

Redundancies—Be sure you are not saying the same thing more than once. For example: ATM machine, PIN number, SAT test.

Singular v. plural—There must be subject/verb agreement in sentences. If the subject is singular, the verb must be, too. Words such as class, committee, crowd, family, group and team are singular. *“The Unit reported its progress on the project. It has collected \$1,000 for the cause.”*

Toward—The word is “toward,” not “towards.” *“We moved toward our goal with 99.7 percent.”* Also for “forward,” “afterward,” “beside,” and “backward.” For example: “beside” means to be next to or in addition. “Besides,” means in addition to something.

Use of contractions—It is perfectly OK to use contractions in your writing. The apostrophe in the contraction takes the place of the letter that is being omitted: who’s (who is/has); he’s (he is/has); you’re (you are/were); it’s (it is); she’d (she had/would); isn’t (is it not?); don’t (do not).

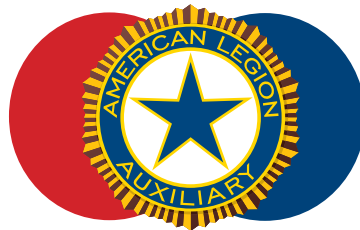
Vague—Avoid using words that do not specify/define. Examples are many, very, good, nice, and thing.

Words easily confused—Be sure to check the dictionary on words you might get confused: accept/except, advice/advise, all ready/already, principle/principal, then/than, a while/awhile, who/whom.

Xerox and other trademarked products—Do not use a brand name when you don’t specifically mean that product. Examples: Kleenex-tissue; Q-tip-cotton swabs; Vaseline-petroleum jelly; Coke-soda.

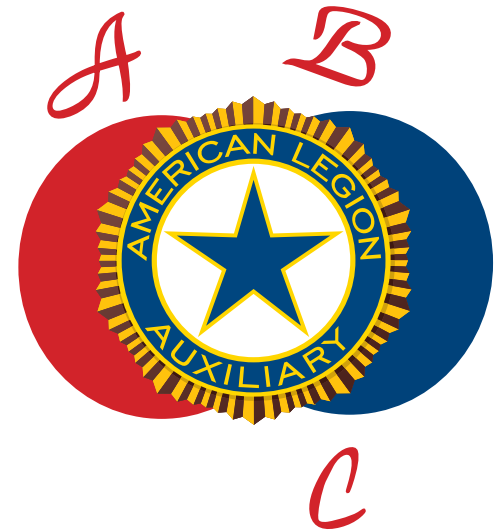
Years—1990s means the entire decade; 1990’s is possessive of the year 1990. Centuries are not capitalized.

Zoom—Don’t zoom through your work. Take your time and plan it out. Make an outline or organize your thoughts in some way. Also, don’t be a speedy proofreader. Read it out loud. Look up words and figures you aren’t comfortable with. If you stumble on a sentence, your reader probably will, too.



Prepared by American Legion Auxiliary Public Relations

Auxiliary *Alphabet* of Writing Tips



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Atribution—Make sure to give credit to the source. “*According to the 2002-2003 Auxiliary Fact Sheet, members served more than 2.8 million people.*” In reports, give specific recognition by mentioning Unit names and numbers whenever possible: “*Unit 72, Aberdeen, Miss., donated . . .*”

Balance—There should be parallel structure in your sentences. “*Emily selected members for the committee, gave them assignments, and wished them well.*”

Capitalization—Be sure to properly capitalize proper nouns, but not common nouns. “*The committee decided that its chairman, Carol Member, would represent the Department at its convention.*”

Dangling participles—Make sure your participle is modifying the right word, not dangling. Instead of, “*Assigning seats to everyone, the room was set for the meeting,*” make it “*Assigning seats to everyone, Susie set the room for the meeting.*”

Effect v. affect—Effect is commonly used as a noun; affect is generally used as a verb. “*The effect of the bylaws’ change won’t be known for several years. It will affect the membership chairmen the most.*”

Fact checking—Be sure you check your facts before passing them on as truths. Pay special attention to information taken from the Internet.

Get to the point—If you don’t quickly make your point and tell your readers what to expect from the piece, you will lose them. Don’t use vague words or sentences that fail to describe or inform.

His/Her, He/She—There is no such thing as a his/her or he/she. You must write them both out. Also, don’t substitute with “their.” Their is plural, not singular. “*The person must sign his or her form before he or she will be admitted to the event.*”

Internet terminology—According to the Associated Press Stylebook, the following Internet words are spelled as: Internet, e-mail, home page, login, logoff, online, Web site, Web page.

Jargon—Avoid use of vocabulary and idioms known by only those in a particular group or occupation when you are writing for a mass audience (PNP, NLIC, C&Y). Spell out abbreviations on first reference (Past National President, National Leadership & Information Conference, Children & Youth).

Know your readers—Be sure that you are communicating with your audience. Use appropriate language; keep to the facts they need to know; give suitable examples.

Latin abbreviations—When you use (etc., e.g., i.e.) know what they mean: Etc. = and so forth; e.g. = for example; i.e. = that is.

Misspelled words—Use a dictionary to spell check and proof your work. Commonly misspelled words include: harass, receive, desperate, definitely, occasion, judgment and liaison.

Numbers—Spell out numbers one through nine. Use numerals for 10 and beyond. However, if the number is at the beginning of the sentence, spell it out.

Over v. more than—“Over” typically is spatial: “*The National President flew over Kansas City.*” “More than” is most often used with numbers and can imply a comparison: “*The National President flew more than 30,000 miles this year, which is much more than you did.*”

Possessives—Possessive nouns show ownership. Most often they are formed for singular and plural nouns with ‘s; if the sentence already ends in s, it is usually s’. “Its” is possessive case. “It’s” means, it is. “*The children’s books, donated by the Whites, were donated to the hospital’s library.*”

Quotations—Quote marks indicate a direct quote or signal a nickname, or unfamiliar terms. Punctuation goes inside the quotation marks. “*Sue Member said, ‘We’ve got to get more members to meet our target goal.’*”