Business Grammar

Overview of Workshop Modules

1) **Business Grammar**
   a) Why is it important?
   b) Why is it so hard?

2) **Grammar Review**
   a) Parts of Speech
   b) Sentence Structure
      i) All sentences have a Subject AND a Predicate
      ii) Simple and complex structures
   c) Paragraph Structure
      i) Topic sentence
      ii) Support sentences
      iii) Transition sentence

3) **Common Grammar Problems**
   a) Clause Confusion
   b) Disagreement Between Elements
   c) Unclear Meaning
   d) Safire's Rules of Grammar

4) **Punctuation and Spelling Review**
   a) Common Punctuation Problems
   b) Common Spelling Rules
   c) Commonly Misspelled Words

5) **Diction (Word Choice)**
   a) Barriers to Understanding
   b) Revising for Intended Meaning

6) **Proofing, Revising and Editing**
   a) Proofing for Errors
   b) Revising for Content
   c) Editing for Mechanics
   d) Proofreading, Editing and Revising Checklist

Website: http://spot.pcc.edu/~gknox/workshop/grammar.html

Review – Parts of Speech

- **Noun** – Names a person, place, thing, idea
- **Verb** – Expresses action, being or state of being
- **Pronoun** – Substitutes for a noun or group of nouns
- **Adjective** – Modifies/describes a noun/pronoun
- **Adverb** – Modifies/describes a verb, adjective or another adverb
- **Preposition** – Introduces a phrase functioning as an adjective or adverb
- **Conjunction** – Joins words or groups of words
- **Interjection** – Expresses emotion
- **Article** – Points to a noun

Review – Sentence Structure

- **ALL** sentences have a Subject **and** a Predicate
- Both Subject and Predicate may be simple or complex (w/ modifiers)
- Sentences may have more than one subject and more than one predicate.

Review – Paragraph Structure

- Topic sentence with support sentences (details and examples)
- Usually topic sentence comes first
- Start a paragraph when you introduce a new topic sentence

Diction (Word Choice and Order)

Diction affects meaning, tone and emphasis.

- Use specific, familiar language to ensure understanding
- Use appropriate formality and connotation
- Avoid figures of speech, pretentious and sexist language
- Use active voice to emphasize the actor or subject of the sentence; use passive voice to emphasize results or object of the sentence
- Use direct/front loaded message to emphasize the main point early in the document (e.g. for "good" news)
- Use indirect/back loaded message to emphasize the main point later in the document (e.g. for "bad" news)

Proofreading

Purpose: Locate and mark errors and needed changes in a document.

General Strategies:

- Approach w/ *fresh eyes*. (Wait before proofing or use another proofreader.)
- Know why you are proofreading. (Proof ideas and flow for revision; proof sentence structure and grammar for editing.)
- Proofread for the audience. (Look for what the reader will stumble on or miss.)
- Mark the problems; don't fix them. (Proofreading is not revision or editing.)
- Proof multiple times. (Proof at least once for revision and once for editing.)
- Look for necessary changes only. (Don't create a new document.)
- Read both silently and aloud. (This tests both meaning and flow.)
- Proofread in *chunks*. The order typically doesn't matter.

Proofreading for Revision

Purpose: Check content and order for clarification or restatement. The writer "becomes" the reader, asking, "Does this make sense? Does it work?"

- Read for overview. Does the document present ideas effectively and appropriately? Does the document *flow*? Is *formality* appropriate?
- Determine purpose of document.
- Find the main point or thesis. Does it match the purpose?
- Find the evidence or details. Do these support the main point?
- Check paragraph *order* and *weight*. Is order and development effective and appropriate?
- Proof individual paragraphs for relevance and transitions. Are all paragraphs needed and connected?
- Repeat as necessary.

Proofreading for Editing

Purpose: Find sentence-level problems. Spot awkward or unclear sentences, and mechanical (i.e., spelling, punctuation and grammatical) errors.

- Proofread at least two times. (Once for clarity and once for mechanical problems.)
- Be aware of your problem patterns as a writer (spelling, sentence structure, etc.). Check for these first.
- Find the topic sentence within a paragraph before the support sentences. (The topic sentence "drives" meaning.)
- Make sure each paragraph has only one topic sentence. (If the topic changes, start a new paragraph.)
- Check spelling separate from grammar & punctuation.
- Read sentences backwards to check spelling.
- Use writing assistants (spell-check, grammar-check), but don't use *autocorrect*. WA's don't catch all errors and frequently make grammatical misdiagnoses.

Exercise #1

*Edit each of **William Safire's Rules for Writers**. (Safire tells you how to do this.)*

1. Remember to never split an infinitive.

2. The passive voice should never be used.

3. Do not put statements in the negative form.

4. Verbs has to agree with their subjects.

5. Proofread carefully to see if you words out.

6. If you reread your work, you can find on rereading a great deal of repetition can be fixed by rereading and editing.

7. A writer must not shift your point of view.

8. And don't start a sentence with a conjunction. (Remember, too, a preposition is a terrible word to end a sentence with.)

9. Don't overuse exclamation marks!!!!!

10. Place pronouns as close as possible, especially in long sentences, as of 10 or more words, to their antecedents.

11. Writing carefully, dangling participles must be avoided.

12. If any word is improper at the end of a sentence, a linking verb is.

13. Take the bull by the hand and avoid mixing metaphors.

14. Avoid trendy locutions that sound flaky.

15. Everyone should be careful to use a singular pronoun with singular nouns in their writing.

16. Always pick on the correct idiom.

17. The adverb always follows the verb.

18. Last but not least, avoid clichés like the plague; seek viable alternatives.

Exercise #2

Proofread the body of a formal letter below. Mark all errors to be fixed later.

Dear Bob;

This letter is being written to clarify your needs in processing claims and billing requests. Many carriers use a variety of policies in regards to medical and payment claims.

In order to meet your organizations claim processing needs it would be helping for us to know those policies for the following components.

1. Global medical service periods for both major and minor procedures.
2. Multiple treatment guideline in terms of ranking procedutes
3. pro-rated % for primary and secondary procedures
4. modifiers that are recognized and can be used for additional procedural explanation.
5. Medical and officesupplies that will be reimburse for in-office procedures
Your reply regarding these polices will help our firm accurately file claims to you by knowing your billing requirements, it should help eliminate unnecessary claim denials and request for follow-up that is costly and time consuming for both of us.

Yours truly,

(Answer key available on the course website.)

Suggested Writing Resources

- **Course Website:** http://spot.pcc.edu/~gknox/workshop/grammar.html

- **Keys for Writers: A Brief Handbook ,** Ann Raimes

- **How 12 (Handbook for Office Professionals),** James L. Clark, Lyn R. Clark

- **The American Heritage® Book of English Usage**

- **The Elements of Style,** William Strunk
  On-line at http://www.bartleby.com/141/index.html

- **Merriam-Webster Dictionary & Thesaurus**
  On-line at http://www.m-w.com/dictionary.htm

- **Purdue University's Writing Lab for Workplace Writers**
  On-line at https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/681/01/

- **Common Errors in English**
  On-line at http://www.wsu.edu/~brians/errors/

- **Better English Grammar**
  On-line at http://www.better-english.com/grammar.htm

- **Public Records and Meetings Law,** Oregon Dept. of Justice
  On-line at http://www.doj.state.or.us/public_records/index.shtml