimes students do not have a good background in English grammar, and they need to go back to some basics of sentence construction. It might even be necessary to take a developmental or ESL grammar course. Remember, a sentence is a group of words that has a subject and a verb (or predicate) and expresses a complete thought. The subject is the person, object, or idea being described, and the verb shows what that subject is or does.

An incomplete sentence, called a sentence fragment, may contain both a subject and a verb but does not express a complete thought.
Instead of: When the manager called me this morning.
Write: When the manager called me this morning, I was surprised.

In business writing, fragments are not acceptable.

Grammar can tend to be tricky also because we do not always write what we mean to say. Many expressions in our language are written in different ways depending on their meaning. Checking a dictionary is always a good idea. When you check the dictionary, be sure to select the usage that fits the meaning in your sentence. Sometimes a writer simply chooses the wrong word to express an idea. The words may be similar in spelling or pronunciation, but often there is no logical reason for the mistake.

You may get a chuckle out of the following sentences which are not quite worded correctly; they came from actual letters received by the Welfare Department in applications for support.

1. I am forwarding my marriage certificate and six children. I had seven, but one died, which was baptized on a half sheet of paper.
2. I am writing the Welfare Department to say that my baby was born two years ago. When do I get my money?
3. Mrs. Jones has not had any clothes for a year and has been visited regularly by the clergy.
4. I cannot get sick pay. I have six children. Can you tell me why?
5. I am glad to report that my husband, who was missing, is dead.
6. This is my eighth child. What are you going to do about it?
7. Please find for certain if my husband is dead. The man I am living with now can't eat or anything until he knows.
8. I am very much annoyed to find that you have branded my son illiterate. This is a dirty lie. I was married a week before he was born.
9. In answer to your letter, I have given birth to a boy weighing 10 pounds. I hope this is satisfactory.
10. I am forwarding my marriage certificate and my three children, one of which is a mistake as you can see.
11. My husband got his project cut off two weeks ago, and I haven't had any relief since.
12. Unless I get my husband's money pretty soon, I will be forced to lead an immortal life.
13. You have changed my little boy to a girl. Will this make any difference?
14. I have no children yet as my husband is a truck driver and works day and night.
15. In accordance with your instructions, I have given birth to twins in the enclosed envelope.
16. I want money as quick as I can get it. I have been in bed with the doctor for two weeks and he hasn't done me any good. If things don't improve, I will have to send for another doctor.

Evaluating your practice learning experiences

Check each practice worksheet against the answer keys and grade each one. Look for any repeated errors that indicate certain rules you should review again. Make notes of any questions you need to ask your instructor. Remember that this practice is your answer to doing well on the test worksheets and in the course, in general.

Test 4: Basic Worksheet 22 (Editing Survey C) Complete this worksheet, turn it in to be checked, and then take the test that is exactly like this practice.

Complete Basic Worksheet 23 in preparation for the mid-term exam. The mid-term exam will be “like” worksheet 23.

MID-TERM TEST - This test is similar to Worksheet 23.
COMPREHENSIVE WORKSHEETS AND PROOFREADING AT THE COMPUTER

During the second half of the class, you will be completing exercises from *Proofreading at the Computer* along with some of the worksheets in the *Comprehensive Worksheets* text. Use your Lab Assignment Worksheet as the guide for the assignments to complete since you will not be completing all of the work contained in these books.

When you complete and check your worksheets 26, 27, and 28, you will see that these are studying correspondence documents and their formatting. Complete the four correspondence handouts on letters and memorandums. Ask your instructor for these documents. Look for grammatical errors as well as formatting. Turn in these documents for evaluation.

**Comprehensive Worksheets 2-6: Learning practice for Test 5**

Notice that the practice worksheets provide a welcome review of competencies you learned in the *Basic Worksheets* text. If you'd like to review the lecture notes for these skills, use the original ones for *Basic Worksheets* 2-5. Your objective is to begin to "flow" in your proofreading and editing skills, knowing when to look up rules to be certain that your work is accurate.

**Evaluate your progress**

Continue the routine of checking your practice worksheets using the answer keys. Notice whether you are improving by comparing this practice work with grading you did for the corresponding worksheets in the *Basic Worksheets* text. Notice whether specific rules provide you greater challenges and review the samples in the manual. It is helpful to read correct sample versions over and over until they look and sound accurate to you.

**Test 5: Comprehensive Worksheet 7 (Editing Survey A) Complete this worksheet, turn it in to be checked, and then take the test that is exactly like this practice.**

**Comprehensive Worksheets 8-12: Learning practice for Test 6**

This review work corresponds to *Basic Worksheets* 6-7 and 9. Remember to balance gaining speed in your work with focusing on greater accuracy and developing a "sense" for when to stop and look up rules in your handbook.

**Evaluate your progress**

Continue the routine of checking your practice worksheets using the answer keys. Notice whether you are improving by comparing this practice work with grading you did for the corresponding worksheets in the *Basic Worksheets* text. Notice whether specific rules provide you greater challenges and review the samples in the manual. It is helpful to read correct sample versions over and over until they look and sound accurate to you.

**Test 6: Comprehensive Worksheet 13 (Editing Survey B) Complete this worksheet, turn it in to be checked, and then take the test that is exactly like this practice.**

**Comprehensive Worksheet 33** is preparation for the Final Exam. The Final Exam will be “like” this worksheet.

**FINAL EXAM**

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