



Empowering professionals to write with skill and confidence

Q4 2008 Newsletter

A Bad Economy is a Good Time to Hone Skills

Just like the gas crisis can help us learn better driving habits and ways to save gas, a down economy can be a perfect time to reflect on, and hone, our skills. While lots of companies cut training in a poor economy, that doesn't mean that you should also cut out training. In fact, honing your skills, besides enhancing your value to the organization, can demonstrate your commitment to self-improvement and can make your job easier, help you remain competitive, and strengthen your confidence.

Your skills matter, and shouldn't suffer because your company may be offering less training. However, be sure that when you look for training that you consider payoff; in other words, consider training that gives you an immediate and appreciable impact. Ask if the training will help you do your job more effectively and efficiently immediately, and if that impact will continue.

Finally, let your employers know that you've taken the initiative to hone your skills. Doing so will enhance your ethos, and who knows, may even lead to a promotion!

Hurley Write offers a four-week online course in technical writing, and an online six-week course in scientific writing. For more information, contact us at pam@hurleywrite.com.

Current Projects

We've just completed a customized style guide for Atlanta-based KDH Research & Communication, a research institution that constructs and evaluates public programs. The guide, written with input from Kristen Holtz, PhD, the founder and president of KDHR, covers basic writing style as well as issues that are unique to KDHR.

We're also very excited to be working on a writing course for America Reads—Mississippi. This customized online course, which will run from January through June 2009, will focus on helping America Reads members communicate their message of service. The course covers basic, as well as more advanced, writing concepts, and members submit their work for written feedback.

Grammar Tip

What's New

We're now creating **customized online** writing courses. We've found a great software program that allows us to create online courses using Flash at minimal expense. For more information, contact us at pam@hurleywrite.com

Thanks to those of you who attended our fall webinar series! We'll be offering some of our popular webinars again in the spring, so watch your in-box!

New Puzzler

Submit your answers (and a short explanation of how you arrived at the answer) to pam@hurleywrite.com. You could win the opportunity to take our four-week online technical writing course (a \$399 value). Have fun!

Faulty predication is when a subject and predicate do not fit together grammatically or simply do not make together.

- 1:** A characteristic that I admire is a person who is generous.
- 2:** The rules of the corporation expect employees to be on time.
- 3:** A stereotype is when someone characterizes a group unfairly.
- 4:** A confluence is where two rivers join to form one.
- 5:** The reason I like to play soccer is because it provides aerobic exercise.

Please note: winners must sign up within 30 days of winning and must complete the course within four weeks of signing up. Hurley Write reserves the right to use the winner's name as the winner in our newsletter.

Answers to Last Quarter's Puzzler

Using “that”

Seems that businesses and organizations are on a campaign to eliminate the use of the word “that” from their documents. “That” is being touted as “unnecessary” and “worthless.” I work with one organization that tries to delete “that” every time it’s used, and another that cautions its writers “not to use ‘that.’” Why has such a small, seemingly innocent word incurred the wrath of so many organizations, and why would anyone want to ban it? I’m of the opinion that there’s no such thing as a “good” or “bad” word, and that to suggest as much asks writers to focus their attention on minutiae rather than what they should be focused on: content.

I’m actually a huge fan of “that,” and think that it’s under- rather than over-used. “That” can help clarify writing, and shouldn’t be deleted if to do so would cause ambiguity. For example,

- On the file input, the user must ensure the number of sectors is equal

needs “that” to ensure readability:

- On the file input, the user must ensure that the number of sectors is equal.

Also, when indicating what a report, person, or document says, “that” should be used; if “that” isn’t used, then whatever is being said should be in quotation marks.

- The company’s CEO reported the company’s first quarter earnings were above average.

is incorrect; if this is what the CEO actually said, then quotation marks are in order; if however, this is a paraphrase of what the CEO said, then “that” is appropriate. As written, the sentence should read

- The company’s CEO reported that the company’s first quarter earnings were above average.

Next quarter we’ll discuss using “that” versus “which.”

If you have a topic you’d like to have discussed in our one-hour webinars or would like more information, email us at pam@hurleywrite.com.

Continue to send us your questions—grammar and writing-related!

Last quarter, we mixed it up, asking readers to correct these puzzlers:

1: We waited sometime for him to arrive

Should read: **“some time”**

2: I think that you will be impressed by our systems engineers who are located at our home office.

Should read: **“engineers, who are located...”**

3: After he left the office which was closed he came to my house.

Should read: **“office, which was closed, he came...”** (system is a singular noun and needs to relate to the singular verb extends)

4: Efficiency has increased this year. The reason is because our sales team has been more aggressive.

Should read: **“increased this year because our sales team...”**

5: The meeting included Sheila and myself.

Should read: **“Sheila and me.”**

If you’d like explanations for any of the answers, send an email to pam@hurleywrite.com.

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