Grammar and Mechanics:

Three Grammar Tips
&
Four Mechanics’ Tips

Offered by the Center and Learning
Three Grammar Tips

- Agreement
  - Subject and Verb
  - Verbs with amounts, fields of study, and other special nouns
  - Verbs with title, company names, and words as themselves

- Active and Passive Voice

- Non-Sexist Pronouns
Subject and Verb Agreement

- First Person
  - Singular: **I see** a field of fireflies.
  - Plural: **We see** a field of fireflies.

- Second Person
  - **You see** a shower of sparks.

- Third Person
  - The **scientist sees** a cloud of cosmic dust.
  - The **scientists see** a cloud of dust.
Verbs with Amounts

- Amounts as subjects = singular verbs
  - **Two hours** *is* not enough time to finish.
  - **Three hundred dollars** *is* what we must pay.
  - **Two miles** *is* a short sprint for some serious joggers.
  - **Three-quarters of an inch** *is* needed for a perfect fit.
Verbs with Fields of Study

- Field of study as subjects = singular verbs
  - Statistics *is* required of science majors.
  - Statistics *show* that a teacher shortage is coming.
Verbs with Special Nouns

- Special nouns as subjects = mostly singular verbs
  - The *news* *gets* better each day.
  - *Sports is* a good way to guild physical stamina.
  - Three *sports are offered at the recreation center*.
  - Those *slacks* need pressing.
  - That *pair* of slacks *needs* pressing.
  - Two new TV *series are* big hit.
  - A *series of disasters is* plaguing our production.
Verbs with Titles & Company Names

- Titles as subject = singular verbs
  - *Breathing Lessons* by Anne Tyler is a prize-winning novel.
- Company names as subject = singular verbs
  - *Cohn Brothers* boxes and delivers fine art.
Verbs with Words Themselves

- Words themselves as subjects = singular verbs
  - *We implies* that everyone is included.
  - During the Vietnam War, *protective reaction strikes was* a euphemism for *bombing.*
Active and Passive Voice

- **Active voice** = subject performs action
  - Most clams *live* in salt water.
  - They *burrow* into the sandy bottoms of shallow waters.

- **Passive voice** = subject is acted upon
  - Clams *are considered* a delicacy by many people.
  - Some types of clams *are* highly *valued* by seashell collectors.
Non-sexist Pronouns

- Use neutral pronouns
  - Everyone hopes that he or she will win a scholarship.
  - Many students hope that they will win a scholarship.
  - Everyone hopes to win a scholarship.
Three Mechanics’ Tips

- Commas
- Colons
- Semicolons
Commas: Items in a List

- Academic style
  - I can’t believe you went to Disneyland, Six Flags, and Universal Studios all in one day.

- Journalistic style
  - He likes mustard, onions and chili on his hotdogs.
Commas: Introductory Phrases or Clauses

- After we completed our whirlwind visit to all three amusement parks, we fell into a deep sleep for twelve hours.
- To Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse is not a stranger.
- To hotdogs, chili is a natural accompaniment.
Commas: Nonrestrictive Elements

- **An energetic person**, Anna Hom enjoys jogging.
- Anna Hom, **who is in excellent physical condition**, enjoys jogging.
- Anna Hom enjoys jogging, **which is also Adam’s favorite pastime**.
Commas: Coordinating Conjunctions

- The sky turned dark gray, **and** the wind died suddenly.
- The November morning had just begun, **but** it looked like dusk.
- Shopkeepers closed their stores early, **for** they wanted to get home.
- Soon high winds would start, **or** thick snow would begin silently.
- The firehouse whistle blew four times, **so** everyone knew a blizzard was coming.
Commases: Coordinate Adjectives

- The **huge, restless** crowd waited for the concert to begin.
- Hundreds of **roaring, cheering, yelling fans** filled the stadium.
- Only corn grown for popcorn pops consistently because all other kinds of corn lack **tough, enable-like** shells.
Commas: Quoted Words

- Speaking of ideal love, the poet William Black wrote, “Love seeketh not itself to please.”
- “My love is a fever,” said William Shakespeare about love’s passion.
- “I love no love,” proclaimed the poet Mary Coleridge, “but thee.”
Colons: Listed Items

- If you really want to lose weight, you must do three things: eat smaller portions, exercise, and drink lots of water.
- The students demanded the following: an expanded menu in the cafeteria, improved janitorial services, and more up-to-date textbooks.
Colons: Appositives & Quotations

- Appositive
  - Only cats are likely to approve of one old-fashioned remedy for cuts: a lotion of catnip, butter, and sugar.

- Quotation
  - The little boy in E. T. did say something neat: “How do you explain school to a higher intelligence?”
Semicolons: Independent Clauses

- The desert known as Death Valley became a US National Park in 1994; it used to be a US National Monument.
- This is my husband’s second marriage; it’s the first one for me.
Semicolons:
Sentence Structures & Lists

- When the peacock has presented his back, the spectator will usually begin to walk around him to get a front view; **but** the peacock will continue to turn so that no front view is possible.
- Our Constitution is in actual operation; everything appears to promise that it will last; **but** in this world, nothing is certain but death and taxes.
- For anything worth having one must pay the price; and the price is always work, patience, love, self-sacrifice.