



## Workshops for Translators by Frances Peck

### Clear and Concise: Guidelines for Style

Clear, concise style is the backbone of strong writing. It's also the product of lots of cold, hard revision. This workshop presents a variety of stylistic techniques to help language do its job. We'll look at how to boost flow, eliminate sloppy shifts and inconsistencies, link ideas using parallelism and subordination, tighten sentences, and trim wordiness. Through discussion, examples, and exercises, we'll examine surefire methods for polishing any type of document.

### English Grammar

Even seasoned language professionals wrestle with questions of grammar from time to time. Why is *whoever* the correct pronoun in the sentence *He gave a brochure to whoever he thought was interested*? Why are two subjects joined by *and* sometimes grammatically singular? What's the difference between a phrase and a clause? What is an antecedent?

If you are plagued by such questions, or know the answers but have trouble explaining them to others, this workshop will help. Beginning with a review of grammar terminology, the session goes on to cover tricky cases of agreement, pronoun case (including everyone's favourite, *who* and *whom*), and modifier form and placement. We'll look at some of the most common grammatical problems found in writing, including comma splices and dangling modifiers. The workshop includes self-tests, exercises, and discussion of your individual questions.

### Grammar Fundamentals

Take this quick quiz:

1. List and define the eight parts of speech.
2. Explain the difference between a phrase and a clause.
3. What's a subject complement? An object complement? An appositive?
4. Provide an example of an absolute phrase, a gerund phrase, a participial phrase. Which one always functions as an adjective? Which one is falling out of use?
5. Explain the difference between a restrictive and a non-restrictive clause.

At sea? Then this workshop is for you. Whether your aim is to plug educational holes, to better apply the rules of grammar, or to impress your clients and colleagues, this workshop will cover all the grammatical terms and structures you need to know. Bring your pencils and prepare to parse!

## Grammar Rules and Myths

*Note: This workshop assumes knowledge of grammar terminology (parts of speech, phrases, clauses, subjects, objects, subject complements, etc.). Participants must be familiar with these terms.*

Even the best translators wrestle with questions of grammar from time to time. Why is *whoever* the correct pronoun in the sentence *He gave a brochure to whoever he thought was interested*? Why are two subjects joined by *and* sometimes grammatically singular? Is it correct to begin a sentence with *however*, *and*, or *because*, despite what some individuals and texts tell you?

If you are plagued by such questions, or know the answers but have trouble explaining them to others, this workshop will help. We'll cover tricky cases of agreement, pronoun case (including everyone's favourite, *who* and *whom*), and modifier form and placement. We'll also discuss common grammatical errors, including comma splices and dangling modifiers. Finally, we'll investigate the most tenacious grammar myths and review the rules that have changed over time. The session includes exercises and self-tests and allows time for individual questions.

## The Ins and Outs of Verbs

What translator doesn't harbour strong feelings about verbs? Love them or hate them, there's no ignoring this essential—and sometimes tricky—part of the sentence. In this workshop, designed specifically for translators, we'll explore the most common errors in verb tense, focusing on perfect tenses and the conditional. We'll also cover verb mood (including the subjunctive) and voice (active versus passive). Along the way, we'll discuss the conventions of tense in specific types of writing (e.g., journalistic, scientific, literary, analytical) and the delicate balance of keeping tense, voice and mood consistent.

## Plain Language: Building Results

Many documents have one basic goal: to deliver information to a particular audience. But all too often, the message gets buried by weak organization, wordiness, abstract language, jargon, poor page design, and other barriers to readability.

This introduction to plain language shows you how to remove those barriers and build a document that says what it means. We'll start by defining plain language and examining its benefits. Next we'll discuss readers, including the different types and their different reading needs. Then we'll cover seven practical techniques for creating plain language documents. We'll finish with a look at page design and ways of evaluating readability. The workshop includes individual and group exercises to help you apply plain language to real-life passages. You will also receive handouts and a list of recommended resources.

## Punctuation and Mechanics

“God is in the details,” the old saying goes—though anyone who has agonized endlessly over a comma or a hyphen might argue that a much darker entity lurks there.

This workshop takes an appropriately detailed look at punctuation and mechanics, including commas (what’s right, what’s wrong, what’s optional), semicolons, colons, quotation marks, apostrophes, dashes, hyphens, italics, and the ever-perplexing bullet points. The session presents up-to-date rules and guidelines, examines how punctuation and mechanics affect meaning (for instance, the relationship between commas and modifiers), and looks at some of the most useful style guides available. There will be group and individual exercises throughout the day, and participants are encouraged to bring along troublesome samples for discussion.

## Tips for Editing and Proofreading

This workshop offers guidelines and tips to help you minimally edit and proofread documents more effectively. Following a review of the different levels of editing, you will learn how to improve consistency, expression and correctness in documents and how to spot the most common errors, omissions and weaknesses. The workshop includes practice activities as well as a real-life editing exercise.

## Usage Woes and Myths

You’ve sorted out *imply* and *infer*. You know it’s not all right to use *alright*. But what about more troublesome usage points, like the difference between *may* and *might*? Or such frequently misused expressions as *centre around* and *beg the question*? Is it true that you should always change *though* to *although*, *till* to *until*, *like* to *such as*?

For anyone intent on preventing (not *avoiding*) word errors and avoiding (not *preventing*) usage myths, this workshop will help. Through discussion and examples, the session provides an up-to-date look at some of the most misunderstood and contentious points of English usage, and suggests helpful guides and other resources. Bring your most perplexing usage questions to share with the group.