

The Uniform Code of Notation for Providing Feedback on Written Work Skidmore Department of Government

Introduction

The Government department has adopted a uniform code of notation for providing students with feedback on their written work. Your instructor will employ the following numbering system to identify unclear constructions and grammatical, punctuation, and usage errors. If, for example, your paper includes a sentence in which the subject and verb fail to agree either in number (singular or plural) or in person (first, second, or third), your instructor will underline or circle the offending sentence and place in the margin the number “3.” This notation will direct you to the #3 in the code below, where you will find the chapter(s), section(s), and, in some cases, pages in the 17th edition of *The Hodges Harbrace Handbook* (referenced below as *Hodges*) that both describe this error and offer instructions for how to correct it.

The Uniform Code

Clarity, Grammar, and Punctuation

No. 1: Sentence Fragments

Hodges, Chapter 2

Incorrect: When the president gives a press conference.

Correct: When the president gives a press conference he tries to sound like Andrew Shepherd.

No. 2: Comma Splices and Run-On Sentences

Hodges, Chapter 3

Incorrect: “We stand at Armageddon, and we battle for the Lord,” this statement causes modern audiences to think of mushroom clouds, though Roosevelt was merely trying to persuade his supporters that a Bull Moose could not be domesticated by an effete; wooly headed Princeton political scientist.

Correct: “We stand at Armageddon, and we battle for the lord”; this statement causes modern audiences to think of mushroom clouds. Roosevelt, however, was merely trying to persuade his supporters that a Bull Moose could not be domesticated by an effete, wooly headed Princeton political scientist.

No. 3: Subject-Verb Agreement

Hodges, Chapter 6, Section a

Incorrect: High levels of pollution **causes** damage both to the respiratory tract and to Los Angeles’ campaign to be featured in the AMA’s “Black Lung Prevention” public service announcement.

Correct: High levels of pollution **cause** damage both to the respiratory tract and to Los Angeles’ campaign to be featured in the AMA’s “Black Lung Prevention” public service announcement.

No. 4: Pronoun-Antecedent Disagreement

Hodges, Chapter 6, Section b

Incorrect: The American government years ago abandoned **their** effort to rule the Philippines.

Correct: The American government years ago abandoned **its** effort to rule the Philippines.

No. 5: Ambiguous Pronoun Reference

Hodges, Chapter 28, Section a

Incorrect: Jed Clampett and Mr. Drysdale were neighbors in Beverly Hills; he had moved there after finding oil on his Tennessee homestead.

Correct: Jed Clampett and Mr. Drysdale were neighbors in Beverly Hills; Jed had moved there after finding oil on his Tennessee homestead.

No. 6: Parallel Constructions

Hodges, Chapter 26

Incorrect: *The Secret* is not **to be** tossed lightly aside, but **it was** hurled with great force.

Correct: *The Secret* is not **to be** tossed lightly aside, but **to be** hurled with great force.

No. 7: Incorrect Pronoun Case

Hodges, Chapter 5, Section b

Incorrect: Just **between you and I**, “Pitchfork” Ben Tillman was raised in Crackerbox Palace

Correct: Just **between you and me**, “Pitchfork” Ben Tillman was raised in Crackerbox Palace

No. 8: Overuse of Passive Voice

Hodges, Chapter 7, Section c and Chapter 29, Section e

Incorrect: The British Expeditionary Force **was shredded** by the German Luftwaffe.

Correct: The Luftwaffe **shredded** the British Expeditionary Force.

No. 9: Misplaced, Dangling, and Unattached Modifiers

Hodges, Chapter 25

Incorrect: Upon entering the symposium, **the buffet table enticed Socrates**.

Correct: Upon entering the symposium, **Socrates first noticed the buffet table**.

No. 10: Misplacement of Modifier “Only”

Hodges, Chapter 25, Section a(1)

Incorrect: The lonely **only know** the way I feel tonight

(Placement of “only” suggests that the lonely know nothing other than the way that “I” feel tonight; that is, “the lonely’s” SAT verbal score is “1”)

Correct: **Only the lonely** know the way I feel tonight

(This placement of “only” suggests that no people other than the lonely can understand my despair, which is the meaning that the “celebrated Orbison” wished to convey to his auditors)

No. 11: Mixed Metaphors

Hodges, Chapter 23, Section b

Incorrect: Leaders of developing countries **cannot eat their seed corn** without **gumming up the wheels of commerce**.

Correct: Leaders of developing countries **cannot eat their seed corn** without reducing economic **yields**.

No. 12: Subjective Verbs

Incorrect: **I feel** that Moby Dick is white.

Correct: Moby Dick is white.

No. 13: Consistency of Verb Tense/Sequence of Verb Tense

Hodges, Chapter 7, Section b

Incorrect: Gandhi **was** fond of salt. He **thinks** that by marching to Dandi to protest the British salt tax he **would gain** the upper hand on both “perfidious Albion” and unpalatable popcorn.

Correct: Gandhi **was** fond of salt. He **thought** that by marching to Dandi to protest the British salt tax he **would gain** the upper hand on both “perfidious Albion” and unpalatable popcorn.

No. 14: Incorrect use of Common Abbreviations (e.g., i.e., pp., etc.)

Hodges, i.e., pp. 749, etc., p. 748

Incorrect: Castro did not accept Kennedy’s gift of a herbicide-lined wet suit (**e.g.**, he wanted to maintain his smooth, rosy-hued skin).

Correct: Castro did not accept Kennedy's gift of a herbicide-lined wet suit (**i.e.**, he wanted to maintain his smooth, rosy-hued skin)

No. 15: Ungrammatical Incorporation of Quotations

Hodges, Chapter 16

Incorrect: Lincoln said to Herndon that he was, "**go to** Gettysburg on the same train that broke John Henry's heart."

Correct: Lincoln said to Herndon that he was "**going to** Gettysburg on the same train that broke John Henry's heart."

No. 16: Anachronisms

Incorrect: Thomas Aquinas **loved to turn back the clock**.

Correct: Thomas Aquinas would have loved to turn back the clock **but the clock had yet to be invented**.

No. 17: Jargon/Slang

Hodges, Chapter 19, Section c

Incorrect: Webster kept **dogging** Hayne, despite the latter's statement that he subscribed to **synergistic approaches** to reconciliation

Correct: Webster continued to **question** Hayne's argument, despite the latter's statement that he was **committed** to reconciliation.

No. 18: Unidiomatic Expressions

Hodges, Chapter 20, Section c

Incorrect: Senator McCain says that I am **green behind the ears**.

Correct: Senator McCain says that I am **wet behind the ears**.

No. 19: Unnecessary Words

Hodges, Chapter 21

Incorrect: **Indeed, the fact that** there is no capitalism without failure means that there is no religion without sin.

Correct: Capitalism without failure is like religion without sin.

No. 20: Hyphen v. Dash

Hodges, Chapter 18, Section f and Chapter 17, Section e

Incorrect: Stalin had **well-- thought--out** ideas- including many that Beria thought were whacky- for directing the kulaks "toward the light."

Correct: Stalin had **well-thought-out** ideas-- including many that Beria thought were whacky-- for directing the kulaks "toward the light."

No. 21: Incorrect Word Choice

Hodges, Chapter 19, Section c

Incorrect: William Jennings Bryan told the Democratic Convention that he would not be **tacked to** a cross of gold.

Correct: William Jennings Bryan told the Democratic Convention that he would not be **crucified on** a cross of gold.

No. 22: Incorrect Possessive Case Formation

Hodges, Chapter 15, Section a

Incorrect: If you fail to protect **farmers** rights, then a guy named Goober will run the gas station on every corner of every city in this country.

Correct: If you fail to protect **farmers'** rights, then a guy named Goober will run the gas station on every corner of every city in this country.

No. 23: Apostrophe Errors

Hodges, Chapter 15, Section a

Incorrect: **Roosevelts** patrician upbringing gave him all the intellectual heft of a feather duster.

Correct: **Roosevelt's** patrician upbringing gave him all the intellectual heft of a feather duster

No. 24: Quotation Mark Errors

Hodges, Chapter 16

Incorrect: Louis XIV said, "I am the state".

Correct: Louis XIV said, "I am the state."

No. 25: Misuse of/Failure of Capitalization

Hodges, Chapter 9

Incorrect: The **united states senate** operates according to rules drafted by Gilbert Gottfried.

Correct: The **United States Senate** operates according to rules drafted by Gilbert Gottfried.

No. 26: Lack of Reference or Footnote Marks

Incorrect: A melancholy John F. Kennedy once averred, "There is always inequity in life. Some men are killed in war and some men are wounded, and some men never leave the country¹."

Correct: A melancholy John F. Kennedy once averred, "There is always inequity in life. Some men are killed in war and some men are wounded, and some men never leave the country."¹

Paper Structure

Hodges, Chapters 33-35

No. 27: Introductions

1

1

No. 28: Transitions between Sentences and Paragraphs

No. 29: Conclusions

Incorrect Usage

Hodges, pp. 739-757

No. 30: Affect/Effect

No. 31: Among/Between

No. 32: Bad/Badly

No. 33: Double Negative (*Hodges, Chapter 4, Section c*)

No. 34: Farther/Further

No. 35: Fewer/Less

No. 36: Imply/Infer

No. 37: In Regards To or In Terms Of

No. 38: Its/It's

No. 39: Lead/Led

No. 40: Lie/Lay

No. 41: Like/As

No. 42: Precede/Proceed

No. 43: Respectfully/Respectively

No. 44: Than/Then

No. 45: That/Which

No. 46: There/Their/They're

No. 47: To/Too

No. 48: Unique

No. 49: Who/Whom

No. 50: Who's/Whose

No. 51: Your/You're

Common Spelling Mistakes

Hodges, Chapter 18, Section c and pp. 739-757

No. 52: Capital/Capitol

No. 53: Cite/Site

No. 54: Complement/Compliment

No. 55: Principal/Principle

No. 56: Borders/Boarders

*"Irritating Terms and Phrases" to Avoid (most provided by Jeremy Butterfield in
Damp Squid: The English Language Laid Bare)*

No 57: At the end of the day

No. 58: Fairly unique

No. 59: I personally

No. 60: At this moment in time

No. 61: With all due respect

No. 62: Absolutely

No. 63: It's a nightmare

No. 64: Shouldn't of

No. 65: 24/7

No. 66: It's not rocket science

No. 67: The fact of the matter is

No. 68: Let me be perfectly clear