



Elements of Style Syllabus

Course Goals

1 Learn and internalize Strunk & White's rules for Usage, Composition, and Style.

Students read Strunk & White's classic "Elements of Style," learn the difference between Usage, Composition, and Style, and internalize the rules through quizzes, games, writing, and revising.

2 Write clear, engaging, persuasive prose, following Strunk & White.

Students learn how to apply the rules in Strunk & White to real writing situations, across various writing genres.

3 Hone editing and revising skills in peer review.

By reading and commenting on their peers' essays, students enhance their understanding of Strunk & White's rules, and their ability to apply them.

Course Topics

1 11 Usage Rules

Students learn the 11 iconic Strunk & White Usage Rules, including those related to comma use, syntax, subject-verb agreement, pronoun use, and other common punctuation errors.

2 11 Principles of Composition

Students learn Strunk & White's 11 Principles of Composition, including those that instruct paragraphing, composition design, using concrete language, using the active voice, and the famous: "Omit needless words."

3 Strunk & White's Notes on Style

Students learn Strunk & White's various suggestions on style, such as avoiding overstating points, and avoiding the use of qualifiers. Students will consider when and where these more subjective rules apply.

4 Writing to report

Students learn to write brief newspaper articles, and develop a camp newspaper.

5 Writing to review

Students learn how to evaluate and assess cultural objects like movies, books, video games, or television shows.

6 Letter writing

Students practice the letter genre, by writing letters to someone or something that likely won't respond.

7 Persuasive writing

Students learn the basics of researched writing, and discuss how to organize and design a persuasive piece, including how to incorporate counterarguments.

8 Peer reviewing

Students read the work of their peers, and learn how to give useful and constructive feedback, as well as to assess their

own writing mistakes.

Course Schedule

Day 1

Introduction

Students are introduced to each other, the instructors, the location director, and the course text by Strunk and White.

Usage, Composition, and Style

Students learn the basic differences between Usage, Composition, and Style for a deeper introduction to Strunk and White.

Rule 1 - Possessive Singulars

Students practice Rule 1: Forming the possessive singular of nouns by adding 's

Rule 2 - Commas in a List

Students practice Rule 2: In a series of three or more terms with a single conjunction, use a comma after each term except the last.

Rule 3 - Parenthetical Expressions

Students practice Rule 3: Enclose parenthetical expressions between commas. They discuss restrictive vs. nonrestrictive clauses.

Cultural Review

Students practice their Usage, Composition, and Style skills by writing a review of a cultural object of their choice. This work is spread out among several days of the class.

Day 2

Micro-Review Assignment

Students practice condensing writing and summarizing key information by writing micro-reviews of a cultural object.

Rule 4: Commas Before Independent Clauses

Students practice Rule 4: Place a comma before a conjunction introducing an independent clause. They review sentence structure and the difference between an independent and a dependent clause.

Rule 5: Avoid Comma Splices

Students learn Rule 5: Do not join independent clauses with a comma. This Rule is also sometimes referred to as a "comma splice." This builds on the review and workshops done with Rule 4.

Rule 6: Do Not Break Sentences

Students learn Rule 6: Do not break sentences in two. This builds directly from Rules 4 and 5.

Continue Reviews

Students continue writing their reviews of a cultural object.

Discuss Rules 7 & 8

Students practice Usage Rules 7 & 8. This reinforces lessons related to sentence structure and dependent/independent

clauses.

Day 3

Finish First Draft

Students finish writing the first draft of their reviews.

Usage Rule 9-11

Students practice Usage Rules 9-11 regarding subject-verb agreement, pronoun-antecedent agreement, and participial phrases.

Peer Review

Students are organized into small groups to conduct a peer review of their recent writing.

Final Drafts

Students incorporate feedback and finish the reviews.

Day 4

Newspaper Assignment

Students begin planning for a newspaper that will be jointly written, edited, and published by the class, and then distributed throughout the camp.

Usage Rules Review

Students quickly review the Usage Rules they have learned by putting some sentences up on the board.

Newspaper Article

Students continue working on their Newspaper.

Day 5

Complete Research

Students finish their research and begin writing an article for the camp-wide newspaper.

Composition Rules 19-22

Students briefly discuss Strunk and White Composition Rules 19-22.

Discuss Newspaper Articles

Students discuss in small groups and then as a class how the articles are shaping up and what the lay-out and organization of the newspaper should be.

Peer Review of Articles

Students peer review each other's articles using the Usage Rules they've learned, as well as Composition Rules 13-17.

Day 6

Finish Newspaper Article

Students finish writing or rewriting their articles, and they neatly write final copies for inclusion in the newspaper.

New Yorker Cartoon Game

Students practice writing captions for satirical cartoons for inclusion in the newspaper.

Begin Letter Assignment

Students are introduced to and begin to brainstorm for a Letter to Something/Someone Who is Unlikely to Respond assignment.

Letters to McDonalds

As a break from Letters, and to get juices flowing, students can practice writing mini-comment letters to companies.

Day 7

Continue Letters

Students continue to write letters and practice composition rules.

Peer Review of Letters

Students practice their Usage, Composition, and Style skills by responding to their peers' writing, and giving comments.

Finish Letters and Respond to Them

Students make final copies of their letters, and then practice their writing skills by responding to the letters.

Day 8

Persuasive Essay: Research

Students begin working on the final writing assignment, a persuasive essay that uses research to prove their points.

Quizzes on Usage Rules

Students develop mini-quizzes to test each other on the Usage Rules.

Begin Persuasive Essay

Students begin to plan out and write their persuasive essays after completing their research.

Day 9

Finish Persuasive Essays

Students finish their persuasive essays.

Peer Review of Persuasive Essays

Students use everything they have learned about S & W to provide peer review comments on the final essays.

Final Copy of Persuasive Essay

Once students have gotten feedback, they incorporate it and write out a neat final copy.

Day 10

Considering the Counterargument

Students listen to and take notes based on the other essays, and then incorporate that information into their essays.

Finalize Persuasive Essays

Student incorporate counterarguments and wrap up their final assignment.

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