

## Top Five Grammar Problems from Jour 002 (Grammar & Usage) Final Exam

### 1. Dates and states rule

*Please punctuate the following sentence (if it needs punctuation):*

The tornado on June 24 1876 destroyed Carton City Texas and several small towns in Oklahoma.

**RULE (DATES):** Set the number designating a year off with commas when the number follows a month and a date. When a date follows a day of the week, set the date off with commas.

EXAMPLE: Jan. 1, 2008, was a memorable day.

EXAMPLE: Wednesday, Jan. 1, was a memorable day.

EXAMPLE: I remember Jan. 1, 2008.

EXAMPLE: I remember Wednesday, Jan. 1.

**TIP:** Most stylebooks agree that when only the month and year are specified, commas are unnecessary:

EXAMPLE: January 2008 was a profitable month for our company.

**RULE (STATES):** Set off state and country names with commas when they follow city names.

EXAMPLE: Weslaco, Texas, is near Mexico.

EXAMPLE: She works in Asolo, Italy.

### 2. Restrictive apposition with a personal title

*Please punctuate the following sentence (if it needs punctuation):*

Women's basketball coach Bonnie Henrickson spoke at the luncheon.

**RULE:** Do not put a comma between a title and a name when you can substitute *Mr.* or *Ms.* for the title.

EXAMPLE: President Julie Smith will address the stockholders.  
(Ms. Julie Smith will address the stockholders.)

**RULE:** Do not set off a noun (or noun phrase) with commas when it narrows down the meaning of a preceding noun.

EXAMPLE: My associate Arnold Jones will address the stockholders. (The noun *Arnold Jones* narrows down the noun *associate*; it tells which associate.)

EXAMPLE: Our newsletter *Employees Today* just won a national award. (This is accurate only if the company has more than one newsletter. In that case, *Employees Today*

narrows down the noun *newsletter*; it tells which of your organization's newsletters won the award.)

3. **Pronoun case**

*In the following sentence, please*

- a. underline the possessive pronoun
- b. put an "x" through the objective pronoun
- c. circle the nominative pronoun

After some confusion, they mailed their certificates to her last  
Wednesday.

**RULE:** A nominative pronoun is the subject of a verb (*She is a good grammarian*) or is a so-called predicate nominative (*It is I.*) Objective pronouns are objects: direct objects (*They like her*), indirect objects (*They gave her the letter*), objects of prepositions (*The debate is between her and me*), etc. Possessive pronouns are easier – but remember that possessive personal pronouns don't take apostrophes: *yours, hers, its, ours, theirs* (and also *whose*).

4. **Dangling modifier**

*Which of the following sentences has a dangling modifier?*

- A. The House voted in favor of the measure, however it died in the Senate.
- B. Holding the flag high, he charged the enemy lines.
- C. After the gold rush ended, the new settlers found other occupations.
- D. Rushing into the burning building, his courage was amazing.

**RULE:** Most dangling modifiers are dangling participles. There are present participles (add *-ing* to a verb): *jumping*. And there are past participles (fill in the blank: *I have verb form*): *jumped, sung, ridden, walked*. Here's the rule: Opening participial phrases modify the subject of the sentence. So this would be a dangling modifier: *Flying over the North Pole, an iceberg was seen*. The iceberg wasn't flying. This also would be a dangling modifier: *Screamed into the wind, he knew his words were lost*. He wasn't screamed into the wind.

5. **Nonrestrictive relative clause**

*Please punctuate the following sentence (if it needs punctuation):*

Kathleen Sebelius who was just named secretary of Health and  
Human Services loves the movie "Animal House"

**RULE:** A clause is a group of related words with a subject and a verb that shows tense. A relative clause is a clause introduced by a relative pronoun (generally, *who/whom, whose, that, which, where*). The relative pronoun "relates" the clause back to an immediately previous noun. If the clause narrows down that noun – if the clause is essential to the meaning of the noun – do not set the relative clause off with commas. If the clause doesn't

narrow down the previous noun – if it's nonessential – set it off with commas.