Notes on Grammar. See also *Think Like an Editor* Strategy 25, ACES review and Grammar Day webinar.

Editor needs to know how to write/edit. Mistake is mustard on a Brooks Bros. suit.

Note #1 skill for PR is writing, for hiring NP editors it is grammar, punctuation (then accuracy/facts, then conciseness, then general knowledge, story structure). For magazines it’s writing, IP skills, editing.

**Some parts of speech,** sentences we need. We will point those out as needed, but often know it’s right *without* exact terminology.

* verbs
* nouns
* pronouns: [know nominative/subjective vs. objective, e.g. she/her, I/me, who/whom]
* adjectives modify nouns, pronouns
* adverbs (many –ly) modify verbs, adverbs, adjectives (very big steak, swiftly moving stream)
* prepositions (think, position); prepositional phrases can be wordy, e.g. *Principles of Editing* book
* coordinating conjunctions: and, but, or, (two independent clauses) vs. subordinating conjunctions since, because, although (one clause is dependent)
* interjections: Q? A: ouch, yay
* verbals (gerunds e.g. running, participles which often dangle e.g. receiving, infinitives e.g. to run)

**Sentences, parts**

phrase (no S, V e.g. “of wood”) vs. clause S + V; may be implied

already implied independent clauses could stand alone, dependent cannot

nonessential clause needs , which, Or commas

Compound sentences need conjunction + comma, or semi-colon (or make it two sentences): They won the race, another team won the championship. Try all three ways to correct this.

complex sentences have at least one dependent (subordinate clause): If A had not happened, B would never have occurred.

compound at least three clauses

Therefore: Run-on sentences (2 clauses + often a comma splice: They enjoyed the movie, it was hilarious) and fragments (incomplete, often a dependent clause on its own: Because he was the champion. CAN use these for effect/style; She was dead. Completely. vs. She was dead—completely.

**Grammar:**

**Agreement: Subject-verb** agree in number [some tricky singulars; be sure to identify the subject; is it a “unit” or discrete pieces?]

A and B are

A, as well as B, is

Neither he nor they are [closest subject for “or” or “nor”]

General Motors is holding its annual convention.

The team is 2-0; but The team was arguing all afternoon. (as with couple)

Watch words in between: The last two innings of what had been a long, boring game were exciting.

Singular for each , everyone, no one, but John and Mary each are scheduled

The number of accidents is rising; A number of the students were amused.

Politics is taught at La Salle; Her politics were complicated.

**Noun-pronoun**

Agree in number with the noun they replace. Generally no problem here. But

The committee reached its decision.

Each of the girls received her diploma.

Neither John nor Mary received her diploma (closest subject, again).

A journalist should edit his or her own copy.

For AP Stylebook in 2017 singular their/they is OK in some cases. A journalist should edit their own copy.

Reflexives pronouns only after named: I, myself, agree. Not: Bill and myself.

Pronoun **case** as above: Is it subjective (nominative), objective (whom-him). Give advice to whoever asked. [Did him ask or did he ask? He asked, so it’s whoever]

Jones, who I always thought was uneducated, gave the correct answer. [Note how “stuffy” language would make that “whom”]

Also with infinitive: They declared the culprit to be him. [they declared him, not they declared he]

whose NOT = who’s

its NOT = it’s Note this list of possessive pronouns: his, hers, its

**Nonessential clauses**

As above. Generally that=essential, which (+commas) is nonessential (or non-restrictive)

**Possessive nouns**

Watch S sound that follows: witness’s testimony; but Achilles’ heel

attorney general’s decision

Joint “ownership” Bill and Ted’s excellent adventure. But Mary’s and Helen’s purses.

No apostrophe in a descriptive (teachers college: they don’t own it. It’s a college for teachers, not of teachers).

Watch out for plurals: No apostrophe (as in the Apostrophe Protection Society site).

Keep **tenses** parallel/consistent.;

**Irregular verb** forms: tough. Note lay/lie is often tested. Also drunk, led, dived

**Subjunctive** mood: If I were president of the company ... not always used, stuffy.

Be sure **modifier/participle** is clear, not dangling or squinting: What is the subject of the sentence: Nestled between the driver’s legs, the policeman spotted a bottle of beer.

Don’t use no **double negatives**.

**Parallel** construction also means matching the verb forms –ing; to keep (gerunds vs. infinitives). He was charged with drunken driving, resisting arrest and possession of cocaine [possessing, but police reports use that grammar]

**Active voice** usually better

He hit the ball

The ball was hit by him [Q? A: passive voice NOT=past]

But use passive voice for variety, when actor is important

President Obama was given a standing ovation by the assembly.

When subject is meant to be implied

Important documents were missing.