

COSC 91/191, Spring 2019

Cormen's Rules of Usage, Condensed

1. Form the possessive singular of nouns by adding 's.
2. Use the serial comma.
3. Enclose parenthetical expressions between commas, parentheses, or em-dashes.
4. In a compound sentence, separate the two parts by a comma, followed by *and*.
5. Do not join independent clauses by a comma.
6. Use a colon to introduce a list of particulars, an appositive, an amplification, or an illustrative quotation. If you can eliminate the colon and get a sentence that is grammatically correct and means the same thing, then eliminate the colon.
7. A participial phrase at the beginning of a sentence must refer to the grammatical object.
8. Use exclamations sparingly.
9. Hyphenate compound adjectives.
10. Use parentheses and punctuation correctly.
11. Use *between* for two and *among* for three or more.
12. Use *can* for ability and *may* for permission.
13. *Compare with* and *compare to* are different.
14. *Comprise* does not mean *compose*, and you don't use *comprise* in the passive form.
15. There is no such phrase as *different than*.
16. *Affect* is different from *effect*.
17. Try to avoid using *etc*.
18. *Farther* refers to physical distance, and *further* does not.
19. *Hopefully* means "with hope."
20. The worst place to use *however* is at the beginning of a sentence.

21. Use *fewer* for countable objects and *less* for quantities that are not discretely countable.
22. Use *such as* when your example is one of the things, and use *like* when your example is not one of the things.
23. Use *as* for verbs and *like* for nouns.
24. Avoid using *one* to mean a generic person.
25. Try to avoid using *they*, *their*, and *them* to refer to just one person.
26. Avoid wimpy expressions such as *one of the most*.
27. Avoid *secondly*, *thirdly*, and so forth. Also, avoid *lastly*.
28. Use *shall* for belief and *will* for determination.
29. Use Latin abbreviations correctly.
30. *That* is restrictive, and *which* is not.
31. None of *this*, *that*, *these*, or *some* is, on its own, a noun phrase.
32. Do not use *aforementioned*.
33. *Try* takes the infinitive.
34. Use *very* sparingly.
35. *While* refers to time or duration.
36. *Only* modifies only the term that follows it.
37. When enclosing a colloquialism in quotation marks, make sure that it's really a colloquialism.
38. Commas and periods go inside quotation marks. Colons and semicolons go outside quotation marks. Exclamation marks and question marks go inside or outside, depending on the context.
39. Know when to write out numbers and when to use digits.