

APPENDIX I

Words to watch

The words and phrases listed in this appendix are often used incorrectly in correspondence.

ACKNOWLEDGE WITH THANKS or **ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF** Using the words *thank you* is a more direct way of expressing gratitude after receiving something.

AFFECT versus **EFFECT** When used as verbs, *affect* means “to influence”; *effect* means “to accomplish.” Both words can also be used as nouns. The noun *affect* is usually used only in a psychological context, where it means “expression of emotion.” When the construction calls for a noun, and you are not using the word in a psychological sense, you will almost always use *effect*. Most of the time you can the mnemonic device RAVEN to remember the appropriate usage: Remember Affect is a Verb and Effect is a Noun.

AFORESAID Write “named” or “mentioned earlier.”

AFTER THE CONCLUSION OF Write “after.”

ALONG THESE LINES Another trite expression to avoid.

ALLUDE versus **ELUDE** *Allude* means “to refer to”; *elude* means “to escape from.” You allude to a piece of literature. You elude someone who is chasing you.

ALTERNATIVE Means the choice between two possibilities. In constructions such as “no other alternative,” the word *other* is unnecessary.

AMOUNTING TO or **IN THE AMOUNT OF** Write “for” or “of” or “totaling.”

AND/OR Avoid the use of “and/or” unless it is absolutely necessary as a legal term. It destroys the flow of a sentence and causes confusion or ambiguity.

ANYBODY An indefinite pronoun meaning “any person.” Should be written as one word, as should “somebody,” “nobody,” and “everybody.” Only if you are writing about a

body that was looked for but not found, would you write: “The investigators did not find any body.” In most business letters such usage would be rare.

ANYONE Best written as one word unless meaning “any one of them,” as in the sentence “He didn’t like any one of them.”

AS OF EVEN DATE HEREWITH Legalese (and pretty much unfathomable). Merely give the date.

AS PER COPY Instead of writing, “We wrote you last Friday as per copy enclosed,” it’s clearer to write, “We have enclosed a copy of...,” or “Enclosed you will find a copy...”

AS REQUESTED/DESCRIBED/MENTIONED It is a little more personal to write “as you requested,” “as you described,” or “as you mentioned.”

AS SOON AS POSSIBLE Give a specific date whenever possible, but if you really mean “as soon as you can get around to it,” then *as soon as possible* will do; under no circumstances write “ASAP”—unless you are text-messaging a colleague back at the office.

AS TO Write “about.”

AS TO WHETHER Write “whether.”

AS YET Write “yet.”

AT Do not use after the word *where*. (“I wonder where he’s at” is a dire no-no. Erase it from your vocabulary, please.)

ATTACHED HERETO Forget the *hereto*; write “attached.”

AT THE PRESENT TIME or **AT THIS TIME** or **AT THIS WRITING** Write “now” whenever possible instead of these words.

ATTORNEY versus **LAWYER** A lawyer who has a client is an attorney.

AT YOUR EARLIEST CONVENIENCE Encourages delay. Whenever possible, be more specific.

BAD or **BADLY** The adjective *bad* is used after verbs of the sense—smell, sound, feel, look, taste. For example: “He looks bad.” Or: “It tastes bad.” *Badly* indicates manner. For example: “He was hurt badly in the accident.” If you say “She feels badly,” you are saying that her sense of touch is impaired; has she burned her fingers?

BESIDE or **BESIDES** *Beside* means “at the side of.” *Besides* means “in addition to” or “other than.”

BETWEEN versus **AMONG** Where the number exceeds two, use “among” for both persons and things. “Between” is a preposition that takes the objective pronoun (*me, him, her, us, them*). See Chapter 5 for a complete discussion of objective pronouns.

BIMONTHLY “Every two months” or “twice a month.” Since this word can mean either of these, it’s better to be explicit and write whichever you mean.

BIWEEKLY “Every two weeks” or “twice a month.” As with bimonthly, it’s better to be specific and write whichever you mean.

BOTH ALIKE In this phrase, the word *both* is superfluous. Write “alike.”

BY MEANS OF Write “by.”

COMMUNICATION Avoid using this word to mean “a letter” or “a conversation.” Use the specific reference. See section on jargon in Chapter 5.

CONTACT Use more specific words such as “talk to,” “write,” or “call.”

DIRECT versus **DIRECTLY** *Direct* is both an adjective and an adverb. “The man was sent direct (or directly) to Chicago.” In the sentence “The professional made a direct trip to Chicago,” we are using the adjective *direct*. The word *directly* is always an adverb, as in the sentence “We remit directly to a beneficiary if there is no intermediary.”

DISINTERESTED Means “impartial.” Do not confuse with the word *uninterested*, which means “expressing no interest in.”

DROP IN or **DROP A LINE** Avoid using these colloquialisms in your letters.

DUE TO THE FACT THAT Write “because.”

ENCLOSED HERewith Forget the “herewith”; write “enclosed.”

ENCLOSED PLEASE FIND Write “enclosed is” or “I have enclosed...”

EQUALLY AS WELL Drop the *as*. Write “equally well.”

ETC. Don’t use unless the omitted context is understood. Because the meaning of *et cetera* is “and so forth,” you would never write “and etc.” or “etc., etc.”

FACTOR This word is overused. Instead of writing “Good salesmanship is an important factor in account management,” write “Good salesmanship is important to account management.”

FARTHER versus **FURTHER** “Farther” refers to distance. “Further” refers to discourse (“We’ll speak further on this matter”) or to something additional (“Further meetings on the budget will be necessary”). The distinction between these two words is blurred by many writers who also use “further” to refer to distance. Eventually, this usage may become acceptable.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION Usually superfluous.

GO OVER Write “examine,” “look over,” or “read.”

HE/SHE or **S/HE** Avoid using either of these alternatives. If you cannot rewrite the sentence using a plural pronoun, then write “he or she.”

HOPEFULLY An adverb meaning “with hope” or “in a hopeful manner” (“Let me come too, Lavinia said hopefully”). It is used incorrectly by many writers to mean “I hope.”

HOWEVER Best used in the middle of a sentence. When *however* is used at the beginning of a sentence, it often means “to whatever extent.”

I.E. versus E.G. The abbreviation “i.e.” stands for *id est*, which means “that is” in Latin. The abbreviation “e.g.” stands for *exempli gratia*, which means “for example” in Latin. Both of these abbreviations are set off by commas in a sentence.

IN POSITION Implies “at attention” or “standing around.” Write “prepared,” “ready,” “willing,” or “available.”

IN RECEIPT OF Write “We (I) have received” or “We (I) have.”

IN REFERENCE TO or **IN REGARD TO** or **IN REPLY TO** Write “concerning,” “proposing,” “inquiring about,” or “suggesting.”

IN THE LAST ANALYSIS Trite expression. Don’t use it.

IN WHICH YOU ENCLOSED Write “with which you enclosed.” Information is given *in* a letter. You receive an enclosure *with* a letter.

IRREGARDLESS versus **REGARDLESS** “Irregardless” is not a word. The proper word is *regardless*.

ITS versus **IT’S** *Its* shows possession. *It’s* is a contraction of “it is.”

LIKE versus **AS** *Like* is a preposition that introduces a prepositional phrase and is used to compare things: “He looks like his mother.” *As* is usually used as a conjunction and introduces a subordinate clause (clauses have a subject and a verb): “He acts as his mother did.”

MATTER Too general a term. Use the specific word: “problem,” “request,” “subject,” “question,” or whatever you may be writing about.

MOST Don’t substitute *most* for *almost*. Write “almost everyone” instead of “most everyone.”

MYSELF/OURSELVES, HIMSELF/HERSELF/THEIRSELVES, YOURSELF/YOURSELVES (pronouns ending in **-SELF/-SELVES**) Avoid using any of these as the subject in a sentence. Write “Max and I are approving the purchase,” instead of “Max and myself...” Pronouns ending in *-self* (or *-selves*) are used for reference and emphasis in a sentence. In the sentence “I approved the purchase myself,” *myself* emphasizes *I* (that is, no one else approved the purchase).

NEITHER, NOR and **EITHER, OR** These correlatives should be kept together.

PARTY versus **PERSON** Use *party* as a legal reference only. *Person* should be used in ordinary reference.

PEOPLE versus **PERSONS** Use *people* when referring to large groups; *persons* for small groups.

PER Use of *per* is acceptable in an economic context, such as “20 shares per dollar.” Although writers should usually avoid mixing Latin and English (*per* is Latin), if the construction is made less awkward by using *per*, use it. Avoid writing “per your letter” or “per my last letter,” however, because this does nothing to simplify your letter.

PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT Avoid this wordy construction. Just give the information without the long windup.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE The word *experience* already tells the reader “we have a prior history with this ...” Write “Our experience with this person,” instead.

PRINCIPAL versus **PRINCIPLE** *Principle* refers to a basic truth (“The principles of physics do not allow water to run uphill”). *Principal*, as an adjective, means “leading” or “chief.” As a noun, *principal* means either a “person in charge” or, in finance, “capital.”

SHALL versus **WILL** You may have learned that you should use *shall* as the future indicative of the verb *to be* in the first person—I/we shall—and *will* in the third person—you/he/she/they will—and that to express determination the forms are reversed. You can forget this so-called rule, and just say “will” (“I *will* go to the show, no matter what you say”) whenever you want.

TAKING THIS OPPORTUNITY Instead of writing “We are taking this opportunity to thank you,” write “We thank you” or “Thank you.”

THAN versus **THEN** *Than* is used for comparison. *Then* is used to indicate time.

THAT versus **WHICH** A simple rule is to use the pronoun “which” if the clause it modifies can be separated from the rest of the sentence with commas (“The book, which is on the table, is green”). Otherwise use “that” (“The book that I loaned Tim is terrific”).

THEREAFTER Too lofty. Use “after that” when possible.

THIS WILL ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF YOUR LETTER An answer to a person’s letter will let him or her know it was received.

TRY AND versus **TRY TO** Write “try to.”

UNDER SEPARATE COVER Write “We are sending separately” or “You will receive.”

UNIQUE There are no degrees of uniqueness. “Very unique,” “most unique,” or “extremely unique” are incorrect. It’s just “unique.”

UTILIZE/UTILIZATION Inflated language for the verb “to use.” And utilization? Equally inflated language for the noun “use.” Don’t use either of these terms.

VIA Means “by way of” (geographically) and is properly used as a railroad, airline, or steamship term. Write “by express mail” or “by parcel post.”

WE ASK YOU TO KINDLY Write “please.”

WE WISH TO THANK YOU Write “thank you.”

WRITER Write “I” or “me” when you are referring to yourself in a letter.

APPENDIX II

Punctuation

Punctuation is a worrisome thing, not the least because experts differ in their interpretation of its rules. Here we present the system we believe is most useful in business writing. You may encounter other opinions of what is “correct.” No matter. Be consistent with your own usage, and remember the cardinal rule: The purpose of punctuation is to help readers follow your meaning.

apostrophe (')

The apostrophe indicates omission, possession, and sometimes the plural of certain letters, nouns, numbers, and abbreviations.

1. The possessive pronouns—its, hers, his, ours, yours, theirs—do not use an apostrophe.
2. The possessive of plural nouns ending in “s” is formed by adding an apostrophe: *10 days' trial*.
3. Joint possession is indicated by adding an apostrophe and an “s” to the last noun only: *Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream*. To indicate separate possession, add the apostrophe and an “s” to each noun: *Ben's and Jerry's ice cream cones*.
4. Add an “s” with no apostrophe to form the plurals of letters, nouns, numbers, and abbreviations, if it is possible to do so without causing confusion: *several YWCAs and YMHAs; in the 1960s; in fours and fives*.
5. Add an apostrophe and an “s” to form the plurals of lowercase letters used as nouns, abbreviations using periods, and capital letters that would otherwise be confusing: *C.P.A.'s; a's and b's; I's, A's, U's*.

colon (:)

The colon warns the reader that what follows will complete what was promised in the preceding words.

The colon is used:

1. After the salutation of a letter.
2. To indicate that pertinent information follows.
3. Preceding a formal or extended quotation.
4. To introduce a list.

The phrases “as follows” and “the following” should be eliminated if possible in your letters. If it is necessary to use either phrase, it should be followed by a colon.

A colon is always placed outside of quotation marks.

The first word following a colon should be capitalized if what follows the colon could be construed as a complete sentence on its own.

comma (,)

Use the comma:

1. To separate distinct, independent statements in a compound sentence: *I turned left, and George kept on marching down the road.*
2. To separate a series of words or phrases having equal value and not connected by conjunctions.
3. To separate a series of adjectives or adverbs that are equal in value and are not connected by conjunctions: *They are predicting a long, cold, storm-filled winter.*
4. To set off a long dependent clause preceding its principal clause: *If you want to come with us tomorrow, you'll have to be ready by nine.*
5. To precede nonrestrictive relative clauses introduced by “who,” “which,” and similar pronouns: *The boy, who shifted nervously from foot to foot, finally delivered his message.* The pronoun “that” is frequently used in a restrictive sense and does not require a comma preceding it: *The letter that came yesterday contained the check we were waiting for.*
6. To set apart a parenthetical expression: *Thanksgiving, and by the way I really hate turkey, is the most sacrosanct of national holidays.*
7. To separate the year in a complete date from the continuation of the sentence: *June 14, 1981, was his graduation.*
8. To separate the name of the state, following mention of the city located within its borders, from the rest of the sentence: *He lives in a suburb of Omaha, Nebraska, with his wife and two children.*
9. When the thought is broken by a connective, such as “however,” “obviously,” or “namely.”

dash (—)

The dash indicates an abrupt change in thought. Dashes are generally preferable to parentheses. Use dashes to:

1. Set off expressions foreign to the sentence.
2. Set off explanations and repetitions.

ellipsis (...)

When letters or words are omitted in a quotation, use an ellipsis (three periods on the typewriter: "...") to indicate the omission. If the omission ends on a period, use an ellipsis, plus a period (four periods on the typewriter: "...").

exclamation point (!)

An exclamation point should not be overused or it will lose its effectiveness. It should be used:

1. To indicate surprise.
2. To indicate a strong command.
3. To indicate sarcasm.
4. To follow a strong interjection, such as "Ouch!" or "Hurray!"

hyphen (-)

Avoid hyphenation. Excessive use of the hyphen tends to distract from a letter's message and does not add to its appearance. Consult a dictionary on the proper hyphenation of words when you must hyphenate. Here are some general rules:

1. Insert a hyphen in compound adjectives preceding a noun: *absent-minded office manager; fun-loving buddies; twenty-year mortgage.*
2. Insert a hyphen in compound numerals twenty-one through ninety-nine: *thirty-two, forty-six, eighty-seven.*

parentheses (())

Parentheses may be used:

1. To set apart explanatory detail that can be omitted without changing the grammatical structure of a sentence.
2. To enclose a word or clause that is independent of the sentence in which it is inserted.

Punctuation should be placed outside of the closing parenthesis unless it is a part of the parenthetical expression.

period (.)

In addition to the traditional uses of the period, use one after a question of courtesy, which is really a request: *Would you give me a hand with these bundles, please.*

question mark (?)

Use after every direct question: *What is your name?* If your question consists of a polite request you should usually use a period instead of a question mark: *Would you please take out the garbage.*

quotation marks (" ")

Any material quoted within a sentence or a paragraph should be set off with quotation marks.

Use single quotation marks to enclose a quotation within a quotation.

Titles of poems, articles, episodes of television series, or chapters in a book are enclosed in quotation marks. Do *not*, however, use quotation marks for titles of books, magazines, television series, and plays; they should be set in italics.

Lengthy quotations should be set off by indentation—blocking—in which case quotation marks are unnecessary.

If quotation marks are used and the text is continued into two or more paragraphs, use quotation marks at the beginning of each paragraph, but at the end of only the last paragraph of the quotation.

Periods and commas are always placed inside quotation marks, colons always outside. Other punctuation marks go inside quotation marks if they relate to the quoted segment, and otherwise outside.

semicolon (;)

The semicolon is used:

1. To separate the clauses of a compound sentence when the conjunction is omitted.
2. Between the clauses of a compound sentence that are joined by one of the conjunctive adverbs: accordingly, also, besides, consequently, further, hence, furthermore, however, moreover, nevertheless, otherwise, still, then, thus, yet, or therefore.
3. To separate units in a series when they are long and complicated or internally punctuated.
4. Between clauses of a compound sentence that are connected by a conjunction when those clauses are somewhat long, or when a more decided pause is desirable.