

Centre for Continuing Education

Writing clearly in good English

Bob Bolitho

Dates

Tuesday 20 & Wednesday 21 October

Time

9am – 4pm

Overview

Purists may moralise about endless English usage errors. Most readers are more forgiving but do care when persistent usage issues cause them to struggle with a writer's logic and clarity. Clarity suffers when, as writers, we use wrong words, questionable grammar, random punctuation and illogical links between ideas. This course helps writers to understand what today's readers expect of workplace writing and to express themselves clearly in good English.

Content

Emphasising clarity, the course concentrates on usage issues important enough for today's workplace writers to worry about. Topics include:

- how language evolves
- who sets the rules that tell us what is right and what is wrong
- how sentence elements are related and work together to convey meaning
- how the relationship between sentence elements can become distant, broken or illogical
- knowing when certain words and word groups are essential, incidental or unnecessary
- words that writers confuse with other similar words
- how passive voice can cloud meaning
- knowing when the reader needs more information and when the reader needs less
- the role of punctuation in linking and separating sentence elements
- the role of punctuation in clarifying meaning.

Learning objectives and outcomes

As a result of this course, you should be able to:

- distinguish between words that sound or look alike but have different meanings
- distinguish between good English usage and pedantry
- deal with the grey areas of grammar
- understand which words link ideas
- avoid vague, inaccurate and illogical links between ideas
- achieve harmony between sentence elements
- understand the principles of agreement, parallelism, voice, modification and ambiguity
- progress beyond hit-and-miss punctuation based on speaking and breathing patterns.

"The views expressed in this course/activity are those of the presenter and do not necessarily represent the views of The Australian National University"

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Recommended for

Workplace writers who care about the clarity and quality of their written work and want commonsense guidance on which usage issues are the most important in developing strong writing skills.

Short biography

Bob Bolitho has 40 years' experience as an editor. In senior government positions, he was responsible for establishing editorial policy and style and implementing training programs in English language skills. For more than a decade he has combined freelance editing and training, presenting in-house writing courses to business and government in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Canberra. Bob is co-author of the Collins Dove publication *The Guide to Australian Usage and Punctuation*.

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