



Friday @ the Center: April 27, 2007

Writing for Everyone: Part 9

GLOBAL TIP: In the earlier stages of writing, we often have a vague sense of what we want to say that consists of a lot of ideas, phrases, and details chaotically whirling around in the food processor of our brain. One helpful way to begin the writing process is by jotting down all of these random thoughts—in no particular order—just to get them on paper and out of the food processor. Then, sit down with someone and talk. Begin with “The major thing I’m trying to say is . . .” and see what comes out. This can be a useful strategy to use when you are meeting with a struggling student writer. First have her jot down her disconnected ideas; then have her talk you through her major goal.

FINISHING TIP: The ninth most frequent punctuation error in college writing, according to Lunsford’s research, is **a missing or misplaced apostrophe**. This is an error that I find all the time, in all kinds of writing. Sometimes I wonder if new computer keyboards are missing the apostrophe. And text-messaging certainly eschews apostrophes. But perhaps it is simple uncertainty (does the apostrophe go before or after the -s?) that causes so many writers to omit this handy little punctuation mark. To make a noun possessive (indicating ownership), the writer must add an apostrophe and a -s to a singular noun and only an apostrophe to a plural noun; i.e., “The first **baseman’s** foot rose from the bag in a disastrous error” and “The **Mariners’** record is already a cause for despair.” For those cases where we find a plural noun that does not end in -s, use an apostrophe and -s: “The **men’s** uniforms were a dingy white.” A key concept is that apostrophes indicate possessiveness, not plurality. If we were to speak of my family, we would say, “the **Gallaghers**.” No apostrophe. But to speak of our house, we’d say, “the **Gallaghers’** house.”

April Teaching Professor

The April issue of *The Teaching Professor* has been sent out to department chairs and school deans. It contains a sure-to-be controversial essay, “Why I Refuse Student Emails,” an interpretation of common student comments on course evaluations, and an article arguing for the value of faculty self-disclosure in the classroom. As your chair or dean where you can find a copy.

Weter Lecture News

Missed Todd Rendleman’s Weter Lecture on Evangelicals in American film? Contact Jaclyn Stockton (jstock1@spu.edu) if you would like to receive a printed copy of the lecture, or else watch the entire lecture for yourself on SPU iTunes University next week when it becomes available.

Interested in presenting a Weter Lecture of your own? Faculty Affairs is currently receiving proposals for the 2008 Weter Lecture. Proposals are due in the Office of Academic Affairs by **Monday, May 14**. Click [information on the lecture and guidelines for proposals](#) for details.

Cheers,

Susan

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