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U.S. Department of Justice
Drug Enforcement Administration
FOI/Records Management Section
8701 Morrisette Drive
Springfield, Virginia 22152

JUL 25 2014

Case Number: 14-00542-F

Subject: Requesting a copy of the DEA (document) Style Manual, etc.

This letter responds to your Freedom of Information/Privacy Act (FOI/PA) request dated June 20, 2014, addressed to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Freedom of Information/Privacy Act Unit (SARF), seeking access to information regarding the above subject.

To fulfill your request, our office forwarded a copy of your request letter to the Office of Training (TR). Based upon all available information, we have determined that TR is the DEA component they may have records responsive to the subject of your request. As a result of their search, 20 pages of the "*DEA Writing Style Guide*" were received and are being released to you in its entirety.

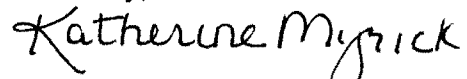
The rules and regulations of the Drug Enforcement Administration applicable to Freedom of Information Act requests are contained in the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 28, Part 16, as amended. They are published in the Federal Register and are available for inspection by members of the public.

For your information, Congress excluded three discrete categories of law enforcement and national security records from the requirements of the FOIA. See 5 U.S.C. § 552(c) (2006 & Supp. IV 2010). This response is limited to those records that are subject to the requirements of the FOIA. This is a standard notification that is given to all our requesters and should not be taken as an indication that excluded records do, or do not, exist.

If you are not satisfied with the response to this request, you may administratively appeal by writing to the Director, Office of Information Policy, United States Department of Justice, Suite 11050, 1425 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20530-0001, or you may submit an appeal through OIP's eFOIA portal at <http://www.justice.gov/oip/efoia-portal.html>. Your appeal must be received within sixty (60) days from the date of this letter. If you submit your appeal by mail, both the letter and the envelope should be clearly marked "Freedom of Information Act Appeal."

If you have any questions regarding this letter, you may contact Government Information Specialist Deshelia S Wallace on 202-307-4264.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katherine Myrick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'K' and 'M'.

Katherine L. Myrick, Chief
Freedom of Information/Privacy Act Unit
FOI/Records Management Section

DEA Writing Style Guide

Last Updated: July 20, 2005

Overview

The *DEA Writing Style Guide* covers the following topics:

- Punctuation
- Capitalization
- Numbers
- Noun and pronoun agreement
- Miscellaneous grammar
- Lists
- Writing resources

If you don't find what you need here, consult *The Business Writer's Handbook* by Charles T. Brusaw, Gerald T. Aldred, and Walter E. Oliu and *The Gregg Reference Manual* by William A. Sabin.

Although the *DEA Writing Style Guide* does discuss a number of general principles of grammar, it is a supplement, not a comprehensive book on modern American English usage. DEA follows the *Business Writer's Handbook* and *The Gregg Reference Manual* for the many complex conventions of the English language.

Punctuation

This section discusses these topics:

- Apostrophes
- Colons
- Dashes
- Exclamation marks
- Hyphens
- Periods
- Quotation marks
- Semicolons

Apostrophes

Use an apostrophe to show possession, to mark the omission of letters or numbers, and sometimes to indicate plurals.

Apostrophes to Show Possession

Follow these guidelines:

- Form the possessive of *singular* nouns with 's; form the possessive of *plural* nouns that end in s with only an apostrophe.

Singular	Plural
the special agent's badge	the special agents' reports
the group supervisor's mandate	the group supervisors' conference
the company's stock options	the companies' joint project
the chemist's lab	the chemists' lab

- When the word that follows singular nouns of multiple syllables begins with an *s* or *sh* sound, form the possessive with only an apostrophe.

the witness's testimony
the witness' statement [s sound follows witness]
the CS's car
the CS' statement [s sound follows CS]

- However, form the possessive of singular nouns of one syllable that end with s by adding 's (even when the word that follows begins with an s or sh sound).

The bus's seats

- Use only the apostrophe to show the possessive of plural forms of such nouns.

The busses' seats, the witnesses' testimony

- Form the possessive of plural nouns that do not end in s with 's.

women's room, men's department, children's area

- Form the possessive of proper nouns and ancient names (Moses) that end in consecutive s or z sounds by adding only an apostrophe.

We found Reeses' keys in the truck.

- When using an organization's name before a noun, follow the organization's preference.

Change	To
Check DEA's handbook for details.	Check the DEA handbook for details.

- Show the possessive of coordinate nouns showing joint possession with 's following the last noun.

SAs Thompson and Mason's target became the focus of our investigation.
--

- Show individual possession of coordinate nouns with 's following each noun.

The similarities between SA Thompson's and SA Mason's reports became obvious.

- Do not use an apostrophe with the possessive form of a pronoun (*its, whose, his, her, our, your, their*).

Reminders

Its is possessive. *It's* is the contraction of *it is*.

Your is possessive. *You're* is the contraction of *you are*.

Their is possessive. *They're* is the contraction of *they are*. *There* is somewhere other than here.

Tip: To avoid possible errors, do not use contractions.

Apostrophes to Show Omission

Use an apostrophe to mark the omission of letters or numbers in a contraction or a date.

can't, I'm, he's, the class of '03

Apostrophes to Form Plurals

Follow these guidelines:

- Do not add an apostrophe to form the plural of capital letters and abbreviations ending with capital letters; add only an *s*.

IDs	
SAs, GSs, and CIs	
five VIPs	
Ph.D.s	
M.D.s	
VCRs	
DVDs	
PCs	

- Add an *'s* to form plurals of lowercase letters and capitalized *A, I, M, and U*.

three A's	
two U's	
six a's	

- Do not add an apostrophe to form the plural of numbers expressed as figures; add only an *s*.

DEA 8s	
the 1980s	
W-2s	

- Do not add an apostrophe to form the plural of most abbreviations; add only an *s* to the singular.

No.		Nos.	
Dr.		Drs.	
Bldg.		Bldgs.	

Colons

Colons to Introduce Explanations and Lists

Use a colon after an independent clause ending in a noun to introduce an explanation or list.

The final meeting focused on central issues: stronger planning and budgeting.
The final meeting focused on central issues, namely, stronger planning and budgeting.
The DEA Strategic Plan cites two objectives:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoring focus on the financial aspects of drug investigations Developing new analytical tools and approaches to sharing intelligence

Do not place a colon between a preposition and **Page 3** or between a verb and its object. When a list immediately follows a

verb or a preposition, do not use a colon.

Change	To
The meeting discussed: stronger administration and additional capital.	The meeting discussed stronger administration and additional capital.
The trunk contained: four radios, two plastic baggies filled with white powder, and one video camera.	The truck contained the following items: four radios, two plastic baggies filled with white powder, and one video camera.
	Or
	The trunk contained four radios, two plastic baggies filled with white powder, and one video camera.

For more information, see Lists.

Capitalizing (or Not) After Colons

If the element introduced by a colon consists of one or more sentences, or if it is a formal statement, a quotation, or a speech in dialogue, you may capitalize the first word after the colon.

Here is the key principle: Do not set off needed identifying information with commas.

Commas

Commas in Compound Sentences

Place a comma before a coordinating conjunction (*and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, *for*, *so*, and *yet*) that joins two independent clauses.

Management in some areas has improved, but problems persist.

The authorities have identified significant assets, and they will attempt to seize these properties and businesses.

Commas in Dates and After City-State Sequences

Place a comma after the year in the month-day-year sequence within a sentence. Place a comma after the state in the city-state sequence within a sentence.

Note. Spell out the state in all references unless space is limited.

We will review the training courses offered in Richmond, Virginia, from April 15, 1998, to June 15, 1998.

Commas After Introductory Material

Place a comma after introductory material.

Although management has improved, problems persist.

Before leaving the restaurant, SA Taylor noted that the CS and Anderson were still in the parking lot talking.

At 9:45 p.m., SA Morris Turner observed a green BMW enter the parking lot.

Serial Commas

Use a comma to separate three or more words, phrases, or clauses in a series.

SA Jones maintained complete care, control, and custody of Exhibit N-1.

Commas After Parenthetical Material

Place commas around parenthetical material.

The Harris investigation, which has become an OCDETF investigation, is near conclusion. [parenthetical]
The agent who best meets these requirements will be selected. [nonparenthetical]
TFO Hendrix, the first officer at the scene, called for assistance. [parenthetical]

Commas to Set Off Abbreviations

Do not use commas to set off Jr., Sr., or roman or arabic numerals following a person's name unless you know that the person prefers to do so.

Kathy D. Patterson Jr.
Thomas M. Hardy 2 nd
Leonard Stokes III

Do use two commas to set off abbreviations like Esq. and those that stand for academic degrees or religious order when they follow a person's name.

The letter was addressed to Thomas Halton, Esq., in Chevy Chase.
Robert W. Cooper, M.D., was the subject of the investigation.

Do not use commas to set off Inc., Ltd., and similar terms in an organization's name unless you know that a particular organization prefers to do so.

McQuire Inc. expanded its operations.

When presenting a personal name in inverted order, use commas to set off the inverted portion.

Norton, James W., Jr.

Dashes

A dash is an emphatic mark that can link, separate, and enclose. Use dashes instead of commas or parentheses to give parenthetical elements strong emphasis.

Construct a dash by pressing the hyphen key twice with no space between the hyphens or between the words and the hyphens on either side.

The Harris investigation—now an OCDETF investigation—will likely lead to the dismantling of a major drug-trafficking organization.
--

See Hyphens.

Exclamation Marks

Use exclamation marks only if part of quoted material. Place two spaces after an exclamation point used to end a sentence, just as you would with a period.

Hyphens

Use hyphens to join or separate compound words when necessary.

Hyphens with Modifiers

Hyphenate two- and three-word modifiers that precede a noun and express a single thought.

Jones headed a major drug-trafficking organization.
We abide by the right-of-entry rule.

Do not hyphenate a modifying phrase that follows the noun that it modifies.

The interview was well conducted.

If the first word is an adverb ending in -ly, do not use a hyphen.

rapidly growing market
previously undetected communication

Always use a hyphen with a letter or number modifier.

59-story building, A-frame, 9-millimeter automatic
--

Avoid using modifier strings. A modifier string is a series of words used to describe a noun. Try to limit the number of modifiers in your string to two.

Change	To
a defense-industry-dominated customer base	a customer base dominated by the defense industry

In a series of hyphenated adjectives whose common element is the last word, you do not need to repeat the last word throughout. Use the term only at the end of the series.

Long- and short-term goals
The sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-floors were evacuated.

Hyphens in Phone Numbers

703-456-2838

Hyphens in DEA Form Names

Include a hyphen between *DEA* and the DEA form number. Follow the number with the word *form*.

DEA-106 form
DEA-6 form

Periods

Use two spaces following a period at the end of a sentence. Do not use periods in acronyms, such as DEA. When a sentence ends with a URL, the period goes after the URL and is not underlined.

Wallis cited the following as his web address: www.deadruqs.com .

Quotation Marks

Quotation Marks with Spoken or Written Words

Do not enclose indirect quotations—usually introduced by *that*—in quotation marks. (Indirect quotations are paraphrases of a speaker's words or ideas.) Handle quotations from written material the same way.

The CS said, "Parker gave Antrim the money to start this business."
The CS stated that Parker gave Antrim the money to start this business.

Quotation Marks with Titles of Reports and Articles

This report refers to a DEA-8 by SA Carolyn Taylor dated October 21, 2004, entitled "Surveillance on October 10, 2001, of Undercover Meeting Between SA Sam Jones and Robert Leroy Parker in Woodbridge, Virginia."

Quotation Marks with Other Punctuation

Commas and periods go inside quotation marks. Question marks and exclamation marks go inside quotation marks when part of the quotation, outside when they punctuate the whole statement. Semicolons and colons go outside quotation marks.

Semicolons

Use semicolons between balanced independent clauses.

Many offices have closed; however, some remain open.
Many offices have closed; some, however, remain open.

Use semicolons between sentence elements that have commas within them.

This year, they opened new offices in Santa Rosa, California; Amarillo, Texas; and Charlottesville, Virginia.
Present were John Marsh, DEA; James Peters, FBI; and Mary Jones, DOJ.

Capitalization

In matters of capitalization, the most important rule is to be consistent.

This section discusses these topics:

- General rules on capitalization
- Capitalization of headings and titles
- Capitalization of organization names
- Capitalization of professional titles

General Rules on Capitalization

Keep these guidelines in mind:

- Avoid overuse of capitals.

The current movement is to use capitalization sparingly because lowercase enhances readability. Do not use all capital letters in email or other writing.

- Do not capitalize words used in a general sense.

The DEA diversion investigators completed their reports.

- Do not use all uppercase for emphasis.
- Capitalize the words *north*, *south*, *east*, and *west* when they refer to sections of the country; do not capitalize them

when they refer to directions:

Taylor was traveling south on I-85.

Morgan said that he grew up in the South.

State Street runs east and west.

- Capitalize certain units, such as parts and chapters of books and rooms or apartments in buildings, when specifically identified by number.

Chapter 13, Ch. 5

Room 8, Rm. 31

Apartment 205, Apt. 205

- Do not capitalize minor divisions within such units, unless they begin a sentence.

page 11

verse 14

seat 12

Capitalization of Headlines and Titles

Use the following guidelines in capitalizing headlines and titles of books, reports, documents, and so on.

- Capitalize the first and last words and all nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, and subordinating conjunctions (*if, because, as, that, and so on*).
- Lowercase the following, unless they are more than four letters in length, or unless they are the first or last word of a title or subtitle:
 - Articles (*a, an, the*)
 - Coordinating conjunctions (*and, but, or, for, nor, so, yet*)
 - Prepositions (*in, on, with*)
 - The *to* in infinitives
- Capitalize both words in compound modifiers.

He referred to the report entitled "Safety and Soundness."

The DEA Office of Training Report Writing Manual was distributed to all employees.

Creating a Real-Time Enterprise

Working with Confidential Sources

Capitalization of Organization Names

Follow the style of the individual company, including its corporate style for capitalization and abbreviations.

Round-Up Restaurant

RC Remco

ComputerSoft

Capitalize a department name if it is the official or actual name of the department. If you don't know the official name of the department, or if you are speaking generically, then use lowercase.

The Global Support Center took responsibility for the project.

The marketing department created a two-page brochure.

The Office of Training conducts three financial-related training classes each month.
Contact human resources for more information.

Capitalization of Professional Titles

Capitalize civil, military, religious, and professional titles that precede a personal name.

Captain Burt Koplan	
Dr. Benes	
Special Agent Ryan McCormick	
Group Supervisor Robert Taylor	

Capitalize professional titles when used with personal names.

Jon Matilla, Special Agent, signed the report.
Special Agent Jones served an administrative subpoena on Manager Carol Chatter.

Numbers

This section discusses these topics:

- Numerals or words
- Addresses
- Consistency
- Dates
- Fractions
- Measurements
- Money
- Phone numbers
- DEA form numbers
- Punctuation and numbers
- Ranges between numbers
- Time

Numerals or Words

Use words for numbers zero to ten.
 Use numerals for numbers above ten.
 Use words for approximate numbers.

The department sends out more than a thousand inquiries a month.
--

Addresses

Use words for numbered streets one to ten.
 Use numerals for buildings. (The only exception is the building number one.)
 Use words for numbered streets one to ten.

East Ninth Street	
5088 Willet Drive	
One West Blithedale Boulevard	
U.S. 70 and I-95	

Use numerals for room, apartment, and suite numbers, even for one through ten.

Use words for floor numbers one through ten; use numerals for higher floor numbers.

610 Leland Avenue, Suite 3
Smith Laboratory, Room 5

Do not use the pound sign (#) if a term such as *room*, *suite*, *apartment*, or *floor* is used before the number.

We rang the bell at Apt. 3, but there was no answer.
The laboratory was across from Room 235.

Consistency

If a sentence or paragraph contains *related* numbers below ten and others above ten, use numerals for all.

During the search warrant, the agents seized 3 scales, 150 plastic baggies, 11 cell phones, and 201 money orders.

Dates

Use numerals for the year and day of the month.

Write dates in the month-day-year sequence, and follow the year with a comma.

Exhibit N-1 is a cassette tape recording of a telephone conversation between Parker and Lee on October 5, 2002, at approximately 10:00 a.m.

Use the slash form of expressing dates (10/24/2001) only in form headers and tables where space is limited; otherwise, write out dates. Do not abbreviate the year.

Fractions

Use numerals when fractions are written with whole numbers.

27 ½ inches
4 ½ miles (or better, 2.5 miles)

Use words when fractions are expressed without a whole number.

one-third, one-half
They headed southbound on Twin Mills Road for approximately one-half mile.

Write decimal numbers as numerals. When a decimal stands alone, insert a zero before the decimal point.

5.34 meters
0.65 inch

Measurements

Use numerals for units of measurement (5 miles, 15 percent, 6 grams). When numbers follow each other in the same phrase, use a word for one and a numeral for the other.

He examined six 3-page reports.

Use numerals to express percentages.
Spell out *percent*, except in a table.

The report was 98 percent complete.

Money

Use numerals to express exact or approximate amounts of money.

\$7

\$15.30

A \$50 bill

More than \$50,000

Use words to express indefinite amounts of money.

The computer system was worth *several thousand* dollars.

Use numerals and words for rounded amounts of money over one million dollars.

\$12 million

\$6.25 billion

\$5 million to \$10 million (*not* \$5 to \$10 million)

Do not add a decimal point plus zero to a whole dollar amount that occurs in a sentence.

He purchased 1 ounce of cocaine from Parker for \$1,000 Official Advanced Funds (OAF).

Phone Numbers

Use hyphens in phone numbers.

925-894-3920

DEA Form Numbers

Include a hyphen between *DEA* and the DEA form number. Follow the number with the word *form*.

DEA-106 form

DEA-6 form

Punctuation and Numbers

Use a comma to separate numbers with five or more digits into groups of three, starting from the right. The comma is optional in numbers with four digits, but be consistent. Do not use a comma in house numbers, zip codes, or page numbers.

Approximately 8,500 people open accounts monthly.

He was carrying \$1,043 in cash.

Turner said that he lived at 5835 Claiborne Drive, Mill Valley, California 94941.

Turn to page 1108 of the training manual.

Ranges Between Numbers

In general, use the word *to* (rather than a hyphen or a dash) to show ranges between numbers.

Four to five people	
50 to 80 loans	
12 to 20 seconds	
5:00 a.m. to 7:30 a.m.	

Exceptions to this rule apply to page numbers, dates, and drug schedules. These require hyphens.

See page 10-65	
1998-1999	
The Schedule 2-5 controlled substances are stored in a cage.	

Time

Use numerals for hours and minutes when *a.m.* and *p.m.* follows. Use lowercase *a.m.* and *p.m.* without internal space.

10:30 a.m., 6:33 p.m.	
-----------------------	--

For time "on the hour," use zeros to denote minutes (except with 12 noon and 12 midnight).

You may express the times *noon* and *midnight* in words alone. However, use the forms *12 noon* and *12 midnight* when using these times with other times expressed in numerals.

The front desk will remain open until midnight.	
The bank will be open from 8:00 a.m. until 12 noon.	

Capitalize time zones only when abbreviated.

8:15 a.m. EST (eastern standard time)	
---------------------------------------	--

Noun and Pronoun Agreement

This section discusses these topics:

- Gender agreement
- Number agreement
- Vague pronoun references
- Miscellaneous pronoun issues

Gender Agreement

Make nouns and pronouns agree in gender.

To protect the identity of a confidential source, rewrite to avoid the problem or repeat the word *confidential source* or the acronym CS.

Change	To
The CS gave his testimony.	The CS testified.
The CS stated that he contacted Rogers on Monday.	The CS stated that the CS contacted Rogers on Monday.

When the sex of the noun antecedent is unknown, rewrite the sentence using different words or using the plural.

Avoid	Use

man	person
man-hours	operator-hours, staff-hours
no man	no one
salesman	salesperson
manmade	synthetic
manhandle	mistreat
mankind	humanity
postman	mail carrier

Don't use *he/she*, *s/he*, or *his/her*. Whenever possible, rewrite your sentence using a plural noun and the plural pronoun *their*. However, when a singular noun is essential, you can use these pronoun constructions: *he or she* and *him or her*.

Change	To
Every special agent will have <i>his</i> chance to participate in a final conference.	All special agents will have <i>their</i> chance to participate in a final conference.
Everyone must submit <i>his</i> timesheet by Friday afternoon.	Everyone must submit a timesheet by Friday afternoon.
Everyone must submit <i>his/her</i> timesheets by Friday afternoon.	Submit all timesheets by Friday afternoon.

Never combine the use of *you* and *one* in the same sentence.

Change	To
One must pass through security before you enter the Federal Building.	You must pass through security before you enter the Federal Building.

Number Agreement

Make nouns and pronouns within a grammatical construction agree in number.

Most indefinite pronouns require singular verbs.

<i>Everyone is attending the conference.</i>
<i>Everybody on the jury understands the problem.</i>

Be careful with relative pronouns like *who*, *which*, and *that*. Determine which noun the relative pronoun is standing for, and make your verb appropriately singular or plural to match.

<i>Employees who lunch at noon eat outside.</i>
<i>An employee who lunches at noon eats outside.</i>
<i>Peters is one of the agents who work late.</i>
<i>One of the agents works late.</i>

Vague Pronoun References

A pronoun should refer clearly to a specific antecedent. Problems often result when the word *this* is used by itself.

Change	To
We got the account after we wrote the proposal. It was a big one.	We got the account, which was a big one, after we wrote the proposal.
He handles most of the accounting questions in the office. This has helped him gain the respect of his fellow employees.	He handles most of the accounting questions in the office. This experience has helped him gain the respect of his fellow employees.

To avoid confusion, repeat nouns instead of using pronouns.

Change	To
SAs Jones and Miller worked on the case, but <i>he</i> wrote most of the report.	SAs Jones and Miller worked on the case, but <i>SA Miller</i> wrote most of the report.

When referring to a noun that includes both sexes (*student, teacher, agent, everyone*), substitute an article or change the statement from singular to plural.

Each student is to have <i>the</i> annual exam by Friday.
All students are to have <i>their</i> annual exams by Friday.

Note. Don't use the pronoun *their* to refer to singular nouns.

Miscellaneous Pronoun Issues

Pronouns for People

Use *who* not *that* or *which* to refer to people.

Change	To
Send this report to key agents <i>that</i> have been involved in the case since its inception.	Send this report to key agents <i>who</i> have been involved in the case since its inception.

Pronouns for Companies

When referring to a company or organization, use *it* instead of *they* and use *that* or *which* instead of *who*.

Change	To
The DEA includes local, state, and federal law enforcement officials in <i>their</i> training programs.	The DEA includes local, state, and federal law enforcement officials in <i>its</i> training programs.
The DEA is an organization <i>who</i> is focused on eliminating the drug trade.	The DEA is an organization <i>that</i> is focused on eliminating the drug trade.

Reflexive Pronouns

Avoid using reflexive pronouns (*myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, oneself, ourselves, yourselves, and themselves*).

Change	To
Sgt. Peters and <i>myself</i> asked the suspect several questions before releasing him.	Sgt. Peters and <i>I</i> asked the suspect several questions before releasing him.
The case was assigned to SA Morgan and <i>myself</i> .	The case was assigned to SA Morgan and <i>me</i> .

Miscellaneous Grammar

This section discusses these topics:

- Active voice
- Dangling constructions
- Needless words
- Parallel structure
- Strong verbs

Active Voice

Use active verb forms to create a strong, direct sentence structure.

Active voice means the subject acts. Passive voice means the subject is acted upon.

Passive	Active
The witness was interviewed by SAs Jones and Baker	SAs Jones and Baker interviewed the witness.

Each of these sentences has a different emphasis. The active sentence is much clearer and more concise. Passive sentences are wordier and more difficult to understand.

Prefer the active voice.

Dangling Constructions

A phrase at the beginning of a sentence must refer to the grammatical subject of the sentence; otherwise, the construction will "dangle."

To correct this problematic construction, introduce the subject of the sentence (and doer of the action) immediately following the opening phrase or clause. If that's not possible, revise the construction entirely.

Change	To
Writing in haste, important information was forgotten by the supervisor.	Writing in haste, <i>the supervisor</i> forgot important information.
To help discuss the problem, the opinions were written out on the easel paper by the instructor.	To help discuss the problem, <i>the instructor</i> wrote the opinions on the easel paper.
By reviewing the case files, several mistakes were avoided by the agent.	By reviewing the case files, <i>the agent</i> avoided several mistakes.
When questioning a witness, several points should be kept in mind.	When questioning a witness, <i>keep</i> several points in mind. (Implied you)

Needless Words

Vigorous writing is concise. Use simple, short, direct words and phrases. In your sentences, omit all unnecessary words; in your paragraphs, omit all unnecessary sentences.

Here are some common phrases to avoid, along with more concise substitutions:

Avoid	Use Instead
at a later date	later
at the present time	now
at this point in time	now
at your earliest convenience	soon
bear in mind	remember
being that	because
call your attention to the fact that	remind you (notify you)
despite the fact that	although
due to the fact that	because
e.g.	for example
effectuate, execute	carry out
etc.	such as
for the reason that	because
gathered together	gathered
he is a man who	he
i.e.	that is

in a hasty manner	hastily
in case	if
in conjunction with	with
in order to	to
in spite of the fact that	although (though)
in the amount of	for
in the final analysis	finally
in the near future	soon
in view of	since
last but not least	finally
on a daily/weekly/monthly/yearly basis	daily/weekly/monthly/yearly or every day, every week, every month, every year
on a few occasions	occasionally
on a regular basis	regularly
on behalf of	for
on the basis of	by
prior to	before
subsequent to	after
the car red in color	the red car
the purpose of	for
the question as to whether	whether (the question whether)
there is no doubt that	no doubt
this is a subject that	this subject
to summarize the above	in summary
utilization	use (noun)
utilize	use (verb)
via	by way of, through
vs. , v.	versus
with reference to	about
with regard to	about
with the exception of	except
with the result that	so that
would you be so kind as to	please

Parallel Structure

Parts of a sentence that are alike in function should be alike in construction. Achieve parallel structure with words, phrases, or clauses.

To succeed in the training program, you must be <i>punctual, courteous, and conscientious.</i> [parallel words]
To succeed in the training program, you must recognize the importance of <i>punctuality, of courtesy, and of conscientiousness.</i> [parallel phrases]
To succeed in the training program, you must <i>arrive punctually, you must behave courteously, and you must study conscientiously.</i> [parallel clauses]

Be sure that connecting words, such as *either . . . or, neither . . . nor, not only . . . but also*, use parallel structure. Follow both parts of the pairs immediately by the same grammatical form: two parallel words, two parallel phrases, or two parallel clauses.

You may attend <i>either Monday or Wednesday, not both.</i> [parallel words]
Clearly, <i>neither Monday's program nor Wednesday's reception</i> was acceptable. [parallel phrases]
<i>Either we must attend on Monday or we must attend on Wednesday.</i> [parallel clauses]

Often, you can achieve effective parallel construction by repeating a key word or phrase.

DEA has a mission statement and a code of ethics.

He was promoted *because he was industrious, because he was inventive, and because he was an effective team leader.*

Strong Verbs

Many of us have a tendency to make our on-the-job writing sound very formal. We think if we elevate the tone and throw in a few extra words, our readers will be more impressed.

Unfortunately, what we often end up with are pages full of nominalizations—or rather the use of a weak verb (*make, do, conduct, perform*, and so on) and a noun, when one strong verb alone would communicate the same idea more effectively.

Change	To
The DEA <i>will conduct an investigation</i> into the Menendez drug-trafficking organization.	DEA <i>will investigate</i> the adverse report.
The Office of Training <i>will perform an evaluation of</i> its instructors.	Every quarter, the Office of Training <i>will evaluate</i> all of its instructors.

Lists

Use lists to emphasize key points and present steps for instructions.

DEA publications commonly use three kinds of lists: bulleted lists, numbered lists, and procedural lists. This section discusses these topics:

- Using bulleted lists
- Using numbered lists
- Creating effective bulleted and numbered list
- Creating effective procedures

Using Bulleted Lists

Bulleted lists present or summarize key ideas that are parallel. List at least two items.

If a sentence includes a serial list of items or phrases, consider presenting the same information in a bulleted list.

Use bulleted lists to achieve these purposes:

- Present a group of related items of the same class
- Present items that naturally fall in a series
- Present or summarize key ideas, recommendations, or benefits
- Introduce topics that are discussed in subsequent material

Examples:

I am authorized to perform these activities:

- Pose as a person engaged in the illicit sales or distribution of controlled substances
- Assist in the controlled delivery of a controlled substance to a violator
- Introduce an undercover agent to a violator
- Infiltrate a drug-trafficking operation

These individuals attended the meeting:

- Managers
- Special agents
- Evidence custodians

- Support personnel

Using Numbered Lists

Numbered lists inform the readers that the sequence is important.

If a paragraph describes the order or sequence of information, consider presenting the same information in a numbered list. Also consider rewriting sentences that begin with the words *first*, *then*, and *lastly*.

Use numbered lists for these purposes:

- Step-by-step instructions (also called procedures)
- Steps in a process flow
- Hierarchical information

Examples:

To relocate information within your file, follow these steps:

1. Select the text that you want to move or copy.
2. Do one or both of the following:
 - o To move the selection, click the Cut button on the toolbar.
 - o To copy the selection, click the Copy button on the toolbar.
3. Position the insertion point in the new location, and then click Paste.

Skim the manuscript in the following way:

1. Read the abstract or executive summary.
2. Read the table of contents and lists of figures, tables, and abbreviations.
3. Glance at the glossary.
4. Glance at the subject index.
5. Read all headings and subheadings in the text.
6. Read the first sentence of each paragraph in the text.

Creating Effective Bulleted and Numbered Lists

To create effective bulleted and numbered lists, follow these tips:

- Precede a list with an introductory sentence, followed by a colon.

For standard bulleted and numbered lists, describe what the list contains, and be concise. The introduction ensures that the reader understands how the list fits into the surrounding sentences.

- Ensure that all listed items are parallel—use all words, all phrases, or all sentences.
- Limit each listed item to only a few words, a phrase, or a short sentence.

Place any supporting information in separate indented paragraphs below the list item. Keep supporting information as brief as possible.

- Limit lists to two levels.
- Do not insert tables, graphs, screen captures, or other graphical aids within a list.

Instead, place these items in a more appropriate location before or after the list.

- Use correct punctuation in lists.

If your listed items are complete sentences, use a period at the end of every line. If your listed items are words or phrases, do not use a period or any other form of punctuation at the end of each line or at the end of the list.

Don't use commas or semicolons to separate the listed items.

- In bulleted lists, use plain circular bullets.

Do not use asterisks, hearts, dashes, or other unconventional, fanciful bullets. However, empty boxes are often useful in a checklist to prompt readers to check off items that must be done before completing a process.

Creating Effective Procedures

To create effective procedures, follow these tips:

- Begin the introductory sentence with the word *To*, followed by the objective or the goal of the procedure.
- Begin each step in a procedure with a command verb.

It's acceptable to precede this command with a brief introductory "if" or "when" clause.

- If a procedure is long, organize the steps in separate sections, restarting the numbering at the beginning of each section.
- If a step is optional, precede the text of the step with the word *Optional* in parentheses, followed by one space.

Example:

Working with Custom Dictionaries
This section discusses the following tasks:

- Creating a new custom dictionary
- Activating the custom dictionary

Creating a New Custom Dictionary
To create a new custom dictionary, complete these steps:

1. On the Tools menu, click Options, and then select the Spelling & Grammar tab.
2. Click Dictionaries.
3. Click New.
4. In the File name box, type a name for the custom dictionary.
5. Click Save.
6. (Optional) Select the dictionary's name, and then click the language in the Language box.

Use the language option only if you want to use the dictionary when checking text in another language.

7. Activate the custom dictionary.

Writing Resources

In Print

Alred, Brusaw, and Oliu. *The Business Writer's Handbook*. St. Martin's Press, 2003.

(Website for *The Business Writer's Handbook*: <http://pc.bedfordstmartins.com/alred/default.asp?>

s=&n=&l=&v=&o=&ns=0&uid=0&rau=0)

Sabin, William A. *The Gregg Reference Manual: A Manual of Style, Grammar, Usage, and Formatting*. McGraw-Hill/Irwin, 2005.

Shea, Virginia. *Netiquette*. Albion Books, 1994

(Website for *Netiquette*: <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/book/index.html>)

Online

Bartleby.com (<http://bartleby.com/>)

Merriam-Webster Online (<http://www.m-w.com/>)

OneLook Dictionaries (<http://www.onelook.com/>)

Your Dictionary.com (<http://www.yourdictionary.com/>)