

Back to the Basics: *Clean, Modern Writing for Associations*

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Quick introduction



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Back to the Basics

Do these writing rules still rule?

What we'll do today

- Take the “Still a Rule?” quiz
- Talk about how to get association colleagues back to the basics of writing correctly
- Practice two basic strategies for making paragraphs and sentences better

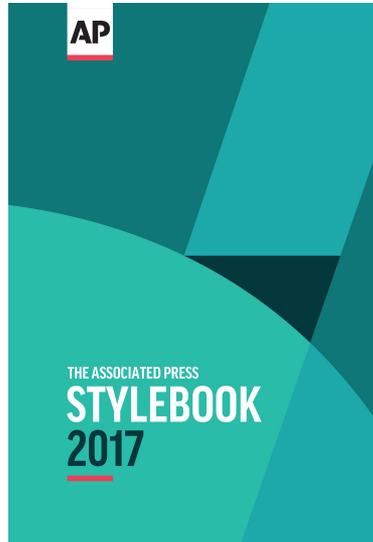
Take the “Still a Rule?” quiz

Writing rule	Still to be obeyed	Go ahead and break it
1. Don't begin a sentence with <i>but</i> or <i>and</i> .		
2. Don't end a sentence with a preposition.		
3. Don't begin a sentence with <i>because</i> .		
4. Don't write a one-sentence paragraph.		
5. Don't use contractions in business writing.		
6. Don't use <i>they</i> as a singular pronoun.		
7. Don't split an infinitive.		
8. Don't write a fragment.		
9. Don't begin a sentence with <i>however</i> or <i>therefore</i> .		
10. Don't write in passive voice. Ever.		

Take the “Still a Rule?” quiz

Writing rule	Still to be obeyed	Go ahead and break it
1. Don't begin a sentence with <i>but</i> or <i>and</i> .		X
2. Don't end a sentence with a preposition.		X
3. Don't begin a sentence with <i>because</i> .		X
4. Don't write a one-sentence paragraph.		X
5. Don't use contractions in business writing.		X
6. Don't use <i>they</i> as a singular pronoun.		X
7. Don't split an infinitive.		X
8. Don't write a fragment.		X
9. Don't begin a sentence with <i>however</i> or <i>therefore</i> .		X
10. Don't write in passive voice. Ever.		X

The authorities



The “authority” – some teacher, somewhere



Those rules don't rule anymore

1. You can begin a sentence with *but* or *and*.

Katie knows every rock-strewn foot of this 8,000-acre ranch. But the strip's width is less than her Skywagon's wingspan.

2. You can end a sentence with a preposition.
 - *Bullied children may have noone to play with.*
 - *Enter the terms you wish to search for.*

Those rules don't rule anymore

3. You can begin a sentence with *because*.

Because most pilots rent the aircraft they fly, we want to provide some practical advice for renting aging aircraft.

4. You can write a one-sentence paragraph.

The Cessna 180 had the speed and range to cover long distances, and the capability to operate from unpaved strips at high elevations. A colleague found a 1956 model on eBay that was almost completely original, and Katie pressed the "Buy" button.

She had to learn to fly tailwheel airplanes, and she upgraded the airplane with a three-blade Hartzell prop, new starter, alternator, IFR panel, and a new headliner.

Her dream of flying to the family's ranch was almost within reach.

Those rules don't rule anymore

5. You can use contractions in business writing.

MEMBERSHIP

Choose the AOPA membership that's right for you!

6. You can use *they* as a singular pronoun.

- *Please provide snacks for your child in case they get hungry on the flight.*
- *We expect each customer to present their boarding pass.*

Those rules don't rule anymore

7. You can split an infinitive.

This five-part series employs more than 30 animatronic spy cameras disguised as animals to secretly record behavior in the wild.

8. You can write a fragment.

I can't go to college, because I just won't fit in.

Not so. Most colleges have students from many backgrounds. Homesick? Need a hand? Look for people with your interests or your background in the African Dance Club, on the soccer field, or in a foreign language study group...

Those rules don't rule anymore

9. You can begin a sentence with *however* or *therefore*.

Ever since the voting age changed to 18 in 1972, young women have been more likely to vote than men. However, voter turnout has been decreasing.

10. You can write in passive voice. Sometimes.

- Dogma: *The letter carrier delivered the mail.*
- Real writing: *The mail was delivered.*
- Dogma: *The assistant canceled the meeting.*
- Real writing: *The meeting was canceled.*

How to get association
colleagues back to the basics
of writing correctly

“Why do I have to change this every time?!”

Discuss

- What’s one writing rule you wish you could get your colleagues to follow... once and for all?
- What steps can you take to get your colleagues to learn, follow, and respect the rule?

Two basic strategies for
writing better sentences and
paragraphs

Two basic strategies for improving your draft

1. Break the “this and that” habit.
2. Cut your word count by 10 or 15 percent.

What is the “this and that” sentence habit?

- Using a pair of words that are so close in meaning that one of them is unnecessary.

*A performance system will allow for the development of **new and innovative** training **techniques and methodologies** and allow companies added flexibility in tailoring their training to the specific job duties of their employees.*

Fixing “this and that” sentences

- Children with *moderate and serious impairments and disabilities* will benefit from *follow-up and referral* aimed at reducing their severity of functional limitations.
- Children with *moderate or ~~and~~ serious ~~impairments and disabilities~~* will benefit from *follow-up ~~and referral~~* aimed at reducing their severity of functional limitations.

Revise “this and that” sentences

Before

After

1. The report content and structure will consist of a one paragraph abstract and an executive summary that highlights the key findings and recommendations.
2. These individuals are well positioned within our company to provide expert opinion about the contributions of the RPP program and the RPP Research Assistants to the research agenda and mission of our company.
3. In addition to our experience developing, modifying and executing training programs for the NCS Vanguard Study, ABC Corporation has more than 30 years of experience delivering training programs in a variety of modes and modules.

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- In addition to our experience developing and executing training programs for the NCS Vanguard Study, ABC Corporation has 30 years of experience delivering training programs in a variety of modes.

More “this and that” practice

- Because an increasing number of school districts are introducing foreign language immersion in the classroom for children at a young age, the reinvention and rethinking of how languages are being taught and will be taught at the collegiate level is critical going forward.
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More “this and that” practice

- Because an increasing number of school districts are introducing foreign language immersion in the classroom for children at a young age, the reinvention and rethinking of how languages are being taught and will be taught at the collegiate level is critical going forward.
- Because more K-12 school districts offer foreign language immersion for children in the primary grades, university professors must rethink how languages are taught in college.

Cut word count by 10 or 15 percent

1. A surprisingly useful (but admittedly unsubtle) method
2. Reduces good-natured chattiness in a draft
3. May reduce sinister biz-jargon bloviating

Cut word count by 10 or 15 percent = 29 to 44 words

(298 words) Kevin Miley, vice president of business development, took a much needed sabbatical last fall after 11 years with ABC Systems. Around his ninth anniversary with the company, he remembers he recalled that his sabbatical – an ABC Systems benefit for employees celebrating ten years with the company – was on the horizon, but due to some exciting business opportunities he chose to delay it. “I really didn’t do much dreaming about it,” said Kevin. But when the time came, he knew just what he’d do. “Spend more time with my aging and ailing mother, learn to cook, and improve my golf game.”

Kevin opted to take an eight-week sabbatical, using the first five weeks to help his mother select a new residence in Northbrook and address her outstanding medical issues. After 38 years as a teacher, Kevin’s mother was living near him in Maryland but she longed to return “home” in Summertown, Virginia, a tiny town in Southern Virginia possibly best known for the velodrome that bears its name. He opted to take an eight-week sabbatical, using the first five weeks to help his mother select a new residence in Northbrook and address her outstanding medical issues. He was able to just be present for his mother. No phone. No email. No distractions. And without the ABC Systems sabbatical, that wouldn’t have been possible.

After his mother was happily and comfortably settled in Summertown, Kevin took on the challenge of learning how to be a better cook. He explored culinary classes in Washington, D.C., and practiced Top Chef Kitchen meal planning and preparation options. “I learned how to create and prep an entire meal,” said Kevin, much to the delight of his family. “I thought I would learn Italian or French, but my signature dish ended up being Peruvian Chicken.”

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(231 words) Kevin Miley, vice president of business development, took a much needed sabbatical last fall after 11 years with ABC Systems. Around his ninth anniversary with the company, he remembered that his sabbatical was on the horizon, but due to some exciting business opportunities he chose to delay it. “I really didn’t do much dreaming about it,” said Kevin. But when the time came, he knew just what he’d do. “Spend more time with my aging and ailing mother, learn to cook, and improve my golf game.”

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Cut word count by 10 or 15 percent = 13 to 20 words

Executive Summary (136 words)

The Consulting team's goal is to provide strategic guidance on how to best leverage data and technology to deliver the optimal customer experience and ultimately drive business value by addressing the needs of the following audiences:

- **Clients:** We aim to meet the demand for high level, strategic thought leadership on technology selection, implementation and utilization through account dedicated, embedded support providing innovative, full-scale technology stack recommendations and implementations.
- **Agency Partners:** We aim to increase education and team presence across the organization, through training and sharing of thought leadership to provide technology support, recommendations and a streamlined workflow and workload across teams.
- **ABC Systems:** We aim to document our technology expertise to enable proper utilization of tech resources allowing for innovative, full-scale technology stack recommendations and implementations while monitoring resource utilization to ensure proper allocation/funding.

Cut word count by 10 or 15 percent = 13 to 20 words

Executive Summary

The Consulting team's goal is to provide strategic guidance on how to ~~best use~~ leverage data and technology to deliver ~~the optimal~~ an excellent customer experience and ~~ultimately~~ drive business value. Our team will ~~by~~ addressing the needs of these following audiences:

- **Clients:** We will provide ~~aim to meet the demand for high level,~~ strategic thought leadership on selecting, implementing, and using technology ~~selection, implementation and utilization~~ through account-dedicated, embedded support. We'll recommend and implement ~~providing~~ innovative, full-scale technology stacks ~~recommendations and implementations.~~
- **Agency Partners:** We will provide ~~aim to increase education and team presence across the organization, through training and sharing of~~ thought leadership so we can support partners' ~~to provide~~ technology support, ~~recommendations and a~~ and streamlined workflow and workload across teams.
- **ABC Systems:** We will ~~aim to~~ document our technology expertise, so we can use ~~to enable proper utilization of~~ tech resources properly and ensure proper spending and resource use in ~~allowing for innovative,~~ full-scale technology stack recommendations and implementations ~~while monitoring resource utilization to ensure proper allocation/funding.~~

Cut word count by 10 or 15 percent = 112 words

Executive Summary

The Consulting team's goal is to provide strategic guidance on how to data and technology to deliver an excellent customer experience and drive business value. Our team will address the needs of these audiences:

- **Clients:** We will provide strategic thought leadership on selecting, implementing, and using technology through account-dedicated, embedded support. We'll recommend and implement innovative, full-scale technology stacks.
- **Agency Partners:** We will provide training and thought leadership, so we can support partners' technology and streamline workflow and workload across teams.
- **ABC Systems:** We will document our technology expertise, so we can use tech resources properly and ensure proper spending and resource use in full-scale technology stack recommendations and implementations.

Questions?