A Guide to Using Good Grammar

The Write Advice

Special Edition

UWF Writing Lab

GOT A GRAMMAR QUESTION?
GRAMMAR HOTLINE

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RADIO GRAMMAR

It's Grammar Time with Mamie Hixon on WRNE Radio 980 AM Mondays at 5:30 a.m.

( Grammar for Students and Professionals)

NEWSPAPER GRAMMAR

Read the bi-weekly language column in the Independent Voice newspaper:

Grammar Watch

by Mamie Hixon, the Grammar Guru
(Advice on English language use)

PUNCTUATING with PURPOSE

There is one difference between us.
There is one difference between us: we have different religious beliefs.
There is one difference between us: our religious beliefs.
There is one difference between us - our religious beliefs.

Don't Trust Your Spell Checker
By Mamie Webb Hixon, Writing Lab Director

Don't trust your spell checker. A spell checker recognizes misspellings only when the spelling given does not exist in American English. Standard spellings such as incontinence (for in-convenience), mines (for mine), curse (for course), and enemies (for enemies) are not detected by a spell checker because these words do in fact exist. Don't depend on your spell checker to find these and other mistakes with homonyms, for instance; for, as its name suggests, a spell checker checks spelling. You'll have to proofread and find your own mistakes.

SPELL CHECKER

I have a spell checker, / I came with my PC.
It plainly marks four my revue / Mistakes I cannot see.
I've run this poem through it / I'm sure your pleased too no;
Its letter perfect in it's weigh / My checker killed me san.

-Penny Harper

The following sentences were taken from actual business documents and college papers. And, yes, each writer used a spell checker.

With friends like these, who needs enemies?
The affects of Alzheimer's disease . . . .
The committee has enclosed its minutes for your review.
He is a cereal killer.
I identified the purse as mines.
This change is the result of operating instructions from our headquarters; we are sorry for any incontinence this new operation may have caused you.
This policy is for ten-year professors only.
Over the curse of my college career . . . .
UWF has a guess speaker for commencement.
Over two hundred extinguished guests are invited to the program.
Other curses with intensive writing expectations are . . .

YOU'VE GOT MAIL!

E-mail or e-mail?
Both spellings are correct.
Email and e-mail are also correct.

The 10 Most Common Errors in Speech and Writing

1. just between you and I
2. in regards to / with regards to
3. irregardless
4. This is her/him's.
5. real good
6. Thor's several reasons.
7. The university will celebrate it's anniversary.
8. had went, had came, had did
9. alot
10. a interesting experience

Inside

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Avoiding Random Acts of Commas
By Troy Erquhart

When I ask writers about their placement of commas, I’m often told that the sentence “needed a pause there” or that it “was a long sentence.” While these ideas are well intended, they are absolutely wrong. Writers often construct long sentences (such as this one) that include a number of dependent clauses and that are correctly punctuated without the inclusion of even a single comma. Consider Out of the black limousine with mirrored windows stepped a tall young woman with flaming red hair that fell well below her shoulders and a handsome six-year-old boy in a cowboy suit decorated with silver sequins. Conversely, short sentences often require commas for clarity. We ate bacon and the guests ate ham is unclear and should be recast as We ate bacon, and the guests ate ham. Further, even though readers are taught to pause when encountering a comma, the inverse is not true; commas should be placed according to grammatical rules, not to create a dramatic pause. So, when writing, keep a grammar handbook such as Real Good Grammar, Too or Elements of Style nearby, and place your commas deliberately, not randomly.

Students, Faculty, and Staff, Lend Me Your Ears
The Loan/Lend Controversy
By Brian Hansen

The latest edition of Webster’s International Dictionary notes that loan is now both a verb and a noun, likewise, Fowler’s Modern English Usage observes that loan has been passing for a verb since the 19th century. But here at the Writing Lab, we’re a conservative bunch; we stand on tradition and strive to combat the degeneration of the English language at the hands of dictionary publishers. And, as far as we’re concerned, a loan (noun) is still the thing we receive when someone lends (verb) us something.

Would You Loan or Lend Me Money?
By Chris Bui

Perhaps Shakespeare should have written “Neither a borrower nor a lender be.” Even he knew that loan is not a verb, or else he might have written “Friends, Romans, countrymen, loan me your ears.” Loan is a noun that is often mistaken for a verb. So do not use loan as a verb; instead, use lend. For example, banks give loans, or they lend money. So be a lender, not a loaneer.

Using Words Such As Like
By Troy Erquhart

Today’s writers seem to like like they like no other word. However, this affinity for like leads, in many cases, to overuse and misuse of the word. Consider this example from the February 2 edition of The Times: Mr. Ashcroft met with the heads of Justice Department agencies like the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Drug Enforcement Administration. Clearly, the writer does not intend agencies like (i.e., similar to) the FBI and the D.E.A., but he means to include those particular agencies in the group with which Mr. Ashcroft met, so the sentence should be recast: Mr. Ashcroft met with the heads of Justice Department agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Drug Enforcement Administration. The use of like denotes a comparison to a similar item (He acts like a child), but it does not include that item; the use of such as provides a representative example of a group.

The principal expelled the student for three principle reasons.

One of the underlined words in the above sentence is incorrect. Do you know which one?
Call the Writing Lab (474-2129) for the answer.

Who Cares about Correct Grammar and Punctuation as Long as Your Creative Writing Is Creative and Interesting?
By Chris Bui

Some writers feel that grammar and punctuation have little to do with their creative work, but what good is the work if it is hard to read? Grammar and punctuation help readers understand the text. A reader might not know what noun an adjective describes if the adjective is misplaced; perhaps a reader might not know a character is speaking because quotation marks have been omitted. Any creative piece written without the proper use of grammar and punctuation rules may be difficult for readers to comprehend. Take the following sentence: David Copperfield said Tom Sawyer is a good book. Without the proper underlining or italics and quotation marks, a reader might not know the speaker or the title of the book. So correct grammar and punctuation are not tortures used to suppress a writer’s creativity. Instead, they are used to help readers understand and appreciate it.

Expect your reader to read your ideas, not your mind.
—Anon

When my students respond to a grammatically correct sentence by saying “That don’t sound right!” I say, “I think it do.”
—Mamie Hixon
So I'm like,  
"Who needs this grammar stuff?"  
By Betty Hooten, Instructor  
Department of English and Foreign Languages

During the past several years, I've read quite a few articles about the value – or rather the lack of value – of teaching grammar as a collegiate course. They all say about the same thing – DON'T BELIEVE THE MYTHS. The problem is that I want to believe. Judging from the 20 or 30 grammar and punctuation errors that my own students often make on their 500-word essays, I conclude that the need for teaching grammar at the university level still exists.

LIN 2670 Practical Grammar is necessary for the betterment of student writing. I am sold on this fact, and students should be, too. Perhaps I need to call upon the Grammar Lady, Mary Newton Bruder, who maintains her own Web site at Stamp Out Bad Grammar. As a grammar cop, she's a little touchy these days about personal pronoun abuse. Frankly, so am I. If I get one more essay like the first ones, I may have to be sworn in as one of Bruder's deputies.

Who Knows About Whom?  
By Heather Stadelhofer

Many students wish Ernest Hemingway had never written For Whom the Bell Tolls. After all, if Hemingway's novel didn't exist, then grammarians would allow the word whom to disappear from the English language, right? Well, as tempting an option as banning whom might be, it is not a very practical one. Though many rules govern pronoun case, it helps to remember that who serves that same purpose as he, and whom equates with him.

"Whom's Doom"  
By Mamie Webb Hixon  
The Grammar Guru

In informal spoken English, usage is relaxed, and speakers tend to use who in almost all spoken situations.

Who you gonna call? Ghostbusters!  
Who would you like to speak to?  
He is a person who we all respect.  
Who do you believe – the politicians or the media?

In fact, many writers and speakers don't use whom anymore. Here are the myths explaining why:

MYTH 1: Whom has become obsolete; it's just not used anymore in informal speech or writing.

FACT 1: Careful writers and speakers still use whom.

MYTH 2: Only Northerners use whom.

FACT 2: Whom is no more a Northern pronoun than are the other objective case pronouns: me, him, her, them, and us. Whom is used in objective case instances – the direct object or indirect object of a verb, and the object of a preposition.

MYTH 3: It's difficult to distinguish between who and whom.

FACT 3: Actually, distinguishing between who and whom is quite easy if you follow these 4 steps:

1. Substitute he for who, and him for whom.
   Whom (Him) do you believe – the celebrities or the tabloids?

2. Isolate the clause(s) in which the who/whom is functioning.
   Whom (Him) do you believe?

3. Using only the clause in which the who or whom is functioning, place these words in their natural sentence order: subject verb pattern. This step may be omitted when the words in the clause are already in this pattern.
   You do believe him.

4. Read or write the sentences correctly.
   Whom do you believe – the celebrities or the tabloids?

GRAMMAR CHECKERS

Be especially skeptical of grammar checker programs. They are not always accurate. Remember, they can only mechanically match what they are programmed to do. The Grammar Checker didn't find the mistakes in this sentence. Can you? Thanks to employees whom participated in the Children's Festival.

 WHICH SPELLING IS CORRECT?

a. supercede  
b. superceded  
c. supersede  
Call the Writing Lab (474-2129) for the answer.
**Guilty**
As Charged -
Using Legalese!

**The Plain English Movement**
By Susan W. Harrell, J.D.
Director, Legal Studies Department, UWF

We have all heard the old adage “Ignorance of the law is no excuse,” a concept which places a burden on each citizen to learn the law. The burden is unreasonable only because legal jargon and a complicated writing style prevent citizens from understanding the law. In the 1970’s, the Plain English Movement started as a consumer-protection effort, which promoted the passage of laws by calling for consumer documents to be written in understandable language. You probably won’t be surprised to learn that lawyers were not the first to support the Plain English Movement. Complex language is customary for lawyers. Legalese, as it is called, is similar to a foreign language. It was created by lawyers and judges over many centuries. Legalese is still used in law schools and is perpetuated by many lawyers and judges in their daily work. While the use of legalese facilitates communication among lawyers because they know the language, it also frustrates others who try to read and understand legal documents.

Since the movement, government agencies, state legislatures, and even presidents of the United States have passed laws and set policies requiring or encouraging the use of simple, clear language when creating law. While many federal regulations, forms, and information brochures have been rewritten in plain English, there are some segments of the legal profession that have not responded to this need. Many lawyers learned legal writing in law school and do not want to take the time necessary to learn a completely different style of writing. Senior lawyers are busy and want to impress their clients with the professional image which legalese has upheld for generations. Many lawyers use the old adage “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” as a justification for continuing the use of legalese. But if complicated language for lawyers is easy, “plain speak” ought to be a slide.

If you’d like to learn more about plain English, check out the following sources:

- http://www.plainenglish.co.uk
- http://www.plainenglishnetwork.org
- Richard C. Widick’s *Plain English for Lawyers, 4th Edition*
- Jefferson R. Baker’s *Writing with Precision*
- Alan L. Dworsky’s *The Little Book on Legal Writing, 2nd Edition*

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**To Split or to Not Split**
By Heather Studelzhofer

For years, English teachers have admonished students not to split infinitives, and now the *Oxford English Dictionary* has changed the rule saying that a writer can, in fact, decide to split an infinitive with one word. What does that statement mean? It means you can write “not to split” or “to not split.” Though either version is now acceptable, careful writers will want to avoid the split in case their readers do not know the *OED*’s most recent grammatical ruling. (And, student writers, you especially should try not unnecessarily use split infinitives because your professors may not allow them.)

**10 Grammar Rules**

1. Try to not split an infinitive.
2. Verbs has to agree with their subjects.
3. Each pronoun must agree with their antecedent.
4. Don’t use commas, which aren’t necessary.
5. It’s important to use aposterrophe’s correctly.
6. Don’t use no double negatives.
7. About sentence fragments.
8. When dangling, don’t use participles.
9. Use a modifier only to describe what is intended.
10. Be real careful about using adjectives and adverbs correct.

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**Hooton’s Mnemonic Devices and Other Shortcuts**
By Elizabeth Hooton

Affect/Verb = AV (audiovisual, Veterans Administration)
I before E except after C (receive) or when sounded like A as in neighbor and weigh.
Nonrestrictive = not necessary = commas.
Triteness comes from the Latin tritus, past participle of verb meaning “to wear out.”
Principal is a pal; principle is a rule.
To know, know, know him is to love, love, love him — parallelism at its finest.
A dash is more emphatic than parentheses.
Denotation = Dictionary Meaning.
Who is a subject pronoun. If a clause already has a subject, don’t use who.

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Learn to put yourself into your writing, but leave “you” out of it.

*Judy Young*
Using Politically Correct (PC) And Non-sexist Language
By Mamic Webb Hixon, Writing Lab Director

1. Avoid gender-biased pronouns. With generic antecedents such as person or student, use his or her and he or she. A student should make good grades if he or she studies hard.

2. Avoid using trendy "pronouns" such as s/he, he/she, s/he, or s/he. Use the phrases his or her and he or she sparingly to risk writing sentences such as If any employee needs his or her decal, he or she must bring his or her receipt with him or her.

3. If necessary, recast the sentence by changing the singular antecedent to a plural. A student should make good grades if he or she studies hard.

4. Students should make good grades if they study hard.

5. Alternate between the singular masculine and feminine pronouns if the result is not confusing or cumbersome. The American worker is the most productive person in the whole world: he’s a taxpayer, and she’s also a consumer.

6. If you prefer, replace masculine or feminine pronouns with one or you when appropriate: You should make good grades if you study hard.

7. Substitute other words for "man" words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexist Usage</th>
<th>PC Usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>businessman/woman</td>
<td>business associate/person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mankind</td>
<td>people, human beings, humanity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mailman</td>
<td>mail carrier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manmade</td>
<td>manufactured, artificial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chairman</td>
<td>chair or chairperson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>salesman</td>
<td>sales associate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fireman</td>
<td>fire fighter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>policeman</td>
<td>police officer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use moderation, however, to avoid usage such as these:
Person the lifeboats
Personhole cover

8. Substitute gender-neutral words for gender-biased words.

9. Include both male and female reference points.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexist Usage</th>
<th>PC Usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You and your spouse</td>
<td>You and your guest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dear Sir/Dear Sirs (for an all-male organization only)</td>
<td>Dear Sir or Madam or Dear Madam or Sir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>employees and wives</td>
<td>employees and guests/companions/partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naval Officers’ Wives Club Naval Officers’ Spouses Club</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. Use women and men instead of girls and boys or gals and guys when referring to adults.

"Stay tuned to the current terminology by which racial and ethnic groups refer to themselves. Usage changes (e.g., from "black" to "African-American" and "Oriental" to "Asian"). National newspapers and television news are good indicators of current usage. Also, ask people what term they prefer."
- Florida Atlantic University flyer on "Bias-Free Communications"

The Trouble with Articles
(Helpful Hints for Speakers of English as a Second Language)
By Helen Richards

Have you ever been reading a sentence and all of the sudden, WHAM!, you run smack into a noun? Those pesky nouns have always been a problem, but now the grammar police have come up with an advanced warning system. It's known as an article, and it lets you know that a noun is approaching. Just watch how it works.

Sentence without article Did you take candy?
Sentence with article Did you take the candy?

Notice in the first sentence that the verb take ran smack into the noun candy. However, the article in the second sentence signaled that a noun was approaching, and a collision of words was avoided.

Because all nouns are not created equal, two types of articles are available for use: the definite article and the indefinite article. "What's the difference?" you ask. The definite article is the word the. It knows without a doubt what noun is approaching; thus, it is definite. The indefinite articles, the words a and an, really don't care what noun is approaching, so the articles don't bother to check. That's why a and an are called indefinite articles; they didn't bother to look, so they are unsure or indefinite.

Note the difference in the two types of articles:

Did you take the cookie? This is a definite article in action. Notice it wasn't just any cookie. It was the cookie.

Did you take a cookie? This is an indefinite article. Notice how it didn't tell you which one. It didn't care which cookie, just a cookie.

The trouble with articles is that uncountable nouns are particularly menacing and frighten away indefinite articles. That is why you will never find an indefinite article preceding an uncountable noun. On the other hand, definite articles are not easily intimidated and can be used with countable nouns. Here are a few examples of the uncountable nouns and how definite articles, not indefinite, will warn the approach:

The air is polluted but not An air is polluted.
The sand is hot but not A sand is hot.
I live in the South but not I live in a South.

So the next time you are reading a sentence, look for those articles because they are there to warn you that a noun is approaching.
Capitalizing and Punctuating for Effect
By Livvy Mullins

How do you decide to punctuate your sentences? Are you often unsure about which words require capitalization? Stop worrying, and visit the Writing Lab. In the Lab, you'll learn that punctuation and capitalization serve specific purposes in your writing. Neither is used simply for effect or decoration. Consider the following sentences:

The President has aids.
The President has AIDS.
The era of the ERA is not over.

Hernandez sat on the stoop listening to his boom box above him a tenant of the building appeared at the window with a bucket of water.

Hernandez sat on the stoop listening to his boom box above him, a tenant of the building appeared at the window with a bucket of water.

Without the proper punctuation and capitalization, the meaning of these sentences is changed considerably.

How's Your Sentence Sense?
Can you correct this run-on?
That is is that that is not is not it is it is.

Call the Writing Lab (474-2129) for the answer.

Fragments
By Amy Woodland

No doubt about it. The fewer the fragments, the better your paper. Fragments are not always easy to recognize. Students rarely having recognized their mistakes. Continue about their papers without noticing that a sentence is incomplete. Reading a paper plagued by fragments becomes difficult. Even for an instructor. Students, finish your thoughts! And while you're at it. Finish your sentences.

There are six fragments in the passage above. Notice that the first two are intentional. Good, seasoned writers often use intentional fragments for rhetorical effect. For instance, intentional fragments are used in narratives and other kinds of writing to suggest a character's thoughts as in the passage above: No doubt about it. Other types of intentional fragments such as these below appear in writing to record conversation or a natural form of expression.

Bon voyage.
What a mess!
No smoking.
Out of sight, out of mind.
The more, the merrier.
So much for the history of the problem.

Now for some possible solutions.
The Writing Lab's paper reading service is available for all UWF students. Any major, any class.

A Preposition Is a Word You Shouldn't End a Sentence With
By Marnie Webb Hixon, Writing Lab Director

A preposition is a word you shouldn't end a sentence with. The warnings against ending a sentence with a preposition are aimed at superfluous prepositions like at in Where's the book at? or Where do you live at? not prepositions like these, some which are used idiomatically.

Where are you from?
He lives in a town I've never heard of.
Whom are you talking to?

At this retirement center, the patients are well cared for.

Sure, all could be reworded to remove the "postposed" preposition at the end of the sentence, but to what end? Meaning, and sometimes economy and clarity, could be lost.

So is it wrong to end a sentence with a preposition? You decide - should you risk clarity, meaning, and economy just to remove these terminal prepositions?

We have asked registered voters whom they plan to vote for.

What was wrong with me? What was I afraid of?

Most underachievers have talents and strengths they're not aware of.

I might change my mind if you ask me to.
He thought he had nothing more to live for.

All students had turned their papers in.
I haven't decided what to major in.

Editing Your Own Papers
Jason Glass

Nothing undermines a writer's credibility more than careless errors. Even if your ideas are great, your professors may not see past your mistakes. Fortunately, there are several ways to avoid grammatical and meconical errors in your papers:

1. Give yourself enough time to edit your papers. Any paper that you finish five minutes before it is due will certainly be full of careless mistakes, and professors can tell if you have procrastinated.

2. Read your papers aloud. Many errors which go undetected while you read your paper silently become obvious when you read it aloud. This suggestion might seem boring, but you can add some zest to your oral reading by practicing your British accent while reading your papers.

3. Have a friend read your papers. Often, a fresh pair of eyes will catch errors that yours do not.
4. After you write a paper and proofread it, allow your writing to "simmer" for at least two days: then read the paper again. You may be surprised at how many errors you find during the second or third reading.

5. For any specific grammar questions, call the Grammar Hotline at 474-2129. We can always help.

Is Ain't A Word?
By Mamie Webb Hixon

Is ain't a word? Of course, it's a word. It resides in the dictionary along with other "words" such as regardless, enthused, and complicated and it has been used by reputable speakers and writers. So why the stigma? Why are ain't users called dumb, stupid, illiterate, sub-literate, ignorant, and uneducated? Why are there such far-reaching, serious, almost career-damaging consequences of using ain't? More often than not, those so-called uneducated people who use ain't also use regardless, enthused, complicated, himself, in regard to, had of, and an array of other substandard expressions — it comes with the territory.

Ain't bears the stigma it does because many ain't users don't limit their use to the first-person negative question Aren't I? They use ain't in all instances — You ain't, they ain't, he ain't, she ain't; the list goes on. Your decision to use ain't should be a deliberate, intentional one. Its usage should be masterfully incorporated and rhetorically executed for the desired effect. If you use ain't thoughtlessly or carelessly without regard to content, then you may not only incur the wrath of your reader or listener, but you may also undermine your own credibility as a writer. Now, ain't that the truth!

"Our attitude about ain't," says Martha Kollin in Understanding English Grammar, is an issue about manners, not grammar. If the newscasters and the [P]resident of the United States and English teachers began to use ain't on a regular basis, its status would change very quickly," she continues. "The linguist Paul Roberts made the idea of usage very clear when he said that teachers and newscasters and presidents don't avoid ain't because it's nonstandard; it's nonstandard because such people avoid it."

Laying It on the Line
By M. Gretchen Harris

Perhaps it is time to lay down the rules I found lying around regarding the usage of lie and lay. Lay means "to place or put something," while lie means "to rest or recline."

I will lay my books down for the night. While John was laying carpet, he found fifty dollars lying under the couch.

An especially troublesome verb form is lay. Not only is it the present tense form meaning "to put," but it is also the past tense of lie, meaning "to rest."

I'll lay the keys on the kitchen table. John lay awake last night thinking about how he would spend the fifty dollars.

lie (to rest) lay (to put)
lies lays
laying lying
lay laid
(have) lain (have) laid

Another especially troublesome form of lie is lying, the present participle of lie. Lying may be used with both animate and inanimate objects.
The scissors are lying on the desk. 
Tourists are lying on the beach getting sunburned.

May I Have an "M," Please?
By The Grammar Guru

So you're a contestant on Wheel of Fortune? How are you going to request your consonants and vowels?
"May I have a a, please?" "May I have an a, please?"
"May I have a s, please?" "May I have an s, please?"

Just follow these simple rules.
Use a before letters and words with an initial consonant sound: "May I have a a, please?" The letter u is a vowel, but when pronounced, it has an initial consonant sound.
Use an before letters and words with an initial vowel sound: "May I have an s, please?" The letter s and several other consonants have an initial vowel sound (f, h, l, m, n, r, s, and x).

With words and initialisms, the same principles apply:
a university
a historical occasion
a master's degree
a Saturday game
a one-hour appointment

an understanding
an honorary degree
an MBA degree
an SAT score of 1000
an ordinary person

United We Stand.
Pronouns – There’s No Substitute for Them
By Mamie Webb Hixon

A LOT is two words! I repeat: A LOT is two words.

Despite the overwhelming popularity of spelling this article-noun combination as one word, alot is still not recognized in dictionaries, in handbooks, or on computer spell checkers as one word. And despite the appearance of this non-word everywhere - on business marquees, in newspapers, in business letters, in memorandums, and in high school and college students’ papers - alot is not a correct spelling.

Think about it! If a lot were one word, doesn’t it stand to reason that the article a could be combined with almost any noun to yield other nonsense words such as alittle, abunch, afew: the list is inexhaustible. Perhaps, those who insist on spelling a lot as one word are thinking about words such as a piece and anew, which are in fact spelled as one word. The only one-word a lot is alot – spelled a l o t.

What Is “Good English”?“Good English” is most likely to be familiar to the greatest number of people; it is the English used in textbooks, published documents, reputable magazines and newspapers, and academic and business writing. “Good English” is not only the yardstick by which the distance between what is said and what is meant is measured; it is also the template the communicator may use to improve the accuracy and the credibility of his renderings. Though there is no governing board of linguists or grammarians, or even a blueprint for writing or speaking, careful writers and speakers try to conform to the dicta of authorities: standard usage handouts with prescriptive rules of grammar, standard dictionaries with usage notes based on common practice and universal acceptance, and general conservative usage used by most educated people.

THE WRITING LABORATORY (51/157)
UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA
850/474-2229 (PAPER READING)
850/474-2129 (GRAMMAR HOTLINE)
850/474-2029 (LAB ASSISTANTS)
E-MAIL: WRITELAB@UWF.EDU
FAX: 850/857-6305
INTERNET: WWW.UWF.EDU/WRITELAB
Mamie Webb Hixon, Director
Phone: 850/474-2987
The Write Advice is a publication of the University of West Florida’s Writing Laboratory.
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Assistant Editor Doug Moen
Typographer Livvy Mullins

Every man should help his wife with housework.
Fill in the blank with a third-person pronoun.
Call 474-2129 for the answer.