

# Common Grammar Errors

in theses and dissertations

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February 2011

# The Oxford Comma

... this,  
that,  
and the  
other.

- The Oxford comma is the final comma before *and* or *or*.
- While the Oxford comma is optional in some styles and consciously omitted in journalistic style, the APA manual requires its use. Even if your thesis is not in APA, using the Oxford comma is a good idea because it improves clarity.

# Example

- In the patient care arena, the three most important common clinical applications that involve the use of PDAs are access to inpatient and outpatient data, integration with billing systems, and access to clinical decision-based support tools.

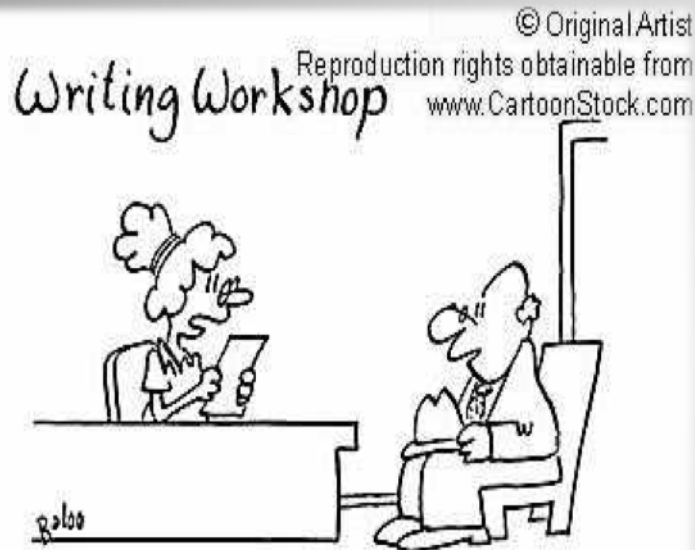
# Because of / Due to

- Use *because of* interchangeably with *as a result of*.
- **Because of** the storm, campus is closed.
- Use *due to* interchangeably with *caused by*.
- Make sure that a “be verb” (*am, is, are, was, or were*) is in the sentence.
- The campus closure **is due to** the bad weather.

# Examples

- The internal validity of the study was reduced ~~due to~~ because of the participants' previous media exposure of the content presented in the scenario.
- This behavior may be due to recurrent thoughts of a negative event.

# Passive Voice



"IT'S A NICE STORY, MR. FERGUS, BUT WHY DO YOU ALWAYS WRITE IN THE PASSIVE VOICE?"

"I SUPPOSE BECAUSE I'VE BEEN A TAXPAYER ALL MY LIFE."

- Whenever possible, you want to use the active voice. Do so by putting the subject of the sentence at the beginning.
- Jim threw the ball.
- The passive voice is confusing because it sometimes leaves the subject out entirely. Even if the subject is present, the sentence is needlessly long when it could be succinct.
- The ball was thrown (by Jim).

# Examples

- For the purpose of this study, the term *at-risk reader* **is used** “to refer to all students who, for whatever reason, read below grade level and who, because of this, struggle to comprehend the textbooks and other content materials assigned in school” (Reinking, McKenna, Labbo, & Kieffer, 1998, p.15 ).
- Reinking, McKenna, Labbo, and Kieffer (1998) **use** the term *at-risk reader* “to refer to...” (p. 15).

# Abbreviations<sup>®</sup>

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- In APA style, you are supposed to introduce the abbreviation once at the beginning of the document.
- You must use the abbreviation throughout the entire document (you may reintroduce at the beginning of a chapter).
- You may not use an abbreviation at the beginning of a sentence; reword the sentence so the abbreviation is not at the beginning.



- **The** TAM is specifically designed to study Information Technology (IT) adoption and use and to predict and explain user acceptance of information technologies (Davis, 1993; Morris & Dillon, 1997).
- **Tinker, Staudt, and Walton (2002) have shown that** PDA software promotes cooperative learning and data analysis activities in the classroom.

# Anthropomorphism

- Do not attribute human characteristics to inanimate objects.
- The study found...
- Remember that the researchers are the ones drawing conclusions, not the text itself.
- (In the study,) Jones et al. found...

