**Pause for punctuation**

by Tiffany Williams

Writing Assistant

So you’ve turned in a paper that you thought was spotless, and your teacher has handed it back to you, bloodied by a red pen and with notations about punctuation. Well, forget about punctuation for the moment. Think about driving. Even if you don’t drive, try to picture it. What happens if you put a whole bunch of drivers on the road and take away the road signs?

BAM! There are going to be a lot of car wrecks.

This is essentially what happens when someone reads your paper and you haven’t put in the necessary punctuation. If readers can’t tell where to slow down, pause, and stop, then they won’t be able to make sense of what you’re trying to say.

“I’m here to give you some road signs.”

Something you may see scribbled on your paper is ‘Sentence Boundaries,’ or ‘SB’ for short. Also, there is ‘Run-on,’ also seen as ‘RO.’ These two marks mean pretty much the same thing: that your sentences run into each other, much like cars at a four-way crossing...without stop signs.

The key thing to do here is to make sure that you construct complete sentences, with a subject and a verb and whatever else you need, and then end it. It’s one complete thought.

“...and then take a deep breath. You can look at commas as the speedbumps of punctuation; when you’re reading aloud, you slow down when you get to them.”

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---see Special Investigation page four
When Simone Federman, a theater director from New York, walked onto the Gavilan Campus for a week-long stay as an artist in residence this November, many may have wondered what acting had to do with writing. Students soon found out.

Research shows when people feel more connected to their physical bodies, their intellectual capabilities increase. For writers, acting can open new ways of thinking and help physicalize and flesh-out abstract ideas. A writer or reader that performs something on stage one day may find him or herself being more concrete and expansive on the page the next.

This concept was tested with Federman’s visit. She led a creative writing class where she used acting exercises to help fiction writers better understand plot, conflict and character development. She played similar games in an acting workshop with students who had already made the connection between their physical and academic bodies. And she conducted a week-long rehearsal with students in an English 250/260 learning community, culminating in a live performance of monologues that had been written earlier in the semester.

Many participants said the playfulness they felt acting gave led to classroom.

—by Kimberly Jean Smith
Writing Center Coordinator

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bud by providing more attention and education to the issue in classrooms.

What is plagiarism?
Standard definitions state that plagiarism is the unauthorized use or close imitation of the words and ideas of another author, and the subsequent passing off of them as one’s own original work.

All of the following are considered plagiarism:

* Turning in someone else’s work as your own.
* Copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit.
* Not putting a quotation in quotation marks.
* Not being truthful about where you got the source of a quotation.

* Just changing the words of a source but keeping the main ideas and content without giving credit.
* Copying so much from a source that more of its content is theirs then yours, whether you give credit or not.

Also, a common misconception students make is that they think plagiarism is “OK if it’s not taken too far and too often. Nowadays, classes

What Gavilan students say about plagiarism

Most Gavilan students say that they know that plagiarism is wrong. But do any of them actually understand what plagiarism consists of?

One Gavilan student, who wanted to remain anonymous because he was a self-proclaimed plagiarist, said that he thought plagiarism was “OK if it’s not taken too far and too often. Nowadays, classes

--see Plagiarism page four
We recommend


“It’s about how you can take advice from the people around you, but don’t have to [follow it] .... You need to create your own life.”

Veronica Barraza recommends, Going on a Bear Hunt, by Helen Oxenbury & Michael Rosen.

“My kids “love it. It’s kind of exciting. They’re going on a bear hunt through the forest, over the hills, and when they find the bear, they run!”

Carol Eshom recommends, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, by C.S. Lewis.

“It’s a good story. It has a Christian theme. I wouldn’t recommend a book about a slasher. It’s uplifting and very enjoyable, and [in the book] it’s always winter.”

Kyle Hull recommends, To the Lighthouse, by Virginia Woolf.

“It’s beautiful and funny and weird. It’s actually about a summer vacation .... [But] to tie it into winter, it’s about death and war and, then again, rebirth.”

Alton Chalk recommends, The Horse Whisperer, by Nicholas Evans

“It’s just a good book about horses and how to train them. It’s a mind soothing read. It makes you feel happy after you read it or while you read it.”

Fabio Gonzalez recommends, The Alchemist, by Paulo Coelho

“It’s a fable basically, and it has a very good message .... It’s a good message for students not to rush through things. Enjoy the moment.”

Books for winter reading
What Gavilan teachers say about plagiarism

On one hand, most students say that they know plagiarism is wrong, but a large amount of them still plagiarize intentionally or unintentionally. On the other hand, teachers think that students largely know what they are doing when they plagiarize, but teachers are not clear on how to approach it. Either way, teachers know that plagiarism is going on in their classrooms.

All Gavilan instructors are expected to promote a zero tolerance policy for plagiarism. What isn’t widely known is that in general, teachers are left to themselves to decide what “zero tolerance” means. It is up to them to choose how to deal with particular circumstances of plagiarism that they encounter in their classrooms.

Gavilan instructor and counselor Candice Whitney believes that plagiarism on campus is a particularly tricky problem. “Students seem to think they can go on the internet and pull entire paragraphs and pages and use them for their own,” she said. “Students think they are invisible, and they absolutely are not.”

Though she has only caught plagiarism once, she was warned that no disciplinary action was taken other then she didn’t get credit for that assignment.

Furthermore, an additional student said that she didn’t plagiarize, but that she “paraphrased” by just changing the words around and re-stating what other people have written (again, just changing the words of a source is not enough to avoid plagiarism.) She didn’t consider doing this plagiarism though, and said that none of her teachers ever noticed.

Most students stated that the only time plagiarism was discussed in their classes was when teachers were going over their syllabi at the beginning of the semester. Perhaps as a result, only one student out of the ten that were interviewed stated that they had never plagiarized and could correctly identify what plagiarism is.

All of these student interviews were conducted in the Gavilan Library and Student Center, representing a diverse cross-section of the student body. Though some students do plagiarize and know what they are doing, the majority of students that were interviewed had a distorted view of what plagiarism was and how they themselves could avoid it.

What causes plagiarism?

While it might be easy to generalize that plagiarism is just a product of poor student skills and laziness, Crook, the English instructor, has a different outlook. She believes that “a lack of confidence... along with academic and financial factors” are involved in what motivates people to plagiarize.

She gave an example of somebody that may feel like they are forced to plagiarize. Imagine that you are a working single mother going back to school who is on financial aid. In your English class, you’ve tried hard but still done badly on all your previous assignments, and you need to ace a paper to not get kicked out of school and remain on financial aid. Somebody like this may feel that they have no choice but to plagiarize in order to stay afloat.

“There are lots of different flavors of plagiarism,” said Whitney. “Sometimes brand new students think it’s ok to use other peoples’ words; they aren’t tryin’ to cheat. There are innocent instances where people don’t understand and can’t tell the difference.”

The issue of the internet making available a wider array of information for students to plagiarize is also pertinent. The internet “makes students feel it’s a lot easier. Once they learn to copy and paste, the world is their oyster,” said Whitney. Crook likened the internet to a “candy store or smorgasbord” for plagiarizers.

There are also cultural factors that come into the issue of plagiarism. The documentary “Writing Across Borders”, produced by Oregon State University, hits on the topic that international students have particular trouble understanding what plagiarism is in an American context.

In the documentary, students from other cultures say the concept of plagiarism is viewed differently in their home countries. Sometimes they don’t know what constitutes plagiarism or know what they are doing is considered plagiarizing here in the United States.

The anonymous instructor said, “I used to have a class where I assigned written homework. Certain cultural groups, when one person did the work, the rest of them thought it was fine to copy it word for word. People were getting F’ss on all the tests and A’s on all the homework. I had to quit giving written homework, and began basing [students’] grades only on tests.”

Crook believes that sometimes, cultural things, not language “have factored into her students’ plagiarizing. They come from places where plagiarism is considered
Writing Prompt

Positive emotions such as joy and contentment can set you free as a writer into a vast world that you didn’t even know existed. Some people may disagree saying that when they are angry their best work comes out and is even therapeutic. But who the heck wants to be pissed off every time they write? When positive emotions dwell in you, your best writing will pierce through because your flow will be directed into what you are doing. Find out what you are passionate about and this will get you back into flow.

For example, many good writers take notes while they do what they are passionate about. In your life, you do things that you care for and these are good opportunities to take advantage of. For example, at an art exhibit, one great source is to create stories from artifacts you see. Imagine taking a trip back in time and becoming the person who created that particular item.

Or maybe at that same exhibit you might have flirted with someone. If you build off of that, in your own fictional story it can have the best ending ever!

Other writers’ inspiration, like mine, comes from nature. One way to continue developing your skill is to carefully describe your breathing of that cold, crisp, mountain air and of the sounds that come from the river’s roar. These things make me feel alive and bring great joy to me. But everyone has things that make them click, so I suggest you find them.

The writer's job is to paint an image and make it clear so that the reader can hear, see, and possibly even taste what you are describing. All we need is to keep it positive and take advantage of the situations that present themselves. Just remember whenever possible slow down and soak it all in. Positive emotions can only set you free as a writer. Now how can you do this, if you are not in a good mood?

By Jose Luis Hernandez
Writing Assistant

Writing of the People’s Poet

Federico, your face!
Along the shore, your friends bathe.

How the blossoms kneel under your green shadow.
Along the shore, your blood dances Flamenco.

How the cypresses hold your head.
Federico, your waist

Oh, Federico!
A hundred bullets of copper couldn’t kill your shadow of crystal not a glass of water

You will never die because your heart holds all of Spain.
In you, in me;

You will never die because you are the poet’s breasts.
A terrible anguish, a ripe pomegranate.

Federico, the olive groves!
Federico, your mouth!

Mountains pull their eyes out when they look at you.
Federico, Federico,

Balconies and ears shed tears when they hear your voice.
Federico, Federico, Clara, Clara.

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Don’t jump to the next subject without putting a period in there!

Another note you might get on your paper is “CS,” which means Comma Splice. This is when you write two complete thoughts that are related to each other, and connect them with a comma. For example, “I went to the store, I got some milk there.” A semicolon is more appropriate here. You can think of this as a flashing red light at an intersection: stop and go, stop and go, stop and go.

When you’re driving along a road, you’ll sometimes come upon speedbumps. Unless you like hitting your head on the roof of your car, you probably slow down for those. You can look at commas as the speedbumps of punctuation; when you’re reading aloud, you slow down when you get to them. So when you write, you should put them in where you think your reader should slow down. Here’s an example: “The thirteen cats, plus one dog, ran down the street.” Read that sentence aloud; you’ll probably slow down when you reach those commas.

A final tip: If you’re having any trouble with punctuation, read your essay out loud. You can catch a lot of mistakes that way, simply by noticing where you would slow down, pause briefly, or stop completely.

The ideas in this piece originated with and were presented by Jeanne Campanelli and Tina Royer of American River College at the 2006 Northern California Writing Centers Association conference.

POETRY

Alexis Rivas, a Gav graduate, completed his degree in Political Science from California State University, Stanislaus in 2006. Next he will pursue a degree in education and continue to write plays and poetry.

Peasant of the People’s Poet

Federico, your face!

How the blossoms kneel under your green shadow.

How the cypresses hold your head.

Oh, Federico!

You will never die because your heart holds all of Spain.

You will never die because you are the poet’s breasts.

Federico, the olive groves!

Mountains pull their eyes out when they look at you.

Balconies and ears shed tears when they hear your voice.

Federico, Federico, Clara, Clara.

--by Alex Rivas

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EVENTS CALENDAR

November

Writing Contest
$100 Cash Prize
Thurs., 16th Deadline
Come to the Writing Center for more details.

Creative Writing Workshop
Tues., 21st (two-part series)
1 p.m. in HU 104
Contact: shootingforthemoon97@yahoo.com

Practice Department Final
Sat., 18th 9-11 a.m.
Art Lecture Hall & SS210
Contact: jsandow@gavilan.edu

December

Creative Writing Workshop
Tues. 5th (two-part series)
1 p.m. in HU 104
Contact: shootingforthemoon97@yahoo.com

Open Mic
Fri., 8th 7-9 p.m.
Sue’s Coffee, Monterey St.
Gilroy, CA.

Ongoing

Inception Literary Club
Every Monday, 2:30 p.m.
BU 117
Contact: shootingforthemoon97@yahoo.com

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"OK and even encouraged, especially in Eastern and Chinese cultures."

These students may come from countries where it is believed that all information belongs to the people, and they have trouble understanding the concept of copyrights and plagiarism. "They come into my class and the rules have changed," Crook said. “They also may have trouble putting things into their own words” and unintentionally plagiarize because of that.

What can be done to stop plagiarism?

Plagiarism is happening everyday at Gavilan College. But, what can students and teachers do to stop it?

Crook believes that the answer lies in bringing plagiarism out of its dark closet and into the light in the minds of both students and teachers.

“We need to become united and have a real practical policy” she said. “I believe that we need to have a discussion on the widest level, including the president and administrators, and address the root causes of plagiarism, with laziness being at the bottom. We need to build a discussion on integrity, honesty and curiosity. I don’t want [students] to think plagiarism is an option.”

How can students be expected to not plagiarize if they’ve never had plagiarism explained to them in exact terms? How are they supposed to know techniques to avoid plagiarism if their teachers only briefly address it on the first day of class?

“People are really taking their destiny into their hands if they choose [to plagiarize],” said Whitney. Any form of plagiarism is risky, whether it be intentional or just a product of ignorance.

Gavilan students know that plagiarism is wrong. Nonetheless, many still plagiarize, whether they realize what they are doing or not.

Vox Calumus publishes letters

Let us hear from you so we can learn more about your ideas concerning writing and how it fits into your life.

Reach us at Gavilan College Writing Center, LI 120, 5055 Santa Teresa Blvd., Gilroy, CA 95020 or email ksmith@gavilan.edu

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