Gratifying Rules of Grammar

by K.K. DuVivier

Note: The information superhighway is responsible for this month's column. These Rules of Grammar have been making the snailmail rounds for years. A legal writing professor from the University of Arkansas, Jan Levine, recently posted them on the legal writing electronic bulletin board. I have edited them only slightly and have reorganized them into categories for more easy access.

Professor Levine claims that he acquired these Rules of Grammar from a student and that their origin is unknown. If you have seen them already, perhaps you know their origin and can help us trace it. If you haven't seen them, I hope these rules add some humor to the sometimes arduous task of remembering conventions of grammar and construction.

WORD CHOICE
Point of view: A writer must not shift your point of view.
Archaisms: It is incumbent on us to avoid archaisms.
Slang: Avoid trendy locutions that sound flaky.
Alliteration: Also, avoid awkward or affected alliteration.
Redundancies: Never, ever use repetitive redundancies.
Contractions: Don't use contractions in formal writing.
Negatives: Never use no double negatives.
Do not put statements in the negative form.

PARTS OF SPEECH
Adverbs: Write all adverbial forms correct.
Verbs: Verbs has to agree with their subjects.
Steer clear of incorrect forms of verbs that have snuck into the language.
If any word is improper at the end of a sentence, a linking verb is.

PUNCTUATION
Hyphens: Hyphenate only between sy-llables, and avoid unn-cessary hyphens.

Apostrophe: Reserve the apostrophe for it's proper use and omit it when its not needed.
Semicolon: Use the semicolon properly, always use it where it is appropriate; and never where it isn't.
Commas: Avoid commas, that are not necessary.
Quotations marks: "Avoid overuse of 'quotation "marks.""
Run-ons: Avoid run-on sentences they are hard to read.
Sentence fragments: No sentence fragments.

PROOFREADING
Proofread carefully to see if any words out. If you re-read your work, you will find on re-reading that a great deal of repetition can be avoided by re-reading and editing.

FIGURES OF SPEECH
Hyperbole: If I've told you once, I've told you a thousand times, resist hyperbole.
Metaphors: Take the bull by the hand and avoid mixed metaphors.
Idioms: Always pick on the correct idiom.
Cliches: Last but not least, avoid cliches like the plague.

And finally a note on spell checkers:

A POME

I have a spelling checker,
It came with my PC;
It plainly marks four my revue
Mistakes I cannot sea.
I've run this pome threw it,
I'm sure your please two no,
Its letter perfect in it's farm,
My checker tolled me sew.

K.K. DuVivier will be happy to address them through The Scrivener column. Send your questions to: K.K. DuVivier, University of Colorado School of Law, Campus Box 401, Boulder, CO 80309-0401.

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