

Punctuation & “We Don’t Proofread Here”

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Punctuation

- Causes of Punctuation Errors
 - Aural Errors: Attempting to punctuate by ear by recalling the rhythm of spoken phrases (178).
 - Application of Misunderstood or Misremembered Rules: Omission of punctuation or the overuse of it because of not knowing the appropriate time of application. In addition, an unfamiliarity with punctuation marks such as “colons, semicolons, parentheses, and marks of ellipsis” is a common error (179).
- Strategies to Improve Punctuation Errors
 - “If you approach punctuation errors as an opportunity to help a writer explore alternate ways of relating ideas, not as occasion for fixing up ‘mechanical errors, as so many English handbooks do, you will be addressing her real need” (180).
 - Have your student read the incorrect sentence out loud. Through doing so, they may be able to hear where they have misplaced or forgotten punctuation (180).
 - To help your student get a better grasp of punctuation errors or misunderstandings, have them orally punctuate a new sentence (181). By doing this, they will be removed from their own language and ideas, making the words and grammar itself more apparent. Here is an example you could use:

“Its vanished trees the trees that had made way for Gatsbys house had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder” (F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*).

- Types of Sentence Errors
 - Fragment: An incomplete sentence usually disconnected from the main clause, generally missing the subject or verb in the sentence (Purdue Owl)
 - Run On Sentence: A run on sentence happens when two or more independent clauses are not joined correctly (writing.umn.edu)
 - “If you take away this idea, will the sentence still make sense” or “How many ideas are there?” (186).
- Understanding Basic Grammar
 - Subject: The word or phrase that controls the verb. The subject is what or whom the sentence is about (Wikipedia).
 - Verb: The word that expresses an act, occurrence, or mode of being (Merriam Webster)

- Coordinators: Conjunctions that join two or more items of equal syntactic importance (Wikipedia) Common examples of this are FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so (Wikipedia).
 - Subordinators: A conjunction that introduces a subordinate clause (Dictionary.com)
 - Common examples of subordinators: although, because, when, if, while, since, unless, after.
- Apostrophes
 - The Apostrophe can “indicate possession and contraction” (192).
 - Possessives: “Who is the owner? Write the name of the owner; then add ‘s” (193).
 - Contractions: “What letter is missing? Place the apostrophe where the letter should be” (193).

“We Don’t Proofread Here”

- Tutoring Contradictions
 - “Tutoring is about improving the writer, not the writing: practice must follow from that premise. If our focus is on the writer, so the logic goes, directive tutoring is out. If our goal is not to improve the writing itself, editing and proofreading are inappropriate” (1).
 - ““Of course the paper is important,’ was the contrasting message. ‘Writing center tutors work on editing and proofreading because those are important issues to teachers and students’” (1-2).
- Writing Center Cases: Notes from the Semester
 - Hawthorne explains that throughout the semester, numerous questions came up about what practices were most important to institute and were certain situations worth their time. The three examples of Natalia, the ESL student, the Business course students, and Jason, the unproblematic student, all needed to be handled in unique ways that made the Writing Center wonder if they were capable of handling the specific needs (3-4).
- Tutor Techniques
 - Active Listening: “I hear you saying,” paraphrasing to demonstrate understanding and attentiveness, question, positive body language (4).
 - Genuine Reader Reaction: “I statements,” requesting clarity or information, asking questions to generate depth or new ideas (4).
 - Silence and Wait Time: Pausing to wait for the student to think through on their own and come to answers, but not too much that it feels unproductive or forceful (4).
- Directive Tutoring
 - Providing a correction
 - Providing a word or sample sentence
 - Directly answering a question about a student’s work
 - Demonstrating effective brainstorming techniques
 - Offering sample wordings and how that changes meaning