CSE/ISE 300 Communication  F11

• Time: Tue/Thur 5:20-6:40PM
• Location: Room 102  Light Engineering
• Required Book: The Elements of Style, 4th edition (2000), Authors: Strunk and White $10 (or $4 2007 reprint by Coyote)
• Online Technical Writing, Author: David A. McMurrey  http://www.io.com/~hcexres/textbook/
• Recommended Textbook: Pocket Guide to Technical Communication, 5th ed. (2011).  Author: Pfeiffer $42 list; $33 Amazon ($26+$4 used)
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• Course Homepage: http://www.cs.sunysb.edu/~lw/teaching/cse300

Paper 1 My Weekend with Irene, graded and back Tuesday, 9/27.
   Bring paper and a pen to class Thursday, 9/22.
CSE/ISE 300
Strunk and White: Commonly Misused Words

Aggravate/Irritate  
Aggravate means “to add to” or “to make worse” a bad situation. Irritate means “to annoy” or “to chafe.”
Don’t aggravate me!  Don’t irritate me!

All right  
Idiomatic in casual speech as a phrase meaning “O.K.”
“Do we have a deal?” “All right.”

Allude/elude/refer  
You allude to a book; you elude a pursuer. An illusion is an indirect mention; a reference is a specific mention.

Allusion/illusion  
An allusion means “an indirect mention”; an illusion means “a false impression” or “an unreal image.”

Alternate/Alternative  
Alternate means “every other one in a series.”
Alternative means “one of two possibilities” and always connotes a choice. Alternate can mean “a substitute” where there is no choice.
The flooded road left them no alternative; they took the alternate way.
Among/Between  

Among is normally used if more than two persons or things are involved.  

Between is used when each of two or more is considered individually.  

You and I will split the work between us.  
The money was split among the four players.  
There is an agreement between the six heirs.  

And/or  

And/or is a confusing shortcut that should be avoided.  

Would an honor system cut down on the amount of stealing and/or cheating?  
Would an honor system reduce the incidence of stealing or cheating or both?  

Anticipate/expect  

Use expect to mean “believe in advance.”  Use anticipate to connote actions other than simple belief.  

I anticipated that he would look older.  
I expected that he would look older.  
My aunt anticipated the upturn in the market by buying stock.
**CSE/ISE 300**

**Strunk and White: Commonly Misused Words**

**Anybody/Any body**  *Anybody* means “any person.” *Any body* means “any corpse” or “any human form” or “any group.” Similarly write *everybody, nobody, and somebody* as single words in normal usage.

**Anyone/Any one**  *Anyone* means “anybody.” *Any one* means “any single person or thing.”

**As good or better than**  Avoid by rewriting the sentence. *My opinion is as good or better than his.*  *My opinion is as good as his, or better.*

**As to whether**  *Whether* is sufficient.

**As yet**  *Yet* nearly always is as good, if not better. *No verdict has been reached as yet.*  *No verdict has yet been reached.*
CSE/ISE 300
Strunk and White: Commonly Misused Words

Being

*Being* is not proper after *regard*, *as*.

He is regarded as being the best programmer.

He is regarded as the best programmer.

But

*But* is unneeded after *doubt* and *help*.

I have no doubt but that …

I have no doubt that …

He could not help but see it.

He could not help seeing it.

Can/May

*Can* means “is able.”

Can is not a substitute for *may*, meaning “has permission.”

Can I play now?

May I play now?

Care less

The dismissive “I couldn’t care less” is often erroneously shortened to “I could care less”, destroying the meaning.
Case

*Case* is often not needed.

- In many cases, the rooms lacked air conditioning.
- It has rarely been the case that any mistake has been made.

Certainly

*Certainly* is used indiscriminately by some speakers to intensify every statement. This mannerism is bad in speech and worse in writing.

Character

Character is often used from a mere habit of wordiness.

- acts of a hostile character  
  **hostile acts**

Claim (verb)

With an object, *claim* means “lay claim to.” *Claim* is not a substitute for *declare, maintain,* or *charge.*

- He claimed that he knew how.  
  **He declared that he knew how.**
Clever

_Clever_ has a special meaning when applied to horses. A_ clever_ person is ingenious; a _clever_ horse is good-natured.

Compare with/to

*To compare to* is to point out resemblances in highly different objects; _to compare with_ is to point out differences in highly similar objects. Life has been _compared to_ a drama. Congress may be _compared with_ the British Parliament.

Comprise/Constitute

_Conprise_ literally means “embrace” or “hold.” _Constitute_ literally means “stand together.” A zoo comprises mammals, reptiles, and birds. Animals _constitute_ a zoo.

Consider/Consider as

*Consider*, meaning “believe to be,” is not followed by _as_. *Consider*, meaning “examine” or “discuss,” uses _as_.

I consider him as competent. I consider him _competent_.

The lecturer _considered Eisenhower_ first as a solder and second as a manager.
Contact  As a transitive verb, *contact* is vague. Do not *contact* people; get in touch with them, look them up, meet them, or phone them.

Cope with  *Cope* is an intransitive verb always used with *with*.

I knew they’d cope.  I knew they would cope with the problem.

Currently  Used to mean *now*, *currently* is usually redundant; emphasis is better achieved by a more precise reference to time.

We are currently reviewing your application.  At this moment, we are reviewing your application.

Data  Like *media*, *phenomena*, and *strata*, *data* is plural and is best used with a plural verb.

The data is misleading.  These data are misleading.
Different from/than  Since one thing differs from another, the correct usage is different from. Avoid different than. Substitutes for different from include other than and unlike.
Her dog is different than mine.  Her dog is different from mine. Her dog is unlike mine.

Disinterested/uninterested  Disinterested means “impartial.” It is not a substitute for uninterested, which means “not interested in.”
Let a disinterested person judge our dispute. This person is clearly uninterested in our dispute.

Divided into / Composed of  A quartered apple is divided into sections, but it is composed of skin, flesh, and seeds. Composed literally means “placed together.” A play is divided into acts, but a poem is composed of stanzas.
Due to  

Due to should not be used for through, because of, or owing to in adverbial phrases. Due to means “attributable to” and is used in adjectival phrases.

He lost the game due to carelessness.
The accident was due to bad weather. Losses due to brush fires cost California more than $1 billion last year.

Each and every one  

Advertising jargon that should be avoided.

It should be a lesson to each and every one of us.

It should be a lesson to every one of us.

It should be a lesson to us all.

Effect/Affect  

As a noun, effect means “result”; as a verb, it means “to bring about” or “to accomplish.” The verb affect means “to influence.” The noun effect is overused in vague writing about the arts: “subtle effects”, “very delicate effects.”
Enormity  Use *enormity* only to mean “monstrous wickedness.” It is misleading, if not wrong, when used to mean only “bigness.”

Enthuse  Avoid this verb created from the noun *enthusiasm*.

She was enthused about her new car.  She was enthusiastic about her new car.
She enthused about her new car.  She talked enthusiastically about her new car.

Etc.  *Et cetera* literally means “and other things,” but is used improperly to mean “and other persons.” It is equivalent to “and so forth” and should not be used if the reader would be left in doubt about any important items. In formal writing, avoid *etc*.

Facility  *Facility* is overused for hospitals, jails, and prisons.

He has been appointed warden of the new facility.  He has been appointed warden of the new prison.
Fact  Use *fact* only for matters that can be directly verified, but not for matters of opinion. The melting point of lead is a fact, but that California has a wonderful climate is only an opinion.

Factor  *Factor* is a hackneyed word; its expressions usually can be replaced by wording that is shorter and clearer.

Her superior training was the great factor in her winning. She won by being better trained.

Farther/Further  Although commonly interchanged, there is a subtle distinction between *farther* and *further*. *Farther* serves best for physical distances; *further* is best for quantities or time.

You can chase a ball farther than another player; you pursue a subject further.
Finalize  Avoid *finalize*, which is a pompous and ambiguous business verb. Does it mean “terminate” or “put in final form”?

Fix  *Fix* is well established in America as colloquial for *arrange*, *prepare*, and *mend*. However, its preferred meanings are derived from its Latin root *figere*, “to make firm” or “to place definitely.”

Flammable  The common word *inflammable* means “combustable.” Lest some people think it means “not combustable,” safety signs on the backs of trucks say “Flammable Liquid.” Write *inflammable*. A mixture of oil and gasoline is highly flammable.

Folk  The collective noun *folk* is equivalent to *people* and always properly used only in the singular form. The colloquial *folks* meaning “parents,” “family,” or “those present” should be avoided. Your folks are here!  Your parents are here!
Fortuitous  *Fortuitous* means “happened by chance.” It does not mean *fortunate* or *lucky*.

He was *fortuitous* to fill a royal flush.

He was *lucky* to fill a royal flush.

Get  The colloquial *have got* for *have* should be avoided in writing. The preferrable form of the participle is *got*, not *gotten*.

He has not *got* any sense.

He has no sense.

They returned without having *gotten* any fish.

They returned without *having got* any fish.

Gratuitous  *Gratuitous* means “unearned” or “undeserved.”

The insult was *gratuitous*.
He is a man who Avoid redundant phrases of this common type.
He is a man who is very ambitious. He is very ambitious.
Vermont is a state that attracts Vermont attracts winter
winter visitors for skiing. visitors for skiing.

Hopefully Hopefully was formerly a useful adverb meaning
“with hope” or “full of hope”. It is now widely used to mean “I
hope” or “it is to be hoped.” Avoid hopefully in your writing. It
offends the ear of educated readers and sounds silly to them.
Hopefully I will leave on the I hope to leave on the noon
noon plane. plane.

However Used first in a sentence, however means “in whatever
way” or “to whatever extent.” Not first, it can mean “nevertheless.”
The road was bearly passible. The road was bearly passible.
However, at last we got home. At last, however, we got home.
However discouraging the prospect, they never lost heart.
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Imply/Infer  The words *imply* and *infer* are not the same. Something implied is suggested or indicated, but not expressed directly. Something inferred is deduced from evidence at hand. **Farming implies early rising.** Since she was a farmer, we inferred that she got up early.

Importantly  Avoid *importantly*.
More importantly, he paid for the damages.  More important, he paid for the damages.
What’s more, he paid for the damages.

In regard to  *In regard to* is wrongly written *in regards to*. On the other hand, *as regards to* is correct and the same as *in regard to*.

In the last analysis  Avoid this overused, bankrupt expression.