

# The Elements of Style

Elementary Rules of Usage  
Elementary Principles of Composition, 8-10

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# 3.1

**In a series of three or more terms with a single conjunction, use a comma after each term except the last.**

**E.g.** Hats, pants, **and** shoes.

Using too many conjunctions will make the sentence imprecise.

# 3.2

## Enclose parenthetical expressions between commas.

Whether the interruption be slight or considerable, **never insert one comma and omit the other.**

**E.g.** Her grandmother, you will be sad to know, is sick.

If a parenthetical expression is preceded by a conjunction, place the first comma **before the conjunction**, not after it.

**E.g.** She saw him walking nearby, **and** discovering that he had heard of her crime, ran away in tears.

# 3.3

## Restrictive v.s. Non-restrictive relative clause

The "non-restrictive relative clause" below does not serve to tell which of several possible guests is meant. The clause gives additional information about the subject.

**E.g.** The guest, **who had at first been interested**, became more and more exhausted.

**Compare: Restrictive v.s. Non-restrictive relative clause**

**The candidate who** best meets these requirements will obtain the place.

The candidate, **who** best meets these requirements, will obtain the place.

# 4.1

## Clearly define the relation between two independent clauses.

### E.g. Cause & Effect relation

The early records of the city have disappeared, **and** the story of its first years can no longer be reconstructed.

imprecise

**As** the early records of the city have disappeared, the story of its first years can no longer be reconstructed.

much clearer

# 4.2

**When the subject is the same for both clauses and used only once, use a comma before 'but', but not before 'and'.**

**E.g.**

I have heard of that restaurant, **but** have yet to try it.

I have been to that restaurant many times **and** love it.

# 5

**Do not join independent clauses by a comma.**

Instead, use semicolons or make each clause a sentence.

**Exception:** The clauses are very short.

E.g. The rain stopped, the clouds parted, the sun came out.

## Dangling Participle

A participial phrase at the beginning of a sentence must refer to the grammatical subject

A common mistake that could result in ridiculous sentences.

- X** Being in a dilapidated condition, **I** was able to buy the house very cheap.
- O** Being in a dilapidated condition, **the house** cost me very little.
- O** I was able to buy **the house, which** was in a dilapidated condition, very cheap.
- O** **As** the house was in a dilapidated condition, I was able to buy it very cheap.



# 8.1

## **One paragraph to each topic.**

Each topic should correspond to every paragraph to help readers understand the idea you want to convey.

There shouldn't be more than one topic in one paragraph.

# 9

## **End each paragraph in conformity with the topic sentence.**

# 8.2

## Single sentences shouldn't be a paragraph.

Single sentences should not be written or printed as paragraphs.

### Exception:

1. Sentences of transition, indicating the relation between the parts of an exposition or argument.

**E.g.** ....In this case, the police will be able to find out who is the criminal.  
However, the evidence detected last night led the case to a different conclusion....

2. In dialogue, each speech is a single paragraph.

# 10.1

## Use the active voice.

Using an active voice enhances the tone, making it more vigorous compared with a passive voice.

E.g.

**O** I shall always remember my first visit to Taipei.

much clearer

**X** My first visit to Taipei will always be remembered **by me**.

imprecise

# 10.2

**Don't use a noun that expresses the entire action.**

- X** A **survey** of this region was **made** in 1900.
- O** This region was **surveyed** in 1900.



**Thank you for your attention.**