



The DREADED comma splice—what is it? We say a sentence has a “comma splice” when its clauses (or “phrases” or “parts”) have been improperly linked by a comma. The question is: what is improper?

Here is an example: “Do what you love, the money will follow.” Why is the comma incorrect? Douglas Cazort, author of *Under The Grammar Hammer: The 25 Most Important Grammar*

Mistakes and How to avoid Them, explains: ...someone in our history decided that a comma couldn't join two independent clauses (or separate them adequately, depending on how you look at it). It's as if we're dealing with a problem in strength of materials, and the comma isn't strong enough to fasten the joint. So, we have to bring Rosie the Riveter back from World War II to slam in a period over the comma (producing a “stronger” semicolon) or rivet a period in place of the comma (creating two separate sentences).

So the correct punctuation is: “Do what you love; the money will follow.” or

“Do what you love. The money will follow.” Two other possibilities are: “Do what you love **and** the money will follow.” and “Do what you love **because** the money will follow.”

And which of these is the best? That depends on who you are, what you mean, and who your audience is! As always, meaning is our first concern.

Like to hear more of Cazort's witty wisdom about grammar? You can find his book (published in 1997 by Lowell House) in most bookstores.

WRITING across the Curriculum

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Writing Around Richmond

The Administrative Fellow by Renée Macbeth, fellow

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Since its beginnings at the University of Richmond, the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program has attempted to fill a need in the area of writing and writing education. Through writing tutors and fellows, the program has reached out to both students and faculty. For students, tutors and fellows have provided insight, helping students become better writers. For faculty, the program (through lunches and interactions with writing fellows) has provided insight and advice on how to teach writing, evaluate writing, and create writing assignments. As the

program has grown, new fellow positions have been created to serve new and emerging needs of the campus and the program. One way in which the program has responded to these needs is the creation of the administrative fellow position.

The position of administrative fellow grew out of transition. In 1998, as Daniel Hocutt was leaving the positions as Writing Fellows Coordinator and Terry Dolson was assuming that role, many things involved in running and transitioning the program successfully needed to be done. Since Daniel could not do them himself, the first administrative fellow

was assigned, whose tasks included updating and creating web pages for the program and light clerical work. Since that time the position has evolved to also include working on the newsletter, updating the database, and working on any special projects that arise in the course of the semester. The administrative fellow works very closely with Terry Dolson to insure the smooth handling of the program

As the needs of the university and the program change, the WAC program has been ready and willing to adapt. By expanding the work that can be handled via adding a fellow, WAC is working toward being the best resource it can be for the university community. Beyond that, the position of administrative fellow is a wonderful opportunity to serve WAC in another way.



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Where the Rubber Meets the Road: Comp Theory and Writing Center Practice by David Gordon, writing fellow

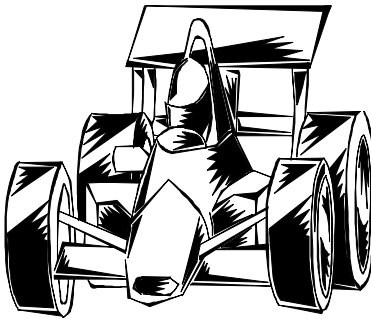
The aspects of composition theory that have affected my work as a writing tutor the most have been the essays detailing the problem of students learning to write for the university. Specifically, Mike Rose's "The Language of Exclusion" and David Bartholomae's "Inventing the University" remind us that very often students come to college with preconceived notions about what is expected of them at certain levels with certain subjects, and will forsake original thought in the name of what they think is "higher order writing."

From essays I've commented on for ENG 376, to real papers I've worked with in the writing center, I've seen Rose and Bartholomae's ideas in real world applications time and again. I now see that, while respecting the professor and his or her assignment, we must tactfully suggest to students that, even in the face of a college campus's "bastard discourse," there is room for what Composition guru, Peter Elbow, calls "real voice."

College writing is decreasingly about plot summaries and article abstracts and is increasingly about critical and analytical thinking. To this end, professors do expect a certain level of understanding and vocabulary from students as they enter the university. Those stu-

dents who have mastered the rhetoric of a particular discipline are welcomed and respected by teachers as being among the brightest of a given freshman class. Meanwhile others, perhaps no less bright or fluid in their thinking, struggle with issues of grammar, syntax, or form: crucial skills in the minds of wizened educators.

Rose offers the long history of grammar education in the United States as evidence that, although with less frequency than in the past, profes-



sors still look at grammatical issues as a measure of the writers' overall worth, "The narrow focus was made even more narrow by a fetish for 'scientific tabulation.' One could measure the degree to which students mastered their writing skills by tallying their mistakes."

During my writing center observations, I saw over and over professors who seemed more interested in the grammatical correctness of student papers than in the substance of

their argument. I do agree to some extent that grammar is absolutely critical in our general understanding of a piece of writing. But I was disheartened to see many students I worked with, so eager to be accepted by the university as legitimate writers, begin abandoning their often powerful theses in order to focus more on upholding obscure and finite grammatical paradigms. The responsibility then falls upon the writing center to walk a fine line between working with what a particular professor has asked the tutor to mention and suggesting corrections the center tutor knows the paper needs. Because of examples such as these, I've noticed that it is not as easy as Bartholomae and Rose suggest to welcome students into the university discourse, however much we may want and be able to show them how to do that. Too often, the writing center and WAC program are put in awkward positions that force us to remain silent about what might make a paper truly great in the face of what the instructor considers to be a more overarching ideal.

Even for those professors who don't hold grammar and syntax in as high a regard, Bartholomae's issue of "knowledge-telling" also becomes an area of concern. As he reminds us, "education has failed to involve students in scholarly projects. . . Much of the written work that students do is test-taking, report or summary – work that

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places them outside the official discourse." Some Core essay assignments are well written to invite the students to do some original and creative thinking, but it is interesting to note that many papers I saw did not follow the assignment, instead falling back on what probably worked in high school: a plot summary with a smattering of commentary on the events of the novel by the student writer. It is possible that the idea of mimicking the words of others had been so inculcated that the writer naturally wrote gobs of summary and little in the way of analysis.

With the seminars to help teachers write new and better assignments becoming increasingly common and with suggestions such as

entry-level writing courses for individual disciplines, the university is certainly moving in an interesting direction. At the writing center, as our professors and supervisors remind us, our consistent and primary goals for every paper are a thesis and a piece of writing that follows the assignment. But once a tutor has identified these issues, or has pointed the student in the appropriate direction for finding them for himself, the tutor might begin to suggest some progressive writing strategies. Here is where Peter Elbow's thoughts on voice appear to make sense: "People often lack any voice at all in their writing, even fake voice, because they stop so often in the act of writing a sentence and worry and

change their minds about which word to use." It certainly isn't our job to write student papers for them but it is our job to make students aware of more progressive, innovative, and viable methods of constructing written work, particularly for those students who come to the center of their own free will.



If you are interested in reading further about the issues identified here, visit the ENG 376 course web site at: www.richmond.edu/~writing/376.html. For access to password-restricted pages, contact jessid@richmond.edu.



Congratulations Graduates!!

**Nancy Annett
Scott Barghaan
Darden Copeland
Susan "Happy" Herbert
Christian Hofer
Renee Macbeth
Jennifer Rutkoski**

**Amma Appiah
Lauren Coapstick
Jonathan Elmi
Glen Henkle
David Lynn
Matthew Perrine
Laurie Sindlinger**

Marley Walsh