



Society for
Technical
Communication

Welcome to the Web seminar: **Ten Things You Thought You Knew About Writing.** The session will start in a few minutes.

MUTE YOUR PHONE, PLEASE!

If you do not have a mute button dial *6*

To get help if technical problems occur during the seminar:

- Dial *10* to connect directly to Genesys Tech Support
- Do not call the STC office.

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Introduction: Why bother?

- Review is necessary for all writers!
- You may have never learned it properly.
- You can't rely on others.
- TC rules differ from other types of writing.
- Language evolves (stay tuned).



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#1: Language evolves.

- Prepositions at end may be OK.
 - Put the fire out. ✗
 - The fire was put out. ✓
 - issue: phrasal verbs OK
- Split infinitives are fine.
 - Julie started to noisily eat the pie.
 - issue: clear and kosher
- Starting with *and* is OK.
- Germanization affects word presentation.
 - bell boy → bell-boy → bellboy
 - re-use → reuse

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#1: Language evolves. (cont.)

- Drop those dated apostrophes with numbers and abbreviations.

Old	New (correct)
U.S.A.	USA
PDF's	PDFs
1920's	1920s

- Guideline: Stay current!

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#2: Not all passive voice is bad.

- Fact: passive voice is harder to understand.
- However, there are three accepted cases:
 - no agent: **Rabies was eradicated in the UK in the 1930s.**
 - stressing action (theory of operation): **The cow is washed, disinfected, and attached to the milking unit.**
 - avoiding blame: **The milk samples were spilled.**
- Guideline: If it doesn't meet the case, rewrite in active voice.



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#3: Bullet lists need agreement.

- Bullets should complete the lead-in phrase.
- They are visual shorthand for the reader.
- Guideline: Ditch unnecessary capitalization and punctuation.

We provide all:

- workbooks
- study material
- textbooks
- access to online groups



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#4: The optional *that* helps readers.

- Improves parsing for non-native readers.
 - *Marty was happy that he could whistle.*
- It doesn't cost much in word count.
- Guideline: Use it consistently.



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#5: Latin abbreviations obscure meaning.

- Most people cannot correctly define them (i.e. and e.g.).
- They require messy extra punctuation.
 - *When using an udder cream, e.g., Bag Balm, make sure to...*
- Red flag: **etc.**
- Guideline: write to *express*, not *impress*.

*Dominum non habui,
liber ibi fui.*



*such as, that is,
for example...*



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#6: TC requires more commas.

- Use a comma after all prepositional phrases.
 - From the Cycle menu, select the milking options.
- Use a comma after conditional phrases.
 - If the cow is wet, use a Dry cycle before testing.
- Use a serial comma (aka *closed punctuation*).
 - The unit detects roundworms (nematodes), tapeworms (cestodes), and flukes (trematodesmastitis).
- Avoid the usual knucklehead mistakes.
 - Ron's wife Janice is a doctor. ✘
- Guideline: Follow the *breathing* rule.

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#7: Hyphenation causes problems.

- There are complex rules for hyphenation across lines.
- It won't work with most automation:
 - YMMV: HATs, DTPs, etc.
 - single sourcing
 - CAT
- It confuses non-native readers.
- Guideline: Don't hyphenate.

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#8: Gender-bias solutions must be elegant.

- You have to address the issue.
- Clumsy fixes are a bigger problem.
 - Every user has to create their own password.
 - Every user has to create his or her own password.
- Use imperatives or plurals.
 - Create your own password.
 - All users must create their own passwords.
- When necessary, remove the pronoun.
 - Each user must create a unique password.
- Guidelines: Make the fix invisible!



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#9: There is more than one dash.

- Incorrect usage can miscommunicate.
- You are responsible for typesetting.
 - hyphen: user-defined setting
 - en dash: between 20–35 grams
 - em dash: All settings—including work files—are saved.
- Do not use spaces with any dashes.
- Guidelines: Learn the correct symbols and use them.

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#10: Controlled English is transparent.

- CE is also known as *simplified English*.
- It makes writing accessible to non-native readers yet doesn't bother high-level native readers.
- Rules:
 - one word, one meaning
 - limit lexicon of verbs
 - use main look-up value
 - short (12 word) sentences
- Guidelines: Add this to your DITA and XML strategy for the ideal global solution.

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Thank you!

If you have additional questions,
you may contact Leah Guren at:
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See STC's website (www.stc.org)
for more Web seminar
opportunities.

