EDITING TECHNICAL DOCUMENTS

College of Engineering
Spring Writing Workshop

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10. **Redundancy** – the use of more words than necessary to convey meaning

**Examples:**
They were *both* alike
*a total of* 68 participants
has been *previously* found
*one and* the same
*period of* time
*absolutely* essential

summarize *briefly*
four *different* groups
small *in size*
in *close* proximity
the reason is *because*
*completely* unanimous
9. **Incorrect Parallel Structure** - parallel ideas are not presented in a parallel or coordinating form

**Examples:**

*Incorrect* –
Results show that such changes could be made without affecting error rate *and latencies* continued to decrease over time.

*Correct* –
Results show that such changes could be made without affecting error rate *and that latencies* continued to decrease over time.

*Incorrect* –
Mary wanted to make sure she made her presentation creativity, effectively, and persuaded others.

*Correct* –
Mary wanted to make sure she made her presentation creatively, effectively, and *persuasively*. 
8. **Misrepresentation of Numbers** - In general, numerals are used to express numbers 10 and above and words are used to express numbers below 10.

**Numbers Expressed in Numerals:**
- 12 cm wide
- The remaining 10%
- 25 years old
- the 15th trial
- 13 lists
- 105 stimulus words

**Numbers Expressed in Words:**
- one fifth of the class
- two-thirds majority
- Twelve students improved, and 12 students did not improve.
- the Twelve Apostles
- Five Pillars of Islam
**Special cases –**

- Numbers that immediately precede a unit of measurement (a 5-mg dose, 10.54 cm of . . .)
- Numbers that represent statistical or mathematical functions, fractional or decimal quantities, percentages, ratios, and percentiles (multiplied by 5, 3 times as many)
- Numbers that represent time, dates, ages, scores and points on a scale, and numerals as numerals (1 hr 34 min, 2-year-olds, scored 4 on a 7-point scale)
- Numbers that denote a specific place in a numbered series, parts of books and tables, and each number in a list of four or more numbers (Grade 8, Table 3, row 5)
7. Improper Use of Semicolons and Colons

**Semicolon** – part period and part comma ( ; ), used to indicate a close relationship between two independent clauses or separate elements in a series that already contain commas

**Examples:**
The participants in the first study were paid; those in the second were unpaid.

- age, M=34.5 years, 95% CI [29.4, 39.6];
- years of education, M=10.4 [8.7, 12.1]; and
- weekly income, M=612 [522, 702]
Colon – (∶), means “note what follows,” used before a list of items, before a long, formal statement or quotation, or between independent clauses when the second clause explains or restates the idea of the first clause.

Examples:
For example, Freud (1930/1961) wrote of two urges: an urge toward union with others and an egoistic urge toward happiness.

They have agreed on the outcome: Informed participants perform better than do uninformed participants.
6. Lack of Subject/Verb Agreement – The subject and verb of a sentence must agree in number, regardless of intervening phrases.

**Examples:**
*Incorrect* –
The percentage of correct responses as well as the speed of the responses increases with practice.

*Correct* –
The percentage of correct responses as well as the speed of the responses increase with practice.

*Incorrect* –
The data indicates that Terrence was correct.

*Correct* –
The data indicate that Terrence was correct.
Let’s practice what we have discussed so far!
In this study, the annual rainfall trends were analyzed using daily precipitation data from 1890 through 2011 in Kansas with three methods; linear regression model and Mann-Kendall and Spearman tests. A gradual increase in total annual rainfall was found for 21 out of 23 stations with 7 significant trends and a greater increase for recent years (1951 through 2011) and eastern part. The average trend slope for the state is 68 mm/10yr with a minimum value of -85 mm/10yr for Saint Francis in Northwest and a maximum value of 20 mm/10yr for Independence in Southeast.
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5. **Ambiguous Pronouns** – Pronouns replace nouns. Each pronoun should refer clearly to its antecedent and should agree with the antecedent in number and gender.

**Examples:**
*Incorrect* –
Neither the highest scorer nor the lowest scorer in the group had any doubt about *their* competence.

*Correct* –
Neither the highest scorer nor the lowest scorer in the group had any doubt about *his or her* competence.
Ambiguous Pronouns, cont.

Incorrect –
The students *that* completed the task successfully were rewarded.

Correct –
The students *who* completed the task successfully were rewarded.

Incorrect –
One of the researchers *were* responsible for the statistical analysis.

Correct –
One of the researchers *was* responsible for the statistical analysis.

Incorrect –
*Those* pair of pups is coming closer.

Correct –
*That* pair of pups is coming closer.
4. **Incorrect Comma Usage** – Commas should be used to distinguish elements in a series, to set off a nonessential clause, to separate two independent clauses joined by a conjunction, and to set off the year in exact dates.

**Examples:**
*Incorrect* – the height, width or depth

*Correct* – the height, width, or depth

*Incorrect* – Switch A which was on a panel controlled the recording device.

*Correct* – Switch A, which was on a panel, controlled the recording device.
Comma Usage, cont.

Incorrect –
Cedar shavings covered the floor and paper was available for shredding.

Correct –
Cedar shavings covered the floor, and paper was available for shredding.

Incorrect –
April 18 1992 was the correct date.

Correct –
April 18, 1992, was the correct date.

Correct –
April 1992 was the correct month.
Comma Usage, cont.

**Do not use a comma before an essential clause, between two parts of a compound predicate, or to separate parts of measurement.**

Incorrect –
The switch, that stops the recording device, also controls the light.

Correct –
The switch that stops the recording device also controls the light.

Incorrect –
All subjects completed the first phase of the experiment, and returned for Phase 2.

Correct –
All subjects completed the first phase of the experiment and returned for Phase 2.

Correct –
8 years 2 months 3 min 40 s
3. **Vague Word Choices** – Every word should be specific and exactly what you intend it to mean.

**Examples:**

*Incorrect* –
Articles by psychologists like Skinner and Watson . . .

*Correct* –
Articles by psychologists such as Skinner and Watson . . .

**Words to avoid:**
important, like, some, good, different, very few, feel, etc!!!!
2. Ending a Sentence with a Preposition – A preposition is used with a noun or pronoun to show the relationship between a noun or pronoun and another word in the sentence.

**Examples:**

about  beside  like  toward
above  between  near  under
across  beyond  of  until
after  but  off  up
against  by  on
along  down  onto
among  during  out
around  except  outside
at  for  over
before  from  past
behind  in  since
below  inside  through
beneath  into  to
Prepositions, cont.

Incorrect –
That is a situation I have not thought of.

Correct –
I have not thought of that situation.

Incorrect –
She is a person I cannot cope with.

Correct –
She is a person with whom I cannot cope.
1. Lack of Proofreading!

Tips:

• Reread your own writing, especially out loud! You will be amazed how many errors you catch by rereading or listening to your own written words.
• Enlist a fresh pair of eyes. Ask a friend, spouse, roommate, or family member to read your document and offer any helpful comments or suggestions. If your document is extremely long, offer chapters or sections to others to read.
• Utilize outside resources such as reputable websites, faculty advisors, on-campus Writing Center, or editors (me!).

**A vast majority of the time, you are your own best editor!!!**
Let’s Practice . . . Again!!
Self-Editing Practice #2

Vector-borne diseases impact health greatly and are among the leading causes of deaths that claims many people's lives in the world every year [13]. They also cause significant economics losses due to animal trade, health care, and tourism etc. From humane and economic point of view, control and prevention is important [12]. Efficient interventions rely on good understanding of disease transmission and persistence [12]. Dynamic modeling of vector-borne diseases may contribute greatly to this end [12]. Vector-borne diseases pose a special problem when considering if a disease can persist or extinct in an area [12].
Self-Editing Practice #2, cont.

Vector-borne diseases impact health greatly and are among the leading causes of deaths that claims many people's lives in the world every year [13]. They also causes significant economics losses due to animal trade, health care, and tourism etc. From humane and economic point of view, control and prevention is important [12]. Efficient interventions rely on good understanding of disease transmission and persistence [12]. Dynamic modeling of vector-borne diseases may contribute greatly to this end [12]. Vector-borne diseases pose a special problem when considering if a disease can persist or extinct in an area [12].

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Vector-borne diseases greatly impact health and are among the leading causes of death worldwide every year [13]. These diseases also cause considerable economic loss for animal trade, health care, and tourism. Therefore, control and prevention of vector-borne diseases are both economical and humane [12]. Efficient intervention requires a thorough understanding of disease transmission and persistence, and dynamic modeling of vector-borne diseases may significantly contribute to this objective [12]. Vector-borne diseases pose a unique challenge when considering whether or not a disease can persist within an area [12].
**Personal Pronouns** ("I," "we," "our") are appropriate for scientific journal writing, but try to avoid in your theses and dissertations. If they must be used, be consistent in correlating with the number of mentioned authors. (Example: one author listed – “I,” “my”)

**Acronyms** – “Define acronyms the first time they appear in the Abstract as well as the first time they appear in the body of the paper, written out as part of the sentence, followed by the acronym in parentheses. If the acronym is not repeated in the Abstract, do not include the acronym in parentheses. Coined plurals or plurals of acronyms do not take the apostrophe (e.g., FETs). Possessive forms of the acronym do take the apostrophe (e.g., CPU’s speed). Indefinite articles are assigned to abbreviations to fit the sound of the first letter (e.g., an FCC regulation; a BRI).”

**Verb Tense -

USE PRESENT TENSE. . .

To express findings that continue to be true.

To express general truths or facts or conclusions supported by research results that are unlikely to change - something that is believed to be always true:

*Galileo asserted that the earth revolves the sun.*
*(The asserting took place in the past, but the earth is still revolving around the sun.)*

To refer to the article, thesis or dissertation itself and what it contains:

*Table 3 shows that the main cause of weight increase was nutritional value of the feed.*

To discuss findings and present conclusions. Also, use present tense to discuss your results and their implications.
USE PAST TENSE. . .

To describe your methodology and report results.

*We extracted tannins from the leaves by bringing them to a boil in 50% methanol.*

When referring to the work of previous researchers.

*Previous research showed that children confuse the source of their memories more often than adults (Lindsey et al., 1991). (The research was conducted in the past, but the finding is now a widely accepted fact.)*

To describe a fact, law or finding that is no longer considered valid and relevant.

*Nineteenth-century physicians held that women got migraines because they were "the weaker sex," but current research shows that the causes of migraine are unrelated to gender. (Note the shift here from past tense [discredited belief] to present [current belief].)*

A Word from the Editor . . .

USE “THE” . . .

To mean the only one or indicate that something is unique (the Internet)

To refer to things known by everyone (the world, the sun, the sky, the moon)

With time expressions (the future, the present, the past, the 1990s)

To refer to widely known inventions (the computer, the microchip, the telescope)

For unstated words which make the noun definite (the user’s ID and age – means the user of the Internet)
DO NOT NEED “THE” . . .

When generalizing ideas or nouns

Rapid changes in the global market

Traditional management accounting practices

Nowadays, computers can receive TV signals

http://www.monash.edu.au/lls/llonline/grammar/articles/2.xml
Writing and Research Resources

KSU Writing Center - http://www.k-state.edu/english/writingcenter/

Hale Library - http://www.lib.k-state.edu/information-for-graduate-students

K-State Libraries electronic resources - http://apps.lib.k-state.edu/databases/


Links to additional online resources - http://www.engg.ksu.edu/ergp/resources/EditingResources.html
KSU Editing Resources

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Editor Services Form:
www.engg.ksu.edu/ergp/resources/services.html

Editing Submission Process:
http://www.engg.ksu.edu/ergp/resources/EditingSubmissionProcess.html

Editing Workshop Information:
http://www.engg.ksu.edu/ergp/resources/Spring2015EditingWorkshop.html