# THE ELEMENTS OF STYLE BY WILLIAM STRUNK, Jr. I. INTRODUCTORY

This book aims to give in brief space the principal requirements of plain English style. It aims to lighten the task of instructor and student by concentrating attention (in Chapters II and III) on a few essentials, the rules of usage and principles of composition most commonly violated. In accordance with this plan it lays down three rules for the use of the comma, instead of a score or more, and one for the use of the semicolon, in the belief that these four rules provide for all the internal punctuation that is required by nineteen sentences out of twenty. Similarly, it gives in Chapter III only those principles of the paragraph and the sentence which are of the widest application. The book thus covers only a small portion of the field of English style. The experience of its writer has been that once past the essentials, students profit most by individual instruction based on the problems of their own work, and that each instructor has his own body of theory, which he may prefer to that offered by any textbook. The numbers of the sections may be used as references in correcting manuscript. The writer's colleagues in the Department of English in Cornell University have greatly helped him in the preparation of his manuscript. Mr. George McLane Wood has kindly consented to the inclusion under Rule 10 of some material from his Suggestions to Authors. The following books are recommended for reference or further study: in connection with Chapters II and IV, F. Howard Collins, Author and Printer (Henry Frowde); Chicago University Press, Manual of Style; T. L. De Vinne, Correct Composition (The Century Company); Horace Hart, Rules for Compositors and Printers (Oxford University Press); George McLane Wood, Extracts from the Style-Book of the Government Printing Office (United States Geological Survey); in connection with Chapters III and V, The King's English (Oxford University Press); Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, The Art of Writing (Putnam), especially the chapter, Interlude on Jargon; George McLane Wood, Suggestions to Authors (United States Geological Survey); John Lesslie Hall, English Usage (Scott, Foresman and Co.); James P. Kelley, Workmanship in Words (Little, Brown and Co.). In these will be found full discussions of many points here briefly treated and an abundant store of illustrations to supplement those given in this book. It is an old observation that the best writers sometimes disregard the rules of rhetoric. When they do so, however, the reader will usually find in the sentence some compensating merit, attained at the cost of the violation. Unless he is certain of doing as well, he will probably do best to follow the rules. After he has learned, by their guidance, to write plain English adequate for everyday uses, let him look, for the secrets of style, to the study of the masters of literature. II. ELEMENTARY RULES OF USAGE 1. Form the possessive singular of nouns by adding 's. Follow this rule whatever the final consonant. Thus write, Charles's friend Burns's poems the witch's malice This is the usage of the United States Government Printing Office and of the Oxford University Press. Exceptions are the possessive of ancient proper names in -es and -is, the possessive Jesus', and such forms as for conscience' sake, for righteousness' sake. But such forms as Achilles' heel, Moses' laws, Isis' temple are commonly replaced by the heel of Achilles the laws of Moses the temple of Isis The pronominal possessives hers, its, theirs, yours, and oneself have no apostrophe. 2. In a series of three or more terms with a single conjunction, use a comma after each term except the last. Thus write, red, white, and blue gold, silver, or copper He opened the letter, read it, and made a note of its contents. This is also the usage of the Government Printing Office and of the Oxford University Press. In the names of business firms the last comma is omitted, as, Brown, Shipley & Co. 3. Enclose parenthetic expressions between commas. The best way to see a country, unless you are pressed for time, is to travel on foot. This rule is difficult to apply; it is frequently hard to decide whether a single word, such as however, or a brief phrase, is or is not parenthetic. If the interruption to the flow of the sentence is but slight, the writer may safely omit the commas. But whether the interruption be slight or considerable, he must never insert one comma and omit the other. Such punctuation as Marjorie's husband, Colonel Nelson paid us a visit yesterday, or My brother you will be pleased to hear, is now in perfect health, is indefensible. If a parenthetic expression is preceded by a conjunction, place the first comma before the conjunction, not after it. He saw us coming, and unaware that we had learned of his treachery, greeted us with a smile. Always to be regarded as parenthetic and to be enclosed between commas (or, at the end of the sentence, between comma and period) are the following: (1) the year, when forming part of a date, and the day of the month, when following the day of the week: February to July, 1916. April 6, 1917. Monday, November 11, 1918. (2) the abbreviations etc. and jr. (3) non-restrictive relative clauses, that is, those which do not serve to identify or define the antecedent noun, and similar clauses introduced by conjunctions indicating time or place. The audience, which had at first been indifferent, became more and more interested. In this sentence the clause introduced by which does not serve to tell which of several possible audiences is meant; what audience is in question is supposed to be already known. The clause adds, parenthetically, a statement supplementing that in the main clause. The sentence is virtually a combination of two statements which might have been made independently: The audience had at first been indifferent. It became more and more interested. Compare the restrictive relative clause, not set off by commas, in the sentence, The candidate who best meets these requirements will obtain the place. Here the clause introduced by who does serve to tell which of several possible candidates is meant; the sentence cannot be split up into two independent statements. The difference in punctuation in the two sentences following is based on the same principle: Nether Stowey, where Coleridge wrote The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, is a few miles from Bridgewater. The day will come when you will admit your mistake. Nether Stowey is completely identified by its name; the statement about Coleridge is therefore supplementary and parenthetic. The day spoken of is identified only by the dependent clause, which is therefore restrictive. Similar in principle to the enclosing of parenthetic expressions between commas is the setting off by commas of phrases or dependent clauses preceding or following the main clause of a sentence. Partly by hard fighting, partly by diplomatic skill, they enlarged their dominions to the east, and rose to royal rank with the possession of Sicily, exchanged afterwards for Sardinia. Other illustrations may be found in sentences quoted under Rules 4, 5, 6, 7, 16, and 18. The writer should be careful not to set off independent clauses by commas: see under Rule 5. 4. Place a comma before a conjunction introducing a co-ordinate clause. The early records of the city have disappeared, and the story of its first years can no longer be reconstructed. The situation is perilous, but there is still one chance of escape. Sentences of this type, isolated from their context, may seem to be in need of rewriting. As they make complete sense when the comma is reached, the second clause has the appearance of an afterthought. Further, and is the least specific of connectives. Used between independent clauses, it indicates only that a relation exists between them without defining that relation. In the example above, the relation is that of cause and result. The two sentences might be rewritten: As the early records of the city have disappeared, the story of its first years can no longer be reconstructed. Although the situation is perilous, there is still one chance of escape. Or the subordinate clauses might be replaced by phrases: Owing to the disappearance of the early records of the city, the story of its first years can no longer be reconstructed. In this perilous situation, there is still one chance of escape. But a writer may err by making his sentences too uniformly compact and periodic, and an occasional loose sentence prevents the style from becoming too formal and gives the reader a certain relief. Consequently, loose sentences of the type first quoted are common in easy, unstudied writing. But a writer should be careful not to construct too many of his sentences after this pattern (see Rule 14). Two-part sentences of which the second member is introduced by as (in the sense of because), for, or, nor, and while (in the sense of and at the same time) likewise require a comma before the conjunction. If the second member is introduced by an adverb, a semicolon, not a comma, is required (see Rule 5). The connectives so and yet may be used either as adverbs or as conjunctions, accordingly as the second clause is felt to be co-ordinate or subordinate; consequently either mark of punctuation may be justified. But these uses of so (equivalent to accordingly or to so that) are somewhat colloquial and should, as a rule, be avoided in writing. A simple correction, usually serviceable, is to omit the word so and begin the first clause with as or since: I had never been in the place before; so I had difficulty in finding my way about. As I had never been in the place before, I had difficulty in finding my way about. If a dependent clause, or an introductory phrase requiring to be set off by a comma, precedes the second independent clause, no comma is needed after the conjunction. The situation is perilous, but if we are prepared to act promptly, there is still one chance of escape. When the subject is the same for both clauses and is expressed only once, a comma is required if the connective is but. If the connective is and, the comma should be omitted if the relation between the two statements is close or immediate. I have heard his arguments, but am still unconvinced. He has had several years' experience and is thoroughly competent. 5. Do not join independent clauses by a comma. If two or more clauses, grammatically complete and not joined by a conjunction, are to form a single compound sentence, the proper mark of punctuation is a semicolon. Stevenson's romances are entertaining; they are full of exciting adventures. It is nearly half past five; we cannot reach town before dark. It is of course equally correct to write the above as two sentences each, replacing the semicolons by periods. Stevenson's romances are entertaining. They are full of exciting adventures. It is nearly half past five. We cannot reach town before dark. If a conjunction is inserted the proper mark is a comma (Rule 4). Stevenson's romances are entertaining, for they are full of exciting adventures. It is nearly half past five, and we cannot reach town before dark. A comparison of the three forms given above will show clearly the advantage of the first. It is, at least in the examples given, better than the second form, because it suggests the close relationship between the two statements in a way that the second does not attempt, and better than the third, because briefer and therefore more forcible. Indeed it may be said that this simple method of indicating relationship between statements is one of the most useful devices of composition. The relationship, as above, is commonly one of cause or of consequence. Note that if the second clause is preceded by an adverb, such as accordingly, besides, then, therefore, or thus, and not by a conjunction, the semicolon is still required. Two exceptions to the rule may be admitted. If the clauses are very short, and are alike in form, a comma is usually permissible: Man proposes, God disposes. The gate swung apart, the bridge fell, the portcullis was drawn up. Note that in these examples the relation is not one of cause or consequence. Also in the colloquial form of expression, I hardly knew him, he was so changed, a comma, not a semicolon, is required. But this form of expression is inappropriate in writing, except in the dialogue of a story or play, or perhaps in a familiar letter. 6. Do not break sentences in two. In other words, do not use periods for commas. I met them on a Cunard liner several years ago. Coming home from Liverpool to New York. He was an interesting talker. A man who had traveled all over the world and lived in half a dozen countries. In both these examples, the first period should be replaced by a comma, and the following word begun with a small letter. It is permissible to make an emphatic word or expression serve the purpose of a sentence and to punctuate it accordingly: Again and again he called out. No reply. The writer must, however, be certain that the emphasis is warranted, and that he will not be suspected of a mere blunder in syntax or in punctuation. Rules 3, 4, 5, and 6 cover the most important principles in the punctuation of ordinary sentences; they should be so thoroughly mastered that their application becomes second nature. 7. A participial phrase at the beginning of a sentence must refer to the grammatical subject. Walking slowly down the road, he saw a woman accompanied by two children. The word walking refers to the subject of the sentence, not to the woman. If the writer wishes to make it refer to the woman, he must recast the sentence: He saw a woman accompanied by two children, walking slowly down the road. Participial phrases preceded by a conjunction or by a preposition, nouns in apposition, adjectives, and adjective phrases come under the same rule if they begin the sentence. On arriving in Chicago, his friends met him at the station. When he arrived (or, On his arrival) in Chicago, his friends met him at the station. A soldier of proved valor, they entrusted him with the defence of the city. A soldier of proved valor, he was entrusted with the defence of the city. Young and inexperienced, the task seemed easy to me. Young and inexperienced, I thought the task easy. Without a friend to counsel him, the temptation proved irresistible. Without a friend to counsel him, he found the temptation irresistible. Sentences violating this rule are often ludicrous. Being in a dilapidated condition, I was able to buy the house very cheap. Wondering irresolutely what to do next, the clock struck twelve. III. ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF COMPOSITION 8. Make the paragraph the unit of composition: one paragraph to each topic. If the subject on which you are writing is of slight extent, or if you intend to treat it very briefly, there may be no need of subdividing it into topics. Thus a brief description, a brief summary of a literary work, a brief account of a single incident, a narrative merely outlining an action, the setting forth of a single idea, any one of these is best written in a single paragraph. After the paragraph has been written, examine it to see whether subdivision will not improve it. Ordinarily, however, a subject requires subdivision into topics, each of which should be made the subject of a paragraph. The object of treating each topic in a paragraph by itself is, of course, to aid the reader. The beginning of each paragraph is a signal to him that a new step in the development of the subject has been reached. The extent of subdivision will vary with the length of the composition. For example, a short notice of a book or poem might consist of a single paragraph. One slightly longer might consist of two paragraphs: A. Account of the work. B. Critical discussion. A report on a poem, written for a class in literature, might consist of seven paragraphs: A. Facts of composition and publication. B. Kind of poem; metrical form. C. Subject. D. Treatment of subject. E. For what chiefly remarkable. F. Wherein characteristic of the writer. G. Relationship to other works. The contents of paragraphs C and D would vary with the poem. Usually, paragraph C would indicate the actual or imagined circumstances of the poem (the situation), if these call for explanation, and would then state the subject and outline its development. If the poem is a narrative in the third person throughout, paragraph C need contain no more than a concise summary of the action. Paragraph D would indicate the leading ideas and show how they are made prominent, or would indicate what points in the narrative are chiefly emphasized. A novel might be discussed under the heads: A. Setting. B. Plot. C. Characters. D. Purpose. An historical event might be discussed under the heads: A. What led up to the event. B. Account of the event. C. What the event led up to. In treating either of these last two subjects, the writer would probably find it necessary to subdivide one or more of the topics here given. As a rule, single sentences should not be written or printed as paragraphs. An exception may be made of sentences of transition, indicating the relation between the parts of an exposition or argument. Frequent exceptions are also necessary in textbooks, guidebooks, and other works in which many topics are treated briefly. In dialogue, each speech, even if only a single word, is a paragraph by itself; that is, a new paragraph begins with each change of speaker. The application of this rule, when dialogue and narrative are combined, is best learned from examples in well-printed works of fiction. 9. As a rule, begin each paragraph with a topic sentence, end it in conformity with the beginning. Again, the object is to aid the reader. The practice here recommended enables him to discover the purpose of each paragraph as he begins to read it, and to retain this purpose in mind as he ends it. For this reason, the most generally useful kind of paragraph, particularly in exposition and argument, is that in which (a) the topic sentence comes at or near the beginning; (b) the succeeding sentences explain or establish or develop the statement made in the topic sentence; and (c) the final sentence either emphasizes the thought of the topic sentence or states some important consequence. Ending with a digression, or with an unimportant detail, is particularly to be avoided. If the paragraph forms part of a larger composition, its relation to what precedes, or its function as a part of the whole, may need to be expressed. This can sometimes be done by a mere word or phrase (again; therefore; for the same reason) in the topic sentence. Sometimes, however, it is expedient to precede the topic sentence by one or more sentences of introduction or transition. If more than one such sentence is required, it is generally better to set apart the transitional sentences as a separate paragraph. According to the writer's purpose, he may, as indicated above, relate the body of the paragraph to the topic sentence in one or more of several different ways. He may make the meaning of the topic sentence clearer by restating it in other forms, by defining its terms, by denying the contrary, by giving illustrations or specific instances; he may establish it by proofs; or he may develop it by showing its implications and consequences. In a long paragraph, he may carry out several of these processes. 1 Now, to be properly enjoyed, a walking tour should be gone upon alone. 2 If you go in a company, or even in pairs, it is no longer a walking tour in anything but name; it is something else and more in the nature of a picnic. 3 A walking tour should be gone upon alone, because freedom is of the essence; because you should be able to stop and go on, and follow this way or that, as the freak takes you; and because you must have your own pace, and neither trot alongside a champion walker, nor mince in time with a girl. 4 And you must be open to all impressions and let your thoughts take colour from what you se e. 5 You should be as a pipe for any wind to play upon. 6 "I cannot see the wit," says Hazlitt, "of walking and talking at the same time. 7 When I am in the country, I wish to vegetate li ke the country," which is the gist of all that can be said upon the matter. 8 There should be no cackle of voices at your elbow, to jar on the meditative silence of the morning. 9 And so long as a man is reasoning he cannot surrender himself to that fine intoxication that comes of much motion in the open air, that begins in a sort of dazzle and sluggishness of the br ain, and ends in a peace that passes comprehension.--Stevenson, Walking Tours. 1 Topic sentence. 2 The meaning made clearer by denial of the contrary. 3 The topic sentence repeated, in abridged form, and supported by three reasons; the meaning of the third ("you must have your own pace") made clearer by denying the contrary. 4 A fourth reason, stated in another form. 5 The same reason, stated in still another form. 6-7 The same reason as stated by Hazlitt. 8 Repetition, in paraphrase, of the quotation from Hazlitt. 9 Final statement of the fourth reason, in language amplified and heightened to form a strong conclusion. 1 It was chiefly in the eighteenth century that a very different conception of history grew up. 2 Historians then came to believe that their task was not so much to paint a picture as to solve a problem; to explain or illustrate the successive phases of national growth, prosperity, and adversity. 3 The history of morals, of industry, of intellect, and of art; the changes that take place in manners or beliefs; the dominant ideas that prevailed in successive periods; the rise, fall, and modification of political constitutions; in a word, all the conditions of national well-being became the subject of their works. 4 They sought rather to write a history of peoples than a history of kings. 5 They looked especially in history for the chain of causes and effects. 6 They undertook to study in the past the physiology of nations, and hoped by applying the experimental method on a large scale to deduce some lessons of real value about the conditions on which the welfare of society mainly depend.--Lecky, The Political Value of History. 1 Topic sentence. 2 The meaning of the topic sentence made clearer; the new conception of history defined. 3 The definition expanded. 4 The definition explained by contrast. 5 The definition supplemented: another element in the new conception of history. 6 Conclusion: an important consequence of the new conception of history. In narration and description the paragraph sometimes begins with a concise, comprehensive statement serving to hold together the details that follow. The breeze served us admirably. The campaign opened with a series of reverses. The next ten or twelve pages were filled with a curious set of entries. But this device, if too often used, would become a mannerism. More commonly the opening sentence simply indicates by its subject with what the paragraph is to be principally concerned. At length I thought I might return towards the stockade. He picked up the heavy lamp from the table and began to explore. Another flight of steps, and they emerged on the roof. The brief paragraphs of an imated narrative, however, are often without even this semblance of a topic sentence. The break between them serves the purpose of a rhetorical pause, thereby owing into prominence some detail of the action. 10. Use the active voice. The active voice is usually more direct and vigorous than the passive: I shall always remember my first visit to Boston. This is much better than My first visit to Boston will always be remembered by me. The latter sentence is less direct, less bold, and less concise. If the writer tries to make it more concise by omitting "by me," My first visit to Boston will always be remembered, it becomes indefinite: is it the writer, or some person undisclosed, or the world at large, that will always remember this visit? This rule does not, of course, mean that the writer should entirely discard the passive voice, which is frequently convenient and sometimes necessary. The dramatists of the Restoration are little esteemed to-day. Modern readers have little esteem for the dramatists of the Restoration. The first would be the right form in a paragraph on the dramatists of the Restoration; the second, in a paragraph on the tastes of modern readers. The need of making a particular word the subject of the sentence will often, as in these examples, determine which voice is to be used. As a rule, avoid making one passive depend directly upon another. Gold was not allowed to be exported. It was forbidden to export gold (The export of gold was prohibited). He has been proved to have been seen entering the building. It has been proved that he was seen to enter the building. In both the examples above, before correction, the word properly related to the second passive is made the subject of the first. A common fault is to use as the subject of a passive construction a noun which expresses the entire action, leaving to the verb no function beyond that of completing the sentence. A survey of this region was made in 1900. This region was surveyed in 1900. Mobilization of the army was rapidly effected. The army was rapidly mobilized. Confirmation of these reports cannot be obtained. These reports cannot be confirmed. Compare the sentence, "The export of gold was prohibited," in which the predicate "was prohibited" expresses something not implied in "export." The habitual use of the active voice makes for forcible writing. This is true not only in narrative principally concerned with action, but in writing of any kind. Many a tame statenc e of description or exposition can be made lively and emphatic by substituting a verb in the active voice for some such perfunctory expression as there is, or could be heard. There were a great number of dead leaves lying on the ground. Dead leaves covered the ground. The sound of a guitar somewhere in the ho use could be heard. Somewhere in the house a guitar hummed sleepily. The reason that he left college was that his health became impaired. Failing hea lth compelled him to leave college. It was not long before he was very sorry that he had said what he had. He soon repented his words. 11. Put statements in positi ve form. Make definite assertions. Avoid tame, colorless, hesitating, non-committal language. Use the word not as a means of denial or in antithesis, ne ver as a means of evasion. He was not very often on time. He usually came late. He did not think that studying Latin was much use. He thought the study of Latin u seless. The Taming of the Shrew is rather weak in spots. Shakespeare does not portray Katharine as a very admirable character, nor does Bianca remain long in memory as an important character in Shakespeare's works. The women in The Taming of the Shrew are unattractive. Katharine is disagreeable, Bianca insignificant. The last example, before correction, is indefinite as well as negative. The corrected version, consequently, is simply a guess at the writer's intention. All three examples show the weakness inherent in the word not. Consciously or unconsciously, the reader is dissatisfied with being told only what is not; he wishes to be told what is. Hence, as a rule, it is better to express even a negative in positive form. not honest dishonest not important trifling did not remember forgot did not pay any attention to ignored did not have much confidence in distrusted The antithesis of negative and positive is strong: Not charity, but simple justice. Not that I loved Caesar less, but Rome the more. Negative words other than not are usually strong: The sun never sets upon the British flag. 12. Use definite, specific, concrete language. Prefer the specific to the general, the definite to the vague, the concrete to the abstract. A period of unfavorable weather set in. It rained every day for a week. He showed satisfaction as he took possession of his well-earned reward. He grinned as he pocketed the coin. There is a general agreement among those who have enjoyed the experience that surf-riding is productive of great exhilaration. All who have tried surf-riding agree that it is most exhilarating. If those who have studied the art of writing are in accord on any one point, it is on this, that the surest method of arousing and holding the attention of the reader is by being specific, definite, and concrete. Critics have pointed out how much of the effectiveness of the greatest writers, Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, results from their constant definiteness and concreteness. Browning, to cit e a more modern author, affords many striking examples. Take, for instance, the lines from My Last Duchess, Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast, The dropping of the daylight in the west, The bough of cherries some officious fool Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule She rode with round the terrace--all and each Would draw from her alike the approving speech, Or blush, at least, and those w hich end the poem, Notice Neptune, though, Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity, Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me. These words call up pictures. Recall how in The Bishop Orders his Tom b in St. Praxed's Church "the Renaissance spirit--its worldliness, inconsistency, pride, hypocrisy, ignorance of itself, love of art, of luxury, of good Latin," to quote Ruskin's comment on the poem, is mad e manifest in specific details and in concrete terms. Prose, in particular narrative and descriptive prose, is made vivid by the same means. If the experiences of Jim Hawkins and of David Balfour, of Kim, o f Nostromo, have seemed for the moment real to countless readers, if in reading Carlyle we have almost the sense of being physically present at the taking of the Bastille, it is because of the definiteness of the details and the concreteness of the terms used. It is not that every detail is given; that would be impossible, as well as to no purpose; but that all the significant details are given, and not vaguely, but with such definiteness that the reader, in imagination, can project himself into the scene. In exposition and in argument, the writer must likewise never lose his hold upon the concrete, and even when he is dealing with general principles, he must give particular instances of their application. "This superiority of specific expressions is clearly due to the effort required to translate words into thoughts. As we do not think in generals, but in particulars--as whenever any class of things is referred to, we represent it to ourselves by calling to mind individual members of it, it follows that when an abstract word is used, the hearer or reader has to choose, from his stock of images, one or more by which he may figure to himself the genus mentioned. In doing this, some delay must arise, some force be expended; and if by employing a specific term an appropriate image can be at once suggested, an economy is achieved, and a more vivid impression produced." Herbert Spencer, from whose Philosophy of Style the preceding paragraph is quoted, illustrates the principle by the sentences: In proportion as the manners, customs, and amusements of a nation are cruel and barbarous, the regulations of their penal code will be severe. In proportion as men delight in battles, bull-fights, and combats of gladiators, will they punish by hanging, burning, and the rack. 13. Omit needless words. Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all his sentences short, or that he avoid all detail and treat his subjects only in outline, but that he make every word tell. Many expressions in common use violate this principle: the question whether) there is no doubt but that no doubt (doubtless) used for fuel purposes used for fuel he is a man who he in a hasty manner hastily this is a subject which this subject His story is a strange one. His story is strange. In especial the expression the fact that should be revised out of every sentence in which it occurs. owing to the fact that since (because) in spite of the fact that though (although) call your attention to the fact that remind you (notify you) I was unaware of the fact that I was unaware that (did not know) the fact that he had not succeeded his failure the fact that I had arrived my arrival See also under case, character, nature, system in Chapter V. Who is, which was, and the e like are often superfluous. His brother, who is a member of the same firm His brother, a member of the same firm Trafalgar, which was Nelson's last battle Trafalgar, Nelson's last battle As positive statement is more concise than negative, and the active voice more concise than the passive, many of the examples given under Rules 11 and 12 illustrate this rule as well. A common violation of conciseness is the presentation of a single complex idea, step by step, in a series of sentences or independent clauses which might to advantage be combined into one. Macbeth was very ambitious. This led him to wish to become king of Scotland. The witches told him that this wish of his would come true. The king of Scotland at this time was Duncan. Encouraged by his wife, Macbeth murdered Duncan. He was thus enabled to succeed Duncan as king. (51 words.) Encouraged by his wife, Macbeth achieved his ambition and realized the prediction of the witches by murdering Duncan and becoming king of Scotland in his place. (26 words.) There were several less important courses, but these were the most important, and although they did not come every day, they came often enough to keep you in such a state of mind that you never knew what your next move would be. (43 words.) These, the most important courses of all, came, if not daily, at least often enough to keep one under constant strain. (21 words.) 14. Avoid a succession of loose sentences: This rule refers especially to loose sentences of a particular type, those consisting of two co-ordinate clauses, the second introduced by a conjunction or relative. Although single sentences of this type may be unexceptionable (see under Rule 4), a series soon becomes monotonous and tedious. An unskilful writer will sometimes construct a whole paragraph of sentences of this kind, using as connectives and, but, so, and less frequently, who, which, when, where, and while, these last in non-restrictive senses (see under Rule 3). The third co ncert of the subscription series was given last evening, and a large audience was in attendance. Mr. Edward Appleton was the soloist, and the Boston Symph ony Orchestra furnished the instrumental music. The former showed himself to be an artist of the first rank, while the latter proved itself fully deserving of its hig h reputation. The interest aroused by the series has been very gratifying to the Committee, and it is planned to give a similar series annually hereafter. The fourth con cert will be given on Tuesday, May 10, when an equally attractive programme will be presented. Apart from its triteness and emptiness, the paragraph above is we ak because of the structure of its sentences, with their mechanical symmetry and sing-song. Contrast with them the sentences in the paragraphs quoted under Rule 9, or in any piece of good English prose, as the preface (Before the Curtain) to Vanity Fair. If the writer finds that he has written a series of sentences of the type described, he should recast enough of them to remove the monotony, replacing them by simple sentences, by sentences of two clauses joined by a semicolon, by periodic sentences of two clauses, by sentences, loose or periodic, of three clauses--whichever best represent the real relations of the thought. 15. Express co-ordinate ideas in similar form. This principle, that of parallel construction, requires that expressions of similar content and function should be outwardly similar. The likeness of form enables the reader to recognize more readily the likeness of content and function. Familiar instances from the Bible are the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, and the petitions of the Lord's Prayer. The unskillful writer often violates this principle, from a mistaken belief that he should constantly vary the form of his expressions. It is true that in repeating a statement in order to emphasize it he may have need to vary its form. For illustration, see the paragraph from Stevenson quoted under Rule 9. But apart from this, he should follow the principle of parallel construction. Formerly, science was taught by the textbook method, while now the laboratory method is employed. Formerly, science was taught by the textbook method; now it is taught by the laboratory method. The left-hand version gives the impression that the writer is undecided or timid; he seems unable or afraid to choose one form of expression and hold to it. The right-hand version shows that the writer has at least made his choice and abided by it. By this principle, an article or a preposition applying to all the members of a series must either be used only before the first term or else be repeated before each term. The French, the Italians, Spanish, and Portuguese The French, the Italians, the Spanish, and the Portuguese In spring, summer, or in winter In spring, summer, or winter (In spring, in summer, or in winter) Correlative expressions (both, and; not, but; not only, but also; either, or; first, second, third; and the like) should be followed by the same grammatical construction, that is, virtually, by the same part of speech. (Such combinations as "both Henry and I," "not silk, but a cheap substitute," are obviously within the rule.) Many violations of this rule (as the first three below) arise from faulty arrangement; others (as the last) from the use of unlike constructions. It was both a long ceremony and very tedious. The ceremony was both long and tedious. A time not for words, but action. A time not for words, but for action. Either you must grant his request or incur his ill will. You must either grant his request or incur his ill will. My objections are, first, the injustice of the measure; second, that it is unconstitutional. My objections are, first, that the measure is unjust; second, that it is unconstitutional. See also the third example under Rule 12 and the last under Rule 13. It may be asked, what if a writer needs to express a very large number of similar ideas, say twenty? Must he write twenty consecutive sentences of the same pattern? On closer examination he will probably find that the difficulty is imaginary, that his twenty ideas can be classified in groups, and that he need apply the principle only within each group. Otherwise he had best avoid difficulty by putting his statements in the form of a table. 16. Keep related words together. The position of the words in a sentence is the principal means of showing their relationship. The writer must therefore, so far as possible, bring together the words, and groups of words, that are related in thought, and keep apart those which are not so related. The subject of a sentence and the principal verb should not, as a rule, be separated by a phrase or clause that can be transferred to the beginning. Wordsworth, in the fifth book of The Excursion, gives a minute description of this church. In the fifth book of The Excursion, Wordsworth gives a minute description of this church. Cast iron, when treated in a Bessemer converter, is changed into steel. By treatment in a Bessemer converter, cast iron is changed into steel. The objection is that the interposed phrase or clause needlessly interrupts the natural order of the main clause. Usually, however, this objection does not hold when the order is interrupted only by a relative clause or by an expression in apposition. Nor does it hold in periodic sentences in which the interruption is a deliberately used means of creating suspense (see examples under Rule 18). The relative pronoun should come, as a rule, immediately after its antecedent. There was a look in his eye that boded mischief. In his eye was a look that boded mischief. He wrote three articles about his adventures in Spain, which were published in Harper's Magazine. He published in Harper's Magazine three a rticles about his adventures in Spain. This is a portrait of Benjamin Harrison, grandson of William Henry Harrison, who became President in 1889. This is a portrait of Benjamin Harrison, grandson of William Henry Harrison. He became President in 1889. If the antecedent consists of a group of words, the relative comes at the end of the group, unless this would cause ambiguity. The Superintendent of the Chicago Division, who A proposal to amend the Sherman Act, which has been variously judged. A proposal, which has been variously judged, to amend the Sherman Act. A proposal to amend the much-debated Sherman Act. The grandson of William Henry Harrison, who William Henry Harrison's grandson, who A noun in apposition may come between antecedent and relative, because in such a combination no real ambiguity can arise. The Duke of York, his brother, who was regarded with hostility by the Whigs Modifiers should come, if possible, next to the word they modify. If several expressions modify the same word, they should be so arranged that no wrong relation is suggested. All the members were not present. Not all the members were present. He only found two mistakes. He found only two mistakes. Major R. E. Joyce will give a lecture on Tuesday evening in Bailey Hall, to which the public is invited, on "My Experiences in Mesopotamia" at eight P. M. On Tuesday evening at eight P. M., Major R. E. Joyce will give in Bailey Hall a lecture on "My Experiences in Mesopotamia." The public is invited. 17. In summaries, keep to one tense. In summarizing the action of a drama, the writer should always use the present tense. In summarizing a poem, story, or novel, he should preferably use the present, though he may use the past if he prefers. If the summary is in the present tense, antecedent action should be expressed by the perfect; if in the past, by the past perfect. An unforeseen chance prevents Friar John from delivering Friar Lawrence's letter to Romeo. Meanwhile, owing to her father's arbitrary change of the day set for her wedding, Juliet has been compelled to drink the potion on Tuesday night, with the result that Balthasar informs Romeo of her supposed death before Friar Lawrence learns of the non-delivery of the letter. But whichever tense be used in the summary, a past tense in indirect discourse or in indirect question remains unchanged. The Friar confesses that it was he who married them. Apart from the exceptions noted, whichever tense the writer chooses, he should use throughout. Shifting from one tense to the other gives the appearance of uncertainty and irresolution (compare Rule 15). In presenting the statements or the thought of some one else, as in summarizing an essay or reporting a speech, the writer should avoid intercalating such expressions as "he said," "he stated," "the speaker added," "the speaker then went on to say," "the author also thinks," or the like. He should indicate clearly at the outset, once for all, that what follows is summary, and then waste no words in repeating the notification. In notebooks, in newspapers, in handbooks of literature, summaries of one kind or another may be indispensable, and for children in primary schools it is a useful exercise to retell a story in their own words. But in the criticism or interpretation of literature the writer should be careful to avoid dropping into summary. He may find it necessary to devote one or two sentences to indicating the subject, or the opening situation, of the work he is discussing; he may cite numerous details to illustrate its qualities. But he should aim to write an orderly discussion supported by evidence, not a summary with occasional comment. Similarly, if the scope of his discussion includes a number of works, he will as a rule do better not to take them up singly in chronological order, but to aim from the beginning at establishing general conclusions. 18. Place the emphatic words of a sentence at the end. The proper place in the sentence for the word, or group of words, which the writer desires to make most prominent is usually the end. Humanity has hardly advanced in fortitude since that time, though it has advanced in many other ways. Humanity, since that time, has advanced in many other ways, but it has hardly advanced in fortitude. This steel is principally used for making razors, because of its hardness. Because of its hardness, this steel is principally used in making razors. The word or group of words entitled to this position of prominence is usually the logical predicate, that is, the new element in the sentence, as it is in the second example. The effectiveness of the periodic sentence arises from the prominence which it gives to the main statement. Four centuries ago, Christopher Columbus, one of the Italian mariners whom the decline of their own republics had put at the service of the world and of adventure, seeking for Spain a westward passage to the Indies as a set-off against the achievements of Portuguese discoverers, lighted on America. With these hopes and in this belief I would urge you, laying aside all hindrance, thrusting away all private aims, to devote yourself unswervingly and unflinchingly to the vigorous and successful prosecution of this war. The other prominent position in the sentence is the beginning. Any element in the sentence, other than the subject, may become emphatic when placed first. Deceit or treachery he could never forgive. So vast and rude, fretted by the action of nearly three thousand years, the fragments of this architecture may often seem, at first sight, like works of nature. A subject coming first in its sentence may be emphatic, but hardly by its position alone. In the sentence, Great kings worshipped at his shrine, the emphasis upon kings arises largely from its meaning and from the context. To receive special emphasis, the subject of a sentence must take the position of the predicate. Through the middle of the valley flowed a winding stream. The principle that the proper place for what is to be made most prominent is the end applies equally to the words of a sentence, to the sentences of a paragraph, and to the paragraphs of a composition. IV. A FEW MATTERS OF FORM Headings. Leave a blank line, or its equivalent in space, after the title or heading of a manuscript. On succeeding pages, if using ruled paper, begin on the first line. Numerals. Do not spell out dates or other serial numbers. Write them in figures or in Roman notation, as may be appropriate. August 9, 1918 (9 August 1918) Rule 3 Chapter XII 352nd Infantry Parentheses. A sentence containing an expression in parenthesis is punctuated, outside of the marks of parenthesis, exactly as if the expression in parenthesis were absent. The expression within is punctuated as if it stood by itself, except that the final stop is omitted unless it is a question mark or an exclamation point. I went to his house yesterday (my third attempt to see him), but he had left town. He declares (and why should we doubt his good faith?) that he is now certain of success. (When a wholly detached expression or sentence is parenthesized, the final stop comes before the last mark of parenthesis.) Quotations. Formal quotations, cited as documentary evidence, are introduced by a colon and enclosed in quotation marks. The provision of the Constitution is: "No tax or duty shall be laid on articles exported from any state." Quotations grammatically in apposition or the direct objects of verbs are preceded by a comma and enclosed in quotation marks. I recall the maxim of La Rochefoucauld, "Gratitude is a lively sense of benefits to come." Aristotle says, "Art is an imitation of nature." Quotations of an entire line, or more, of verse, are begun on a fresh line and centered, but need not be enclosed in quotation marks. Wordsworth's enthusiasm for the Revolution was at first unbounded: Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, But to be young was very heaven! Quotations introduced by that are regarded as in indirect discourse and not enclosed in quotation marks. Keats declares that beauty is truth, truth beauty. Proverbial expressions and familiar phrases of literary origin require no quotation marks. These are the times that try men's souls. He lives far from the madding crowd. The same is true of colloquialisms and slang. References. In scholarly work requiring exact references, abbreviate titles that occur frequently, giving the full forms in an alphabetical list at the end. As a general practice, give the references in parenthesis or in footnotes, not in the body of the sentence. Omit the words act, scene, line, book, volume, page, except when referring by only one of them. Punctuate as indicated below. In the second scene of the third act In III.ii (still better, simply insert III.ii in parenthesis at the proper place in the sentence) After the killing of Polonius, Hamlet is placed under guard (IV.ii. 14). 2 Samuel i:17-27 Othello II.iii. 264-267, III.iii. 155-161. Syllabication. If there is room at the end of a line for one or more syllables of a word, but not for the whole word, divide the word, unless this involves cutting off only a single letter, or cutting off only two letters of a long word. No hard and fast rule for all words can be laid down. The principles most frequently applicable are: (a) Divide the word according to its formation: know-ledge (not knowl-edge); Shake-speare (not Shakes-peare); de-scribe (not des-cribe); atmo-sphere (not atmos-phere); (b) Divide "on the vowel:" edi-ble (not ed-ible); propo-sition; ordi-nary; espe-cial; reli-gious; oppo-nents; regu-lar; classi-fi-ca-tion (three divisions allowable); deco-rative; presi-dent; (c) Divide between double letters, unless they come at the end of the simple form of the word: Apen-nines; Cincin-nati; refer-ring; but tell-ing. (d) Do not divide before final -ed if the e is silent: treat-ed (but not roam-ed or nam-ed). The treatment of consonants in combination is best shown from examples: for-tune; pic-ture; sin-gle; presump-tuous; illus-tration; sub-stan-tial (either division); indus-try; instruc-tion; sug-ges-tion; incen-diary. The student will do well to examine the syllable-division in a number of pages of any carefully printed book. Titles. For the titles of literary works, scholarly usage prefers italics with cap