

LANGUAGE WEEK TIPS OF THE WEEK – 2014/2015

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1. Way.

Especially in formal writing, avoid using “way” as a synonym for “very.”

Consider this example:

“This is because the alloy has a distinct appearance or morphology WAY different from other alloys.”

(We understand only the register clash in that sentence.)

Preferable:

“This is because the alloy has a distinct appearance or morphology VERY different from other alloys.”

“Way” for emphasis: The word “way” can be used to add emphasis to what you are saying, but you need to be careful about two things: (a) it’s a synonym of far, so you can say *way/far* behind and *way/far* better, but not *way/far* good; (b) it’s used in informal language only.

2. E-mail.

E-mails are both difficult and easy to write. You know why they are easy to write, but why are they difficult? That’s a topic for an MA thesis (“Bad E-Mails: When Technology Meets Old Epistolary Conventions”).

When writing emails in a formal educational setting, the best way to start is with Dear + title (to keep it simple, use Dr. if the person has a PhD, otherwise use Mr. or Ms. as appropriate) + last name. Only use the teacher’s first name if they’ve given you leave to do so. “Hey” is too chummy and “Yo” is completely out. “Greetings” sounds curiously quaint. Use it at your own peril (one of us likes it, the other doesn’t).

A few other tidbits:

- 1) “Dear” in English is slowly losing currency. It is an empty salutation and nowhere near as intimate-sounding as “Dragi/Draga”
- 2) If you’re unsure about formality or whether “Mr.” or “Ms.” is correct (think of names such as “Jean” or “Saša”), write “Dear FULL NAME.”
- 3) Formality. A good way of showing that you are annoyed is to increase the level of formality in your e-mails. Keep this in mind if you are not annoyed but suddenly sound formal in your e-mail exchanges. For example, if you conclude “Cheers, Johnny” in E-mail 1, do not conclude “Sincerely, Johnathan Bartholomew Cubbins” in E-mail 2 – unless you are seriously peeved.
- 4) Keep ‘em short.
- 5) Be very, very careful with the auto-correction function on smartphones.

A very funny link:

<http://slepocrevo.wordpress.com/2007/12/07/izposojeni-genij/>

A not very funny link:

“E-mail ettiquette” (Tip 2) at <http://www2.arnes.si/~bjason/101%20Tips%20-%20BLAKE.pdf>

3. Motive or motif?

Do not mix up “motive” and “motif.”

In English, a “motive” is what compels you to commit a crime.

A “motif” is a recurring idea or image in a work of literature (or a thrice-heard theme in music).

Because “motif” is a technical term, it sounds funny if you get it wrong – the mix-up has a whiff of malapropism.

Put differently, writing “motive” for “motif” is like confusing words in a set expression, like writing “Don’t get a wasp in your bonnet” instead of the usual “bee.”

4. Teacher? Professor?

Once upon a time, one of us had a job teaching sugar-charged Mexican kids English. “Maestro” was the charming term they used (as in, “Maestro, Pedro won’t stop hitting me!”).

Slovenians have their own difficulties with “teacher” or “professor,” so please read these tips carefully.

- 1) Teacher vs. professor: In English, only university teachers are ever called professor. For generic situations “teacher” is a better expression to use. If you’re not sure, ask your instructor.
- 2) In e-mails, both “Dear professor X” and “Dear prof. X” are wrong. Do not abbreviate, but do capitalize “Professor” in e-mails.

In other words, capitalize “Professor,” just as you would capitalize “Mr.” or “Dr.” (for more on this, see Tip #73 at <http://www2.arnes.si/~bjason/101%20Tips%20-%20BLAKE.pdf>).

- 3) Realize, please, that “Mr. Jason” or “prof. Uroš” verges on the barbaric. At the university level this gaffe is inexcusable.
- 4) According to *The Chicago Manual of Style*, abbreviated titles before a full name are more common than only before only a last name (e.g. “Sen. Kirsten E. Gillibrand” vs. “Senator Gillibrand”).

“[W]here space is tight,” the abbreviation “Prof.” “may precede a full name.” E-mails do not qualify as cramped writing quarters.

(At the risk of harping, in the last ten e-mails one of us received, only a single student managed to get the salutation right. This is a little matter that matters a great deal – if you botch the “Dear” in a scholarship or job application, rejection is almost guaranteed.)

5. Depressing and depressive.

The frequent confusing of “depressing” and “depressive” is depressing and it will soon turn us into depressives.

In plain English: “depressing” is the (oft-used) adjective, “depressive” the (seldom-used) noun.

If you want to say you’re feeling a little down or blue or glum, just say “depressed.”

(Admittedly, “depressive” also exists as an adjective, but it’s used almost exclusively in medical contexts.)

6. Albeit.

“Albeit” is tricky to use correctly, which is probably why students don’t use it often. Also, dictionaries give “albeit” bad press. Some dictionaries cautiously label it “formal” or “literary,” while others slander it with “old-fashioned,” “archaic” and “obsolete.”

If “albeit” is no longer used, could someone please inform The Guardian and the New York Times? In other words, it is very much in use, and not just by old people.

Here are some very recent examples from those two newspapers (from a variety of sections, not just the hoity-toity arts pages).

The Guardian

“The rhetoric might sound antiquated but, in a sense, we now take for granted Bebel’s communal kitchens, albeit in private form.”

“In 1967, The Beatles and a BBC executive called Aubrey Singer managed to unite the world, albeit briefly, with the first global satellite broadcast.”

“McGeady created chances for Naismith and Lukaku, albeit both with the same result as his colleagues missed the target, and it was from his corner that Everton doubled their advantage.”

The New York Times

“My survey made me realize that, at heart, I’m a purist — albeit not immune to the appeal of the zanier specimens [of donuts].”

“But, on the plus side, the overall number of women in Congress will rise, albeit at a rate that would get us to equal representation sometime around 2078.”

“And his interwoven story lines, intentionally or not, evoke a piece of jazz, albeit one that’s Buddy Bolden raggedy in places.”

Here are some examples of INCORRECT USAGE:

“We know that – albeit neither of the tests is yet optimal – they are adequate.”*

“According to the author, studying literature is required for education, albeit it is often viewed as unnecessary.”*

...and here are some tips for using it correctly – that is, not as a perfect and simple synonym for “although.”

- 1) It's not good style to use *albeit* as part of a finite clause. To play it safe, use "*albeit*" where there's no verb around, e.g.:

"I kept on reading the book, *albeit* very slowly."

"The free wifi was, *albeit* rather slow, a nice touch."

- 2) You can also use it with a non-finite verbal form but then make it clear this happens outside the main sentence frame:

"The author claims that, *albeit* often viewed as unnecessary, studying literature is required for education."

A good test is that you should always be able to put the part introduced by "*albeit*" in brackets or separate it from the rest of the sentence with dashes.

(If this explanation isn't long enough for you, try: <http://grammarist.com/usage/albeit/>)

7. On quoting.

Quoting is not a get-out-of-syntax-free card. When you integrate quoted words into your sentence, your "combined" sentence has to be grammatical.

This is nonsense:

In "Strange Fits of Passion Have I Known" Wordsworth uses the symbol of the moon to increase suspense, "the sinking moon," "on the descending moon," leading all the way to "at once, the bright moon dropped," to mark his arrival at Lucy's cottage, where, "if Lucy should be dead."

There are two easy tests for whether you have quoted properly:

- i) Read your sentence aloud. Is it syntactically sound?
- ii) Temporarily eliminate the quotation marks and look at your sentence. Does it make grammatical sense? Can you tell where the quoted passages are? (No? That's a good thing in this case!)

After all, nobody would write a sentence like this:

In Strange Fits of Passion Have I Known Wordsworth uses the symbol of the moon to increase suspense, the sinking moon, on the descending moon, leading all the way to at once, the bright moon dropped, to mark his arrival at Lucy's cottage, where, if Lucy should be dead.

Just remember to put the quotation marks back if you use the second test!

Here's another example, *albeit* one that is syntactically confusing rather than flat-out wrong:

The rhyme "This Is the House That Jack Built" is replete with domestic animals, "the cat / That chased the rat" and dairy products, "the cheese."

Solution 1:

“This Is the House That Jack Built” is replete with domestic animals, including “the cat / That chased the rat[,]” and dairy products, specifically, “the cheese.”

Solution 2:

“This Is the House That Jack Built” is replete with domestic animals and dairy products, including “the cat / That chased the rat” and “the cheese.”

For a bit of practice, try putting the above passage on Wordsworth into a sentence that is both correct and clear.

8. Who vs. that

Some people claim that relative clauses which relate to persons should only be introduced by “who” and never by “that,” although the latter option is in fact very common.

According to this logic, the following is WRONG:

“The person that gave me the advice was mistaken.”

It is not wrong. It is just as correct as:

“The person who gave me the advice was mistaken.”

Tracking down the “some people” who/that claim “relative clauses which relate to persons should only be introduced by ‘who’” is difficult. Perhaps because it’s a silly made-up rule.

That said, a fair number of English speakers get irritated when ‘that’ is used for persons, and if the person reading your grant/job application is one of them, consequences may be grave rather than silly. If you don’t know your audience (or you know they are grammar Nazis) and the outcome is important to you, stay on the safe side, otherwise feel free to use whichever you like.

For more on this topic, see: <http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/education/grammar/who-versus-that>

Of course, never use ‘which’ in place of ‘who’ – “That is that woman which [sic] sits beside me in class” begs for a little ‘discussion’, not unlike here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTffnK2tV-4>

9. Like.

One of us was taught in high school that “like” should not precede an example:

“I saw many fruits like oranges and apples and pears” supposedly meant “I saw many fruits THAT HAD A DISTINCT RESEMBLANCE TO oranges and apples and pears (but I didn’t actually see any oranges and apples and pears.”

“I saw many fruits, SUCH AS oranges and apples and pears” was correct.

Nobody listened to this rule back in high school, and few care about it today – though “such as” sounds slightly more formal and some style guides still do not admit “like” in place of “such as.”

Slovenian students often ignore “such as” altogether and instead write “like” all the time, which is, like, annoying.

Next time you write an essay, search through for “like” and see if you can use “such as” to add some variety.

10. “bare” vs. “bear”

Both of these words have several meanings, but “bear” is the one that means “to carry”; “bare” is normally used when referring to someone or something devoid of clothes, plants, etc.

A few examples:

Mussorgsky’s “Night on Bare Mountain” (or “Night on Bald Mountain”)

Barenaked Ladies (the rock band that composed the music for “The Big Bang Theory”)

“I can’t bear it!” (I’ve had enough!)

“Bear with me...” (Put up with me...”)

“Grin and bear it” means something very different from “grin and bare it.”

11. *This is confusing...*

Do not start sentences with “This + verb” (e.g. “This is a massive generalization...” “This sounds glib...”; “This runs counter to...”; “This is troublesome...”).

This tip is a massive generalization. This advice sounds glib, but it’s an easy way to make sure that the reader knows what “this” refers to.

Follow “This” with a full noun.

“While we were watching The Muppet Show, Barry burst into the room and showed us his new sombrero.

This was distracting.”

What does “This” refer to?

- a) bursting into the room?
- b) the sombrero?

Solutions:

- a) “This intrusion/interruption/bothersome burst was distracting.”
- b) “This sombrero/hat was distracting.”

This is easy to fix – sorry! This ERROR/POTENTIALLY AMBIGUOUS STRUCTURE is easy to fix. Just search through your essay for sentences that begin with “This...” and see whether you can add a noun and clarity.

This tip is, of course, not limited to Slovenians writing in English.

Two things to keep in mind:

- 1) Slovenian and other languages with grammatical gender are clearer in terms of reference
- 2) Slovenians tend to overuse “that” at the expense of “this” – what’s up with this (sic)?

12. Holidays. Yuck.

Holidays are a linguistic pain. This is because so much time passes between Good Fridays and All Hallows’ Eves and Victoria Days for you to forget what you said and spelled last time.

The Chicago Manual of Style says, “The names of secular and religious holidays or officially designated days or seasons are capitalized,” and provides a few examples – Christmas Day, Hanukkah, etc.

One problem solved. But that’s only part of the story.

Apostrophes are a problem. Remember, it’s New Year’s Eve, followed by New Year’s Day (see 6).

Other tips (use them at your own peril):

- 1) In the UK, say, “Happy Christmas.” In North America, say, “Merry Christmas.” Elsewhere, mumble. (Actually, this is a dodgy rule of thumb: the British National Corpus has 78 hits for “Happy Christmas” and 68 for “Merry Christmas” – and the latter may be gaining ground).
- 3) “Christmass” (sic) is a howler.
- 4) If in doubt about religion, etc., belt out “Happy Holidays!”
- 5) If you don’t really like the greetee, say “Season’s Greetings.” It’s the “have a nice day” of the Christmas season.
- 6) If you are very, very old, speak of “Yuletide.”
- 7) “Boxing Day” is the day after Christmas. Nobody knows what it is, but because it’s a day off in many countries, nobody complains.
- 8) “Happy New Year!” is the correct pre-snog (i.e. pre-midnight-kiss) greeting. But if you slur “Happy New Year’s” and someone nit-picks, just argue that you meant it elliptically (i.e. short for “Happy New Year’s EVE”). “Happy New Years” is wrong, unless you are wishing for future years as well.
- 9) You do not have to shake hands when you wish somebody “Happy New Year.” In fact, if they don’t know you well, they might find you weird. Oh, and that mistletoe stuff only happens in movies.

- 10) Sylvester is a Puddy Tat in English.
- 11) James Joyce's "The Dead" never actually mentions that the aunts' party is on the "Feast of the Epiphany" (January 6). This was news to one of us.

13. Media.

Media as a plural noun – Originally, the Latin singular used in English is "medium," and the plural is "media."

Nowadays common usage prefers "media" as a singular noun, although it is still recommended to use it as a plural noun in educated written style. After all, your work may be graded by a stickler, so don't take a chance.

One of us predicts that "the media are" will soon die out (even in academic circles), at least if these searches mean anything:

"social media are" – c. 1 million hits

"social media is" – c. 27 million hits

In any case, the form "medias" is not normally used by normal people (unless jumping into the middle of things).

14. *The best of...*

The best of ... construction: It's perfectly ok to say "under the best circumstances" or "under the best conditions," but this is not the best possible way of expressing this idea.

In these particular cases, you can up the level a bit by using an of-phrase: under the (very) best of circumstances.

The challenge, of course, is how to think of such catchy phrases; one possible and surprisingly productive way of doing that is googling e.g. "under the best".

Three examples:

"We were working under the best of conditions."

"We parted under the best of terms."

"I studied under the best of tutors."

(N.B. the overwhelming majority of hits will be for "the best of conditions" or "the best of circumstances")

15. Patterns with *consider...*

The verb "consider" is normally transitive, but the usage depends on the meaning desired:

- 1) "He considers me stupid" means "He believes that I am stupid."

2) “Please consider me as a partner” means “Please think about making me a partner.”

There are shades of difference in meaning (stative vs. dynamic), but you can also think of the difference as a grammatical one – that is, the first “type” takes an adjectival phrase, and the second requires a prepositional phrase with *as*.

In terms of verbal complementation, the usual pattern would be to say:

1) “This elixir is considered to have a healing effect.” (“is considered” is a synonym for “is believed” – this sense requires the infinitive construction).

vs.

2) “You might consider having another child.” (“consider” is a synonym for “think” – this sense requires the gerund.)

16. Borrowing foreign phrases...

Using expressions from other languages is risky and fine and replete with an “I don’t know what.”

A well-placed French or Latin or Slovenian expression can contribute to the impression of a well-educated writer.

However, there are other dangers.

First, you might sound pretentious (like you’re lording your knowledge of Ancient Greek over your reader).

Second, you might sound hackneyed. Phrases such as *carpe diem*, *je ne sais quoi* and *crème de la crème* are overused to the point of cliché.

Third, italics. When to use them? According to *The Chicago Manual of Style*, “Italics are used for isolated words and phrases in a foreign language if they are likely to be unfamiliar to readers.”

Fourth, it can be obvious that we simply can’t think of an English word...

Fifth, you need to be careful to write the word correctly, including accents. “garçon” [sic] is best avoided if you can’t find the cedilla on your keyboard.

Sixth, plurals can get messy. For example, if you order a “panini” (rather than a “panino”), you will not go hungry. If you speak of “tempos” after going to the opera, the chattering classes might wrinkle their collective noses. When in doubt, check the dictionary!

17. The slash...

Try not to use the slash to separate synonyms:

“I went into the woods and saw a giant/huge toad.”

A sentence like the above leaves the reader wondering:

- 1) What is the difference between “giant” and “huge”?
- 2) If there is no great difference, why are both words needed?
- 3) Isn't it the author's job to choose the right word?

If you are signalling an alternative, remember that no space is needed before and after the slash.

e.g. “he/she” or “and/or”

(There are exceptions to this rule. *The Chicago Manual of Style* writes: “Where one or more of the terms separated by slashes is an open compound, a space before and after the slash can be helpful.”)

18. Visit vs. attend.

Here's an easy way to remember the difference between “to visit” and “to attend”:

To visit means to go to some place or person to spend some time there, usually in your free time.

e.g. “Why don't you come for a visit?”

When you go somewhere on a regular basis or for a more or less official purpose, we use the verb to attend (school, a funeral, a meeting).

e.g. “I was unable to attend the funeral because I was attending school.”

19. To age.

The verb to age has to do with growing older, but the implication is generally that the person should be relatively close to old age (i.e. children don't normally “age”) and that it is showing in their looks.

Both “aging” and “ageing” are acceptable spellings.

“Aging” is the more usual spelling in the US, while “ageing” appears to be more frequent in the UK.

In the past, Yorkshire children were taught to write “ageing,” while New Yorkers were taught to write “aging.”

From *The New York Times*: “An Aging Europe in Decline”

From *The Guardian*: “We know the population is ageing – now we must embrace the challenge”

20. Double prepositions.

Spot the mistake in this sentence: “That is a belief in which we do not believe in.”

The mistake? A prepositional doubling-up (“That is a belief IN which we do not believe IN.”).

Other frequent examples:

“The theory of which we have been informed of.”

“The cousin with whom I went to the beach with.”

No great solutions here – just be vigilant!

Here are two links on the matter:

<http://iatefl.britishcouncil.org/2013/sessions/2013-04-09/plenary-session-david-crystal>

<http://david-crystal.blogspot.com/2009/08/on-world-in-which-we-live-in.html>

21. Research.

“Research” is normally a non-countable noun and you can live a full and happy life without ever writing “researches.”

Some use it in the plural to mean “separate scientific investigations” but others (including the writers of these weekly tips) find “researches” very strange. If possible, it is therefore better to use just research, especially when you mean it in a very general way – e.g. “Research has shown...”

As you know, “study” is a regular ol’ count noun:

“A study has shown...”

“Studies have shown...”

22. raise vs. rise.

Both verbs have to do with growing, but RAISE is transitive (“Raising children is difficult”), while RISE is intransitive (“Prices have risen again.”).

23. Conversion.

English has always been adept at converting parts of speech - that is, making a noun function as a verb, or having what looks like a verb do the work of an adjective.

Though especially noun-verbs can scrape our ears on first hearing, we generally get used to them (think of “to task,” “to gift,” and “to friend”).

And yet... before converting parts of speech, verify whether there is a ready substitute.

For example, even though the verb “to higher” exists, it is so rare the majority of English speakers would probably claim there’s no such thing. You can raise (sic) your essay grade by avoiding “to higher.”

24. [comma!] etc.

Be sure to add a comma before “etc.”

Example 1: “We bought bread, cheese, ham, etc.”

Also be sure NOT to italicize “etc.”

Example 2: See Example 1.

As well, be sure to add a comma AFTER “etc.” if your sentence does not end.

Example 3: “We bought bread, cheese, ham, etc., but then forgot them all at the supermarket counter.”

25. Reflections on “reflect”

Remember to use “reflect” in the passive or with a reflexive pronoun when you mean “is manifested” or “is shown”:

Incorrect: “The mood of the poem reflects in the sombre diction.”

Correct: “The mood of the poem reflects itself in the sombre diction.”

Correct (and somewhat more elegant): “The mood of the poem is reflected in the sombre diction.”

Your safest bet is the passive as this is the more common option - Google, for instance, returns some 25 million hits for “is reflected” compared to 92,000 for “reflects itself”.

26. Present vs. represent

The verb “to present” can mean either “give” or “introduce” and is used with an object. When you want to say “to be,” however, the word to use is “represent” (and what follows is a subject complement).

Incorrect: “The sun imagery in the poem presents warmth.”

Correct: “The sun imagery in the poem represents warmth.”

Incorrect: “Allow me to represent John, who’s a good friend of mine.”

Correct: “Allow me to present John, who’s a good friend of mine.”

Also check out slang uses of represent:

<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=represent> and

<http://onlineslangdictionary.com/meaning-definition-of/represent>.

27. War.

Capitalize the titles of wars, and use Roman numerals:

1) World War I or the First World War

2) World War II or the Second World War

3) the Cold War (“cold war” is fine if you use it generically - e.g. “A domestic cold war developed over who would do the dishes.”)

INCORRECT: World War 2

INCORRECT: the first World War

Although some style guides, such as Chicago, call for WW I, especially in less formal writing WW1 is fine (and generally more common than WW I).

Also, avoid writing “2nd World War” or the utterly Slovenish “1. World War.”

28. Amount vs. number vs. a lot

“Amount” is normally (especially in formal writing) used to talk about quantities of uncountable things, whereas “number” is used for countable items.

E.g.

“No amount of money could make me take a cold shower at any time of day.”

“No number of horses could make me take a cold shower at any time of day.”

Two little stylistic notes:

- 1) “A lot” sounds less formal than “many” or “several.”
- 2) Slovenians overuse “a number of...”

29. Long years.

Consider these structures. Which is correct?

- 1) “I was involved in a six year long fan relationship with a bad football team.”
- 2) “I was involved in a six-year long fan relationship with a bad football team.”
- 3) “I was involved in a six-year-long fan relationship with a bad football team.”

The winner is option 3, the one with all the hyphens.

This, however, is snappier (since “year” already indicates duration or long-ness).

“I was involved in a six-year fan relationship with a bad football team.”

30. “According to” vs. “in accordance with”

Note the difference between these two expressions.

Perhaps it’s easiest to think of “according to” as a synonym for “says”, and “in accordance with” as a synonym for “in conformity with”.

- 1) According to Sarah, the party was fabulous.

In Sarah’s opinion, the party was fabulous.

Sarah reports that the party was fabulous.

I have it from the horse’s mouth that the party was fabulous.

Usually, there’s a flesh-and-blood, literal speaker with “according to.”

- 2) Searching online for “in accordance with” + “party” yields results like (i.e. similar to):

“In accordance with subsection 7, each party will pay his/her share of the rental.”

Usually, “in accordance with” pertains to a document or theory.

“According to Smith (2012) and Novak (2007), it is impossible to make hot dogs out of wool. In accordance with their theory, our wool - in spite of the loose affiliation with mutton - could not be turned into a hot dog or sausage of any variety.”

31. The “back and forth” between “to and fro.”

Two very useful expressions for (often useless and unproductive) reciprocal actions are:

- 1) to and fro
- 2) back and forth

Make sure, however, not to mix and match them!

NOT: “They threw insults back and fro.”

But: “They threw insults back and forth.”

With “to and fro” spelling is tricky when it switches word classes. If you want to use it as a noun or verb, look it up in the Oxford English Dictionary to make sure you’re sticking the hyphens and -s endings in the right places.

Example: the to-and-fro of the haggling process.

32. Which sounds silly on its own.

Sentence fragments can sound very, very silly in English. Slovenian seems to have a higher tolerance for syntax-poor snippets of language.

Though we are tempted to say, “Always use full sentences,” that would be going too far!

Instead, a simple never-rule: never start a sentence fragment with a relative clause.

Which would look and sound strange.

Here’s an example in context:

“The world is swimming in horrible movies, whether they be violent action movies or saccharine, simplistic romances. Which is not surprising, given the necessity for studios to produce in a hurry.”

If you’re really really tempted and you feel a comma just wouldn’t do your thought process justice, use a dash:

“The world is swimming in horrible movies, whether they be violent action movies or saccharine, simplistic romances – which is not surprising, given the necessity for studios to produce in a hurry.”

33. Get vs. acquire; get vs. become

“Get” and “acquire” are not interchangeable, because “acquire” means specifically to gain possession of and is normally not used with things you cannot actually have and hold, such as attention.

CORRECT: “I finally got her attention.”

INCORRECT: “I finally acquired her attention.”

Similarly, “get” and “become” are not always interchangeable. The short version: “get” is less formal than “become.”

One of us was taught a long time ago never to use “get” in an essay; the other one pretty much figured it out by themselves.

Consider the mixed-register tone of this:

“Hamlet, never a happy man, gets increasingly world-weary and melancholic as the play progresses.”

34. Take note vs. take notes

“Take note of this tip; take notes if you need help remembering.”

“To take note of something” means to pay attention to it.

E.g. “I took note of his advice, but I still ignored it.”

“To take notes” means to jot things down.

“What happened during the lecture? Dunno. I forget to take notes.”

35. Either vs. as well/too

Spot the error in these sentences:

“I don't like vanilla ice cream and I don't like chocolate cake too.”

“We are not disinclined to accepting the changes, and our customers are not adverse to the changes as well.”

Remember to use “either” instead of “too” or “as well” in negative constructions.

“I don't like vanilla ice cream and I don't like chocolate cake either.” (Assuming the meaning is “I don't like ice cream or cake.”)

“We are not disinclined to accepting the changes, and our customers are not adverse to the changes either.” (Be especially vigilant when using double negatives.)

36. How vs. what...like

These two expressions are sometimes interchangeable and sometimes not:

How are you?

What is she like?

The media tell us what the perfect body looks like. / The media tell us how the perfect body looks.

It is important to note that even in contexts that allow both expressions they cannot be combined. More directly: it is embarrassing when advanced speakers of English say “I know how the perfect summer looks like.”