

Write or Wrong?

With Bob Nigh and Dana Williamson – ChurchCOMM '08

Ever wonder why non-English speaking people sometimes have a hard time learning our language? Check out the following:

The bandage was wound around the wound.

The farm was used to produce produce.

The dump was so full that it had to refuse more refuse.

We must polish the Polish furniture.

He could lead if he would get the lead out.

The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert.

A bass was painted on the head of the bass drum.

When shot at, the dove dove into the bushes.

I did not object to the object.

The insurance was invalid for the invalid.

Since there is no time like the present, he thought it was time to present the present.

There was a row among the oarsmen about how to row.

They were too close to the door to close it.

The buck does funny things when the does are present.

A seamstress and a sewer fell down into a sewer line.

To help with planting, the farmer taught his sow to sow.

The wind was too strong to wind the sail.

After a number of injections, my jaw got number.

Upon seeing the tear in the painting I shed a tear.

I had to subject the subject to a series of tests.

How can I intimate this to my most intimate friend?

Yes, let's face it -- English is a crazy language.

There is no egg in eggplant, nor ham in hamburger; neither apple nor pine in pineapple.

English muffins weren't invented in England or French fries in France.

Sweetmeats are candies, while sweetbreads, which aren't sweet, are meat.

We take English for granted. But if we explore its paradoxes, we find that:

Quicksand can work slowly,

Boxing rings are square and

A guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig.

And why is it that writers write but fingers don't fing,

Grocers don't groce, and hammers don't ham?

If the plural of tooth is teeth, why isn't the plural of booth beeth?

One goose, two geese, so one moose, two meese?

If teachers taught, why didn't preachers praught?

If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat?

In what language do people recite at a play and play at a recital?

Ship by truck and send cargo by ship?

Have noses that run and feet that smell?

How can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same, while a wise man and a wise guy are opposites?

How can overlook and oversee be opposites, while quite a lot and quite a few are alike?

Have you ever seen a horseful carriage or a strapful gown? Met a sung hero or experienced requited love?

And where are all those people who ARE spring chickens or who would ACTUALLY hurt a fly?

You have to marvel at the unique lunacy of a language in which:

Your house can burn up as it burns down,

You fill in a form by filling it out and

An alarm goes off by going on.

English Rules of Thum (sic)

Don't use no double negatives.

Make each pronoun agree with their antecedents.

Join clauses good, like a conjunction should.

About them sentence fragments.

When dangling, watch your participles.

Verbs has got to agree with their subjects.

Just between you and i, case is important.

Don't write run-on sentences when they are hard to read.

Don't use commas, which aren't necessary.

Try to not ever split infinitives.

It is important to use your apostrophe's correctly.

Proofread your writing to see if you any words out.

Correct speling is essential.

A preposition is something you never end a sentence up with.

While a transcendant vocabulary is laudable, one must be eternally careful so that the calculated objective of communication does not become ensconsed in obscurity.

Eschew obfuscation.

A few more good rules:

1. Always avoid alliteration.
2. Avoid cliches like the plague--they're old hat.
3. Eschew ampersands & abbreviations, etc.
4. Parenthetical remarks (however relevant) are unnecessary.
5. Parenthetical words however must be enclosed in commas.
6. It is wrong to ever split an infinitive.
7. Contractions aren't necessary.

8. Do not use a foreign word when there is an adequate English quid pro quo.
9. One should never generalize.
10. Eliminate quotations. As Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "I hate quotations. Tell me what you know."
11. Comparisons are as bad as cliches.
12. Don't be redundant; don't use more words than necessary; it's highly superfluous.
13. It behooves you to avoid archaic expressions.
14. Avoid archaic spellings too.
15. Understatement is always best.
16. Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.
17. One-word sentences? Eliminate. Always!
18. Analogies in writing are like feathers on a snake.
19. The passive voice should not be used.
20. Who needs rhetorical questions?
21. Do not use hyperbole; not one in a million can do it effectively.
22. Never use a big word when a diminutive alternative would suffice.
23. Be more or less specific.
24. Placing a comma between subject and predicate, is not correct.
25. Use your spell checker to avoid misspelling and to catch typographical errors.
26. Hopefully, you will use words correctly, irregardless of how others use them.
27. A writer must not shift your point of view.
28. Don't overuse exclamation marks!!
29. Writing carefully, dangling participles must be avoided.
30. And always be sure to finish what