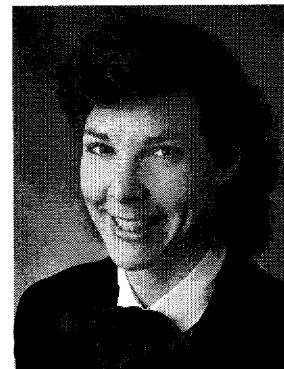


The Scrivener: Modern Legal Writing



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 syllables, and avoid unnecessary hyphens.

DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT LEGAL WRITING?

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.

Apostrophe: Reserve the apostrophe for its 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.

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