

- Take things slowly — think carefully and repeatedly about what you want to say and how you want to say it. Don't be surprised if your writing gets less clear before it gets better; you may need to write many drafts!
- Avoid fancy-pants language. Used to impress, it tends to muddy, not clarify. If you can explain theories and arguments in such a way that your colleagues understand you, you're in pretty good shape.
- Choose your words with an eye toward a straightforward account of what a philosopher thinks, or how you can solve a problem using a philosopher's theory.
- Arrange your sentences in such a way that they conceptually connect with each other. If you're building to a connection, you need to use language that reflects your aim. Remember, grammar is really important. If you don't write grammatically, or your writing is otherwise ambiguous, you leave your reader open to interpret as s/he sees fit, or to simply shrug and say, "I have no idea what the author is trying to say."

- "The amount of grammar and usage error's today is astounding. Not to mention spelling. If I was a teacher, I'd feel badly that less and less students seem to understand the basic principals of good writing. Neither the oldest high school students nor the youngest kindergartner know proper usage. A student often thinks they can depend on word processing programs to correct they're errors. Know way!
- "Watching TV all the time, its easy to see why their having trouble. TV interferes with them studying and it's strong affect on children has alot to due with their grades. There's other factors, too, including the indifference of parents like you and I. A Mom or Dad often doesn't know grammer themselves. We should tell are children to study hard like we did at they're age and to watch less TV then their classmates." (courtesy of Rob Kyff www.robkyff.com)
- This example is from a student (not at Pierce) to a former professor: "i need help i am writing a essay on writing i work for this company and my boss want me to help improve the workers writing skills can yall help me with some information thank you" (www.grammar.com/grammar/grammarhelp/grammarhelp.html)
- This example is from a systems analyst to her supervisor at a high-tech corporation based in Palo Alto, Calif.: "I updated the Status report for the four discrepancies Lennie forward us via e-mail (they in Barry file), to make sure my logic was correct It seems we provide Murray with incorrect information ... However after verifying controls on JBL - JBL has the indicator as B-??-? - I wanted to make sure with the recent changes - I processed today - before Murray make the changes again on the mainframe to 'C'." (www.grammar.com/grammar/grammarhelp/grammarhelp.html)

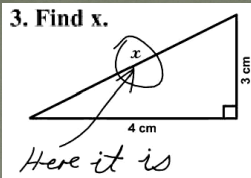
Some Grammar Basics

- Possessives, Contractions, and Homophonic Words:
 - It's going to be hot today.
 - What a cute puppy! What's its name?
 - You're not very nice.
 - I like your shirt.
 - They're a bunch of jerks.
 - I like their program.
 - Look over there.
 - I complimented him on his complementary tie.
- Subject-verb and verb-tense agreement.
- Parts of speech:
 - If my score is higher **than** yours, **then** I am going to be happy.
- Punctuation:
 - Know the difference between a colon and a semicolon.
 - Know the difference between a comma and a semicolon.
 - Know the difference between a comma and a period.

Grammatical Infelicities Can Yield Bad Inferences

- Hypostatize: To ascribe substance or real existence to mental constructs or concepts. (Similar error results when one anthropomorphizes.)
 - The government needs to get its hands out of my pocket!
- Equivocate: To shift the meaning of a term from one iteration to another, resulting in an erroneous inference.
 - Man is rational. No woman is a man. So, no woman is rational.
- Amphiboly: A grammatical error that leads to erroneous inference.
 - He ate the cookies on the couch. That's so gross – do you know how dirty that couch is?

3. Find x .



Let's eat Grandma
or
Let's eat, Grandma

PUNCTUATION

It saves lives

A Note on Style and Grammar: 1990's or 1990s? An historical or a historical?

- Writing styles change, as do grammar rules. People disagree over usage, so it's not essential that you know every style trend.
- Knowing why there is disagreement, however, is quite useful.
 - 1990's or 1990s?
 - 1, 2, and 3 or 1, 2 and 3?

Cohesion

Coherence

- Disconnected, disjointed ideas lead to confusion, and you want to avoid confusion when your aim is clarity and correctness. In other words, it's one thing to show that some concept, argument, or theory is confusing, but it's another to confuse because your writing is unclear or incoherent. When writing is coherent, ideas 'hang' together to form a conceptual web – you can get to any part of the concept, theory, or argument from any other part.
- Your writing can be coherent in several ways when it comes to the structure of a short answer or essay. For example, you can construct an essay in which you start out with a summary of a theory or argument, and then move on to present it in more detail, analyze it, and then discuss problems with it or apply it to solve a problem. Alternatively (but by no means the only alternative), you can start out with a problem, state how the philosopher's theory solves it, and then launch into a detailed account of that theory and solution. What's important is not that you follow this or that structure, but that your writing IS structured in an intelligible way.

- You also need to be sure to focus on what's important. Since we're doing philosophy, our writing should focus exclusively on argument exposition, analysis, and development. Whether or not you think Socrates was an important guy, or that Descartes died while in service to Queen Christina of Sweden is not of philosophical import – at least not as stated. Lots of writers new to philosophy engage in this sort of intellectual foreplay, but it has no place in our work.
- Recall that part of writing coherently is connecting ideas. This means you're not going to make lists, e.g., "Frankfurt says x. Frankfurt says y. Frankfurt says z." Unless you're going to pull a conceptual thread through that list, you haven't distinguished reporting on Frankfurt from thinking about what it means. Consider a fable. There is the story, and then its underlying meaning. The story without the meaning isn't terribly interesting... You can simply report on Plato's Ring of Gyges, but what is philosophically important is it means, and what problems can be extracted from it.

Correctness

- When you get things right in a philosophical essay, it's partly because you've accurately reflected a particular view. For example, the claim, "Plato was an empiricist," is inaccurate. "Plato advanced the theory of recollection," is accurate.
- Correctness is difficult to achieve if you're not sure what a philosopher thinks. To help you work through your confusion, re-write passages, but be sure to write grammatical sentences. You'll find paying attention to how you construct the sentence helps you work through concepts toward a more accurate understanding of the text.
