



Tips for Writing in English

Petr Zemek

2021-01-14

Put yourself into the reader's shoes

- Keep in mind the principal purpose of writing
- Pay special attention to understandability
- Think about who will read your text
- Anticipate your readers' questions
- Is there something that you have not understood in other people's texts?

Try hard to make the text as readable as possible

- Be never satisfied with the first draft
- Keep revising until perfect
- Allow time between revisions

Follow a logical structure

- You do not want to lose the reader
- Parts, chapters, sections, subsections, paragraphs, ... Oh my!
- Understand the purpose of a paragraph
- The newspaper-article analogy
- Use transitional words to connect sentences
 - *"The proposed solution to the problem did not work. **Therefore**, we attempted a second solution. **However**, this solution was also unsuccessful."*

Create visually perfect articles

- Why?
- Beware of:
 - typographical errors
 - spelling errors
 - alignment issues
 - insufficient or excessive spacing
- Use a spell checker and re-read your work several times before publishing

Strive for consistency

- Choose a word for each technical term and stick to it
- Use a thesaurus for non-technical words, but wisely
 - “They are *warm, nice, people with big hearts.*”
 - “They are *humid, prepossessing, Homo Sapiens with full-sized aortic pumps.*”
- Choose US or UK English and stick to it
 - Spelling
 - “My favourite neighbor possesses both humor and nice behaviour.”
 - Vocabulary
 - *rubber/eraser*

Avoid long sentences and excessive parentheses

The greatest advantage the Tmux+Vim combo brings is that it enables you to perform nearly all the development (and development-related activities) in a terminal. This allows you, for example, to `ssh` into a remote server and do your development in there, without a need to edit files on your PC and transfer them to the server (for example, via `scp`). You may then seamlessly resume working from other places—even from a different computer—because you do your work on a remote server through SSH. This might be handy when travelling a lot. Another benefit is that development servers are usually much faster than notebooks or desktop PCs, so, depending on your company's budget, you may even be able to develop on a machine with a massive number of cores and memory (such an experience will make you never want to go back to your work PC).

Avoid chapters/sections with a single section/subsection

5	Left Restriction Range and Its Consequences	18
5.1	State Grammars	18
5.1.1	Unrestricted State Grammar	19
5.2	<i>n</i> -limited Derivations	19
5.3	Results	20



An example of neat contents

Part I Introduction and Terminology

1 Introduction	2
2 Rudiments of Formal Language Theory	7
2.1 Mathematical Notation	7
2.2 Strings and Languages	7
2.3 Grammars and Language Families	9

Part II One-Sided Random Context Grammars

3 Definitions and Examples	17
3.1 Definitions	17
3.2 Examples	19
3.3 Denotation of Language Families	21
4 Generative Power	22
4.1 One-Sided Random Context Grammars	22
4.2 One-Sided Forbidding Grammars	27
4.3 One-Sided Permitting Grammars	37
5 Normal Forms	39
5.1 First Normal Form	39
5.2 Second Normal Form	43
5.3 Third Normal Form	44
5.4 Fourth Normal Form	45

Avoid chapters/sections with no introductions

in Section 5.3. Finally, in Section 5.4, results significance for syntactical analysis is given.

5.1 State Grammars

5.1.1 Standard Version

Definition 5.1.1. A *state grammar* (see [7]) is a sextuple

$$G = (N, T, W, P, S, p_0),$$

Use proper formatting

- Spaces
 - LaTeX: `in~\cite{Wood97}`
 - LaTeX: `1\,000\,000`
- Dashes (en, em)
 - LaTeX: *"You will find this material in chapters 8--12."*
 - LaTeX: *"Upon discovering the errors---all 124 of them---the publisher immediately recalled the books."*
- Units
 - LaTeX: `5\,cm`

Numbers: digits or words?

In general, write digits for numbers 10 or larger, or in mathematical text.

- Compare:
 - *"There is only 1 reason why it could have failed."*
 - *"There is only one reason why it could have failed."*
- Compare:
 - *"We have 2 ways we can go from here."*
 - *"We have two ways we can go from here."*

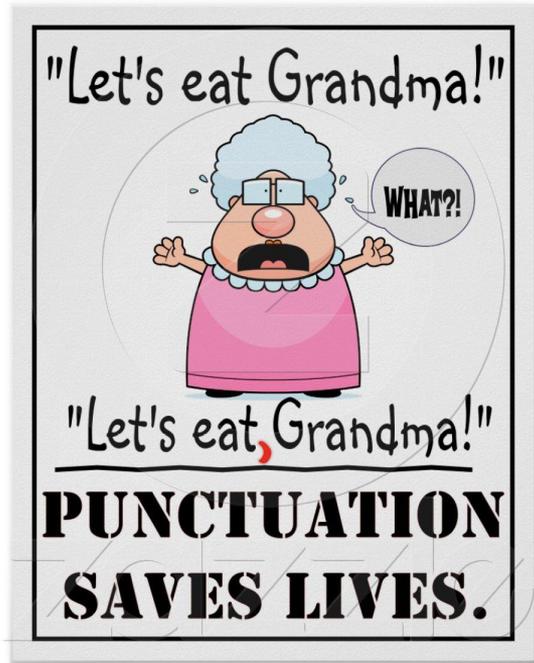
Words and phrases to avoid

- in order to
- interesting
- thing, stuff
- best, worst
- always, never
- simple, easy, obvious
- using *"For example"* followed by *"etc."*

English is not Czech/Slovak

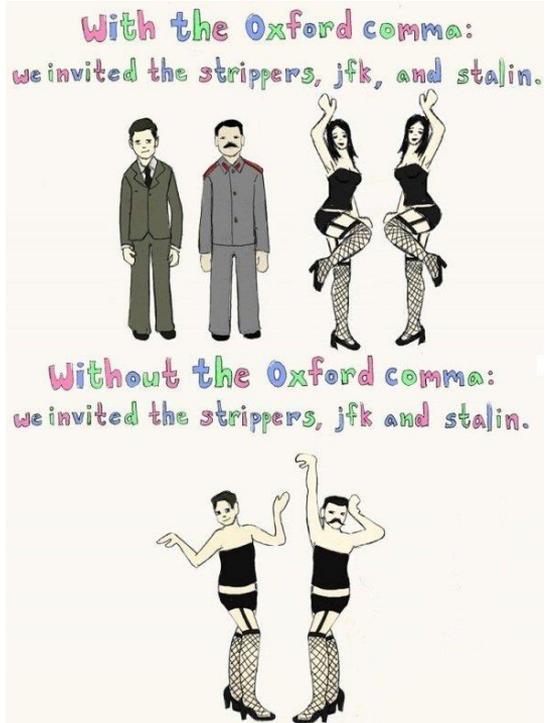
- Czenlish
- A comma before *“that”*
- *“way how”*
- *“on Figure 7”*
- Do not translate literally from Czech/Slovak
 - *“Only if you get down on your knees and **please me!**”*

Pay attention to punctuation :-)



<http://writingwithaesop.blogspot.com/2011/10/lets-eat-grandma.html>

Oxford comma :-)



<https://www.verbicidemagazine.com/2011/09/20/strippers-jfk-and-stalin-illustrate-why-you-should-use-the-serial-comma/>

How to write an article, thesis, etc.

- Do NOT start with an introduction :-)
- Start with the "meat"
- Start with the parts that you enjoy writing the most
- Then, gradually complete the missing parts
- Feel free to write fast and edit later
- Feel free to jump around the text
- Consider writing an outline
- Find the best time and place
- Get rid of distractions
- Consider paying for professional proofreading

How to improve your writing

- Learn the language, not just grammar
- Read books, or any well-written text for that matter
- Watch movies with English subtitles
- Practice, practice, practice, and then practice more!
- Seek feedback and learn to accept criticism
- Find phrases that you like and ~~steal~~ copy them
- Learn English idioms
 - *"We are running out of beer"*



Discussion