

## WR<sub>12I</sub> Editing Plug and Play



# WR<sub>I2I</sub> Editing Plug and Play

*MHCC - WR<sub>I2I</sub>*

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GRESHAM



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As any composition instructor can attest, student writers struggle with wordiness, sentence boundaries, commas, and other issues. My students dismiss skill and drill as “too boring” and seldom apply editing skills they’ve learned to their own writing. That’s why I created assignments that ask writers to pull sentences from their own drafts to illustrate specific punctuation and sentence structure rules. Thanks to these assignments, my students may be paying a little more attention to editing.

# Attribution Statement

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# I. Commas Assignment

## When should I use—or not use—those pesky commas, anyway?

Comma use is challenging. We've looked at commas with independent and dependent clauses and with non-essential information, but we haven't studied the other rules.

- If you'd like to review some of the material we've already covered, the OWL at Purdue has a handy PowerPoint presentation, *Conquering the Comma*.
- The OWL at Purdue offers *Extended Rules for Commas*. Go to the link, copy the text, paste it into a document and **print it**. Read/study the material about when to use commas and when not to. You'll need to refer to specific rules for this assignment and for an in-class activity.
- Open Comma exercise 1 from the OWL at Purdue. You can print this, too. Do the exercise. *Be sure to identify the appropriate comma rule for commas you add.* Check your answers.
- Open Comma exercise 5. Do the exercise. Check your answers.

## Assignment

**Here's a chance to apply these ideas in your own writing. Please type up A and B below so that you can hand it in. This is a 5-point assignment.**

- Identify one comma rule that is clearer to you now than it was before you read about commas. Explain the comma rule. Write a sentence that illustrates the rule.
- Copy and paste **two sentences from your essay** that demonstrate your understanding of commas. Referring to the appropriate rule, explain why you did or did not use commas. (This is similar to your answers for comma exercise 1.)

Bring the completed assignment to class along with your printed copy of the extended comma rules (from the Purdue OWL). You'll need the rules for an in-class assignment.

## 2. Conciseness Assignment

### Style, word choice and conciseness

**Did you see comments such as “awkward” or “wordy” on your graded essay? This 5-point assignment might help. Check your syllabus for the due date.**

1. Examine the draft of your essay. Do you see wordiness? Passive verbs? “Ostentatious erudition” (big words)? The Style page from the writing website for University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill explains how to identify and fix these. Do you see awkward/unclear expressions, clichés, redundancy, or wordiness? The Word Choice page from UNC can help.
2. Read either Style or Word Choice.
3. Watch Writing Concisely, also from UNC Chapel Hill.
4. Study your draft and identify **three examples** of the topics addressed in Style or Word Choice in your draft.
  - Copy and paste the “before” examples from your draft onto a document for this assignment.
  - Revise the sentences to create “after” versions that fix the problems. The video offers a good example of this.

# 3. Semicolons and Colons Assignment

## Semicolons, colons and dashes

**Are you curious about when to use semicolons, colons or dashes? This 5-point assignment might help. Check your syllabus for the due date.**

1. Read Semicolons, Colons and Dashes from the writing website for University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
2. Read the draft of your essay and find **five sentences** that *use or could use* semicolons, colons or dashes.
3. Copy and paste the five sentences from your draft into a document for this assignment.
4. You may need to revise sentences in order to use semicolons or colons or dashes. If so, show both the “before” sentence from your draft and the “after” version.
5. Now consider the *best* version for your essay. For each of the five sentences, support your position, perhaps by starting with one of these statements:
  - The original sentence is the best way because...
  - The semicolon, colon, or dash is more effective than the original because...

# 4. Sentence Variety Assignment

## Sentence variety

**Would you like to vary your sentence structure to improve your writing style? This 5-point assignment might help. Check your syllabus for the due date.**

1. Read four selections from the OWL at Purdue: Variation, For short, choppy sentences, For repeated subjects or topics, and For similar sentence patterns or rhythms.
2. Read the draft of your essay to find sentences that show your understanding of sentence variety and/or could use improvement.
  - Copy and paste your longest sentence from your draft into a document for this assignment. How many words is it? Are you sure it's a correct sentence?
  - Copy and paste your shortest sentence from your draft. How many words is it?
  - Copy and paste the sentence with the most interesting opening.
  - Identify two spots in your draft that need improvement because of short, choppy sentences or repeated subjects/topics or similar sentence patterns. Copy and paste the two "before" examples from your draft and show how to improve each one to produce stronger "after" sentences. (The selections from the OWL provide good examples of this.)