

# Patterns for College Writing - Editing & Proofreading

(adapted from: Patterns for College Writing: A Rhetorical Reader and Guide, 12/e. Copyright © 2012 by Bedford/St. Martin's; pp.85, 88, 90, 91)

## GRAMMAR

- **Subject-verb agreement** Do all your verbs agree with their subjects? Remember that a singular subject takes a singular verb, and plural subjects take plural verbs.
- **Verb tenses** Are all your verb tenses accurate and consistent? Do you avoid unnecessary shifts in tense?
- **Pronoun reference** Do pronouns clearly refer to their (what noun does this possessive pronoun refer to?) antecedents?
- **Fragments** Does each group of words punctuated as a sentence have both a subject and a verb and express a complete thought? If not, can you correct the fragment by adding the missing words or by attaching it to an adjacent sentence?
- **Run-ons** Have you been careful not to connect two independent clauses without the necessary punctuation? Have you avoided comma splices and fused sentences?
- **Modification** Does every modifier point clearly (what word does this adverb modify?) to the word it modifies? Have you avoided misplaced and dangling modifiers?
- **Parallelism** Have you used matching words, matching phrases, or matching clauses to express equivalent ideas? Have you avoided faulty parallelism?

## PUNCTUATION

- **Commas** Have you used commas when necessary—and only when necessary?
- **Semicolons** Have you used semicolons only between grammatically equivalent elements?
- **Quotation marks** Have you used quotation marks to set off quoted speech or writing and to set off titles of essays, stories, and poems? Have you used other punctuation correctly with quotation marks?
- **Dashes and colons** Have you used dashes in moderation? Is every colon that introduces a list, an example, or a clarification preceded by a complete sentence?

## SENTENCE STRUCTURE

- **Awkward phrasing** Have your constructions that are awkward been eliminated? (How might you rephrase this sentence for clarity and conciseness?)
- **Concise sentences** Have you eliminated repetition, empty phrases, and excess words? Is every sentence as concise as it can be?
- **Varied sentences** Have you varied the length and structure of your sentences? Have you varied your sentence openings?
- **Word choice** Remember Strunk & White's ("The Elements of Style") advice: "Use definite, specific, and concrete language"

## PROOFREADING

- **Commonly confused words** Have you proofread for errors involving words that are often confused with each other?
- **Misspelled words and faulty capitalization** Have you proofread for errors in spelling and capitalization? Have you run a spell check?
- **Typos** Have you checked carefully to eliminate typing errors?