

Grammar and Mechanics Checklist

Punctuation

1. Put commas after introductory phrases/clauses (*Handbook*, 42.11).
 - *Correct*: In spite of the considerable differences between the two roommates, they learned to enjoy each other's company.
2. Use commas correctly when joining independent clauses. Use a comma + coordinating conjunction (*Handbook*, 3.65) or semicolon to join independent clauses (*Handbook*, 42.8).
 - *Correct*: Macbeth was wrong, and Lady Macbeth was wrong.
 - *Correct*: Macbeth was wrong; however, Lady Macbeth was also wrong.
3. Place commas around nonessential elements. Tip: if a proper noun follows a common noun, it is probably essential (*Handbook*, 42.10).
 - *Correct*: Jane Austen, author of *Pride and Prejudice*, wrote many novels.
 - *Correct*: The author Jane Austen wrote many novels.
4. Check compound subjects, verbs, and complements.
 - *Incorrect*: Shakespeare was born in Stratford-on-Avon, but later worked in London.
 - *Correct*: Shakespeare was born in Stratford-on-Avon but later worked in London.
 - *Incorrect*: William Shakespeare, and Christopher Marlowe were playwrights.
 - *Correct*: William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe were playwrights.
5. Include the final comma in a series of three or more items (*Handbook*, 42.9).
 - *Incorrect*: She likes eating eggs, bacon and fruit for breakfast.
 - *Correct*: She likes eating eggs, bacon, and fruit for breakfast.
6. Use apostrophes correctly to show possession (*Handbook*, 42.51-52).
 - A. Singular possessive: woman's shoe; Charles's answer;
 - B. Plural possessive: boys' socks, lions' den; Williamses' house
 - C. *Exceptions*:
 - ancient names: Socrates' pupils, Jesus' birth
 - organizations plural in form but singular in meaning: General Motors' policies
7. Use apostrophes correctly to show omissions and to show plurality of numbers, letters, words, and symbols referred to as words (*Handbook*, 42.53-54).
 - '79 = 1979; b's and c's; &'s and and's; 1800s, '90s

Documentation

8. Use correct punctuation for titles of works (*Handbook*, 42.42; 42.40).
 - A. Italicized: Books, journals, magazines, newspapers
 - B. Quotation marks: Articles, chapters, webpages, short stories, essays: quotation marks
 - C. Colons preceding subtitles: *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*
9. Use correct headline style capitalization for titles of works, including paper titles (Turabian 22.3.1.1).
 - Capitalize the first letter of the first and last words of the title and subtitle and all other words with the following exceptions: articles (*a*, *an*, *the*), prepositions, coordinating conjunctions, or the word *to* or *as*.
10. Use correct punctuation to introduce the support material (Turabian 35).
 - A. Direct, informal introduction: Jane Austen writes, "The . . ." (use comma, capitalize first word)
 - B. Direct, formal introduction: Jane Austen criticizes the necessity of women marrying well in the opening lines of the novel: "A single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." (use colon, capitalize first word)
 - C. Integrated into your own sentence structure: Jane Austen asserts that "a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." (no comma/colon, no capital letter)
11. Place the author-date style parenthetical citation in the correct location (Turabian 18.3.1).
 - If author's name is in the introduction: Austen (1995, 12) writes, ". . ."
12. Place the notes-bibliography style reference number in the correct location. (Turabian 16.3.2)
 - *Correct*: Jane Austen asserts that "a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife."⁴ (after end quotation mark)
13. Use present tense verbs for authors' and characters' actions (Turabian 25.2.1).
 - *Correct*: Tolkien writes that as Frodo embarks on his journey, he encounters many dangers.

14. Always place commas and periods completely inside quotation marks (*Handbook*, 42.34). Note: Semicolons and colons always go outside the quotation marks.
- *Correct*: . . . in want of a wife.⁵ *Incorrect*: . . . in want of a wife".⁵
 - *Correct*: We read "The Gift of the Magi," which teaches . . .
 - *Exception*: . . . in want of a wife" (*Austen* 1995, 1).
15. Use ellipses correctly (notice spacing and number of periods) (*Turabian* 25.3.2.2).
- A. Do not use ellipses at the beginning or end of a quotation.
 - B. If words have been omitted inside a sentence: "When a nation is wrong, it should . . . apologize to the wronged party."
 - C. If words have been omitted between sentences and if the first half and the second half form complete sentences: "When a nation is wrong, it should say so. . . . It should also take steps to change the situation."

Pronouns

16. Use correct pronoun/antecedent agreement (*Handbook*, 9.18-32).
- *Correct*: If a student arrives late, he is considered tardy.
 - *Incorrect*: Everyone in the class received their grade.
 - *Correct*: Everyone in the class received his grade.
17. Avoid broad pronoun reference (*Handbook*, 20.3).
- *Incorrect*: He was very tall, which kept him from sitting in the front row.
 - *Correct*: He was very tall, a fact which kept him from sitting in the front row.
 - *Correct*: His height kept him from sitting on the front row. (best option)
 - *Incorrect*: In James 1:1, it says . . . *Correct*: James 1:1 says . . .

Numbers

18. Write out numbers of one or two words (*Handbook*, 38.1).
Note: Numbers referring to years and parts of book are always written as numerals. For example, Chapter 1; Section 17; Page 34; in 1492
19. Write out ordinals: first, second, third, etc. (*Handbook*, 38.4)
- He finished three hundred fifth in the race.
 - We studied the seventeenth century.
20. Write percentages correctly: always write the numeral for the number and spell out *percent* (*Turabian* 23.1.3).
- 7 percent
 - Use a percentage figure (9%) when writing in the sciences or when using many percentage figures.

Diction

21. Avoid first and second person pronouns (*Handbook*, 3.28).
- *I, me, my, mine, we, us, our, ours, you, your, yours*
22. Use standard, formal English. Avoid these words:
- *Kids, a lot, lots, guys, firstly, secondly, thirdly, so, reason is because, etc.*
23. Avoid trite and wordy expressions/phrases: *In this day and age, Last but not least*
24. Avoid contractions and other abbreviations:
- *Shouldn't, won't, wasn't, it's (it is)*
 - *Quote (for quotation), US (spell out United States unless using it as an adjective)*

Sentence Construction

25. Promote parallelism by making logically parallel ideas structurally parallel (*Handbook*, 22.1-8).
- *Incorrect*: That you should study for your test and your need of a good grade are two realities.
 - *Correct*: That you should study for your test and that you need a good grade are two realities.
 - *Incorrect*: You may sit either in the back or you may sit in the front.
 - *Correct*: You may sit either in the back or in the front.
26. Avoid unnecessary passive voice (*Handbook*, 10.38).
- Use passive voice if the doer of the action is unknown, if the object is more important than the doer, or if it is better to leave the doer of the action unidentified.