How Important Is The Use Of Proper Grammar?
By Eve Carmichael and other writers

I overheard the following conversation between two intelligent looking teenagers on the subway about two weeks ago:

“Do you got any tic-tacs cause my breath is really oniony?” asks teenager number one.

“I don't buy those things. They're full of sugar, and sugar ain't no good for your teeth,” replies teenager number two.

I don't know about you, but their use of the English language made me cringe. Double negatives, poor sentence structure, and the like made what they where saying “painful to the ears”. Does that really matter? In this 21st century where the use of coarse (impolite or rude) language seems to be the norm and “ain't” can be found in the dictionary, is using good grammar really important? Well, if you intend to be a master in the art of conversation, good grammar is essential.

Never Judge a Book by Its Cover, But…

We've all heard the old adage (saying) “never judge a book by its cover”, but let’s face it, we all make snap judgments about every person we meet. The way someone dresses, his hairstyle, his manner, and the way he speaks can make us think highly of that person, or not so highly.

How would you judge the two teenagers I overheard in the subway? What type of people do you think they are? Would you say they are intelligent and well educated? After hearing them speak, would you want to employ them? Would you be interested in holding a lengthy conversation with them? These are very thought provoking questions aren't they? Ask yourself: What does the way I speak say about me?

Writing and Grammar in Today’s World

The ability to write well is still important in today's society. In fact, I would say that with the advent of the Internet and mass person-to-person communication, grammar is more important now than perhaps ever before. When you send out a message to a bulletin board, newsgroup, or mailing list, you are representing yourself with a collection of words and sentences. How people view you is often based on how well those words and sentences are arranged. If you want to be taken seriously, then you must make your messages as clean as possible.

I don't think many people realize just how important grammar is to communication. Good grammar says that you are well-enough educated to be able to speak clearly, and more importantly,
that you care enough about the subject of your message that you are willing to take the time to make it readable. If your message is unclear or garbled, then many people are liable to simply skip over it. And if too many people are skipping over all of your messages simply because they don't want to take the time to decipher (figure out) your text, then you might as well be babbling to yourself on a random corner of the internet. The essence of the issue is this: if you aren't writing clearly, then you might as well not be writing at all. That is why you should be careful with grammar when you write.

Grammar matters more than ever because we communicate by written word more than ever now, and the viability (life) of online discourse (conversation) depends on the clarity of our messages. This is not your kindergarten teacher talking. In a recent AOL survey, 68 percent of respondents said E-mails with spelling and punctuation errors annoyed them.

**Tips for Online Writing**

- Remember that less is more. Having a long, wordy paragraph does not necessarily mean that it is meaningful. You can eliminate wordiness by writing in active tense, as opposed to passive tense.
- Keep slang usage to a minimum. You might try chatting with your friends online by using proper writing styles! If you do not like writing formally on TWITTER, AIM or MSN, then limit yourself to using only proper styles: that is, leave out the capitalization/punctuation.
- Your writing will sound stronger if you remove adverbial phrases and replace them with more meaningful words. For example, "very good" can be replaced with "excellent," "very nice" becomes "delightful," "very bad," becomes "terrible," "definitely true," becomes "obvious," and so on. As a general guideline, try to avoid the "-y" words.
- Try to limit using "absolute" terms, such as "everyone", "always", "never". Unless you’re relaying an indisuputable fact, these highly opinionated words will weaken your writing. For example, "He always buys the most expensive shoes" could be revised to "He usually buys the more expensive shoes."
- Try not to think of proper writing as strictly "academic" (school-related). It actually makes you appear more intelligent. More importantly, it eliminates the risk of "slipping out" bad habits in situations where it is critical to convey properness, such as writing a college essay, or a job résumé.
- Expand your vocabulary! Mastering new verbs can allow you to bring color to a paper by eliminating the need to employ the same words over and over again.
- Read! Reading will not only help to improve your vocabulary, but it will also help you to distinguish between formal and informal writing.
- Use a thesaurus. If you find that you are using a particular word too often, you might replace it with another term.
**English As a Second Language**

Of course, we have to take into consideration that our society is a great melting pot filled with people from different countries where English is not the predominate language. Using good grammar may be much more difficult for someone whose native tongue is a different language with its own sentence structure and grammatical rules.

We should all take our hats off to (or “give props to” if you prefer a more modern expression) people who have made the effort to learn our language.

**English As a First Language**

However, for those of us who have been speaking English since childhood, we should want to speak properly. Using good grammar shows that we are intelligent and educated. It tells our listeners that we not only enjoy speaking, but also take pride in how we do it.

Of course we don't want to obsess about speaking properly so much that our speech sounds unnatural and snobbish, but as an artisan (master crafter) of good conversation, we want to use good grammar so that we can be well understood and make a good, lasting impression on all who hear us.

---------------------------------- QUESTIONS ----------------------------------

1. Why is writing with good grammar very important?

2. Why is speaking with good grammar very important?

3. In your writing, how can you replace "very good"? ______________________

4. In your writing, how can you replace "very nice"? ______________________

5. In your writing, how can you replace "very bad"? ______________________

6. In your writing, how can you replace "definitely true"? ______________________

7. What are TWO ways you can expand your vocabulary?
   
   A. _____________________________________________________________________

   B. _____________________________________________________________________

8. Why should people WANT TO speak and write properly with good grammar?

9. What do you think the author’s PURPOSE in writing this article is?
Proper Grammar 1

SURVEY: Record important titles, subtitles, bold-faced words, captions, etc.

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QUESTION: Write out at least 3 "Who, What, When, Where, Why, or How" questions based on your survey.
1.) __________________________________

________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________________

2.) __________________________________________________________________________________________

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3.) __________________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

READ: As you read, look for and write down answers to the questions from above.
1.) __________________________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________

______________________________

2.) __________________________________________________________________________________________

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3.) ________________________________

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RECITE: Complete the FREEWRITE: "Describe the reasons why you should always try to speak and write with proper grammar."

You might want to think about the following in your response:
1.) What are the benefits & advantages of using proper grammar? Why is it important?
2.) Why should people avoid improper grammar? How can it hurt them later in life?
3.) Do you know anybody who uses improper grammar? How can you avoid it & do better?
4.) Why is it important to pay attention to learn proper grammar in school? How can you do a better job of learning the correct way to speak and write?

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