**Some Basic Grammar and Style Tips**

- Know the parts of speech and their functions. Some of the parts of speech you should be familiar with are:
  - verbs (participles, gerunds, simple form, regular/irregular verbs)
  - nouns (abstract, concrete, proper, common)
  - adjectives
  - adverbs
  - prepositions

…and for the enthusiastic learner with lots of time, find out what the following are, if you don’t already know:
  - linking verbs
  - noun phrases
  - dependent and independent clauses
  - active and passive voice.

2. Business writing often takes a direct organizational approach. Get to the point effectively and efficiently. Short words (not “dumbed-down” ones) are very effective.

   Look at this example:
   - His participation is really important. (or)
   - His participation is **vital**.

4. Know what a **run-on** and a **fragment** are.
   - **Run-on**: She is an enthusiastic worker coming to work every Saturday before everyone else gets here.
   - **Fragment**: The large corporation, situated in a metropolitan area.

5. Pay attention to subject/verb agreement.
   - (Incorrect) **They** always does their own thing.
   - (Correct) **They** always do their own thing.
• (Correct) She always does her own thing.

6. Break up your document/letter into **short manageable paragraphs.**

7. Organize your thoughts first. Brainstorm and then outline.

- **Use non-discriminatory language**

  • Use **flight attendant** instead of stewardess,
  • **Use chairperson** (or chair) for chairman,
  • **Use mail carrier** instead of mailman, etc.
  • Do not mention a person’s race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or medical condition unless that information is critical to the document.

8. Learn the rules for **capitalization, abbreviations and punctuation.**
   (At the very least, know where to find the rules!)

   - Use the correct word. Don’t write “advice” when you mean “advise.”

   • Others:
     to, two and too
     its and it’s
     there, their and they’re
     bring and take
     leave and forget
     affect and effect
     imply and infer

10. Write with correct parallel structure.

    Example on a resume: (Incorrect) - **Operated** a fork lift
                           - **Responsible for** inventory
                           - **Was named** “Employee of the Month”

    All should be the same part of speech (past tense, for example)

    - **Operated** a forklift
    - **Managed** inventory
    - **Won** “Employee of the Month” award

Here’s another common mistake with parallel structure:

John likes **golfing, fishing, and doing other recreational activities in his free time.**
Take the quiz!

After each sentence, write C for Correct or I for Incorrect. Rewrite the Incorrect sentences. (Answers on the next page.)

1. My boss always give me good advise.

_______________________________________________________________

2. They took the fireman’s name to write a letter of appreciation.

_______________________________________________________________

3. They saw there house on fire from several miles away.

_______________________________________________________________

4. That’s so much work for you to do you’ll never finish.

_______________________________________________________________

5. After collecting the money, paying the bills and finally getting a chance to look at the profit and loss statement, he was relieved.

_______________________________________________________________

6. The nurses must supply their own uniforms.

_______________________________________________________________

7. Several subscriptions to leading magazines.

_______________________________________________________________
8. We endeavored to ascertain the cause of the malfunction.

9. Bill Miller, a famous black attorney, will be present in the courtroom.

10. She was too tired to drive that night.

Answers:

1. Incorrect: the correct word is advice.

2. Incorrect: Use firefighter.

3. Incorrect: Use their, not there

4. Incorrect: It’s a run-on. Write two sentences or separate with a semi-colon between the words “do” and “you’ll.”

5. Incorrect: Parallel structure is not correct. Collecting the money, paying the bills, and looking at the profit and loss statement…

6. Correct

7. Incorrect: it’s a fragment. The phrase requires a verb to complete the sentence; probably passive voice: Several subscriptions to leading magazines were made available to the graduate students.

8. Incorrect: Use simple language. We tried to identify the source of the malfunction.

9. Incorrect: Race is not necessary. Bill Miller, a famous attorney…

10. Incorrect: “to tired” should be “too tired.”