

Sounds Like a Lot of Who-Plah

Ah, the murky waters of *who* versus *whom*. In this issue of *KB CommEntary*, we dive into the deep end.

What's Up at KB COMM?

At KB COMM, we provide mission-critical communication and learning services to clients in a variety of industries. Thanks to our established and new clients for keeping us busy. Recent and ongoing projects include:

- Writing and editing numerous information products for a healthcare diagnostics manufacturer, including employee communications, customer presentations and letters, product marketing brochures and data sheets, and training materials
- Writing and editing marketing and employee communications for an academic research organization
- Formatting and revising manufacturing standard operating procedures, work instructions, forms, logbooks, and batch records for a pharmaceutical company
- Managing workload for document formatting, quality check, and upload to a document management system for a pharmaceutical company
- Creating content-rich model documents for CMC modules for a pharmaceutical company
- Drafting CMC modules for electronic submission to health authorities on behalf of a pharmaceutical company
- Reviewing and editing for consistency and accuracy response documents and associated modules for electronic submission to health authorities on behalf of pharmaceutical companies

KB COMM LLC is a certified Women's Business Enterprise. We are officially qualified to participate in corporations' woman- and minority-owned vendor programs.

Please keep us in mind for your communication or training projects.

Tips and Tales

Who's Who?

The other day I saw an advertisement that read "They Say Washington Runs on Who-Knows-Who." Many of us might not think twice about that, but it caused me to do a double take. First of all, why the hyphens? And second, shouldn't that last "who" be "whom"?

While a hyphen can be used to make reading easier, the advertisement is already easy to read; it has only eight words, and all but one are one syllable. I got my red pen and crossed out those babies. Marketing types have always bent language and punctuation to suit their purposes, but sometimes they go a little too far.

As for that pesky second *who*, you don't start a letter with "To who it concerns," do you? *Whom* is a word many of us don't love (think Bo Diddley, *Ghostbusters*, *The Who*), but it has its proper place. A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away, we were little tykes who learned about the parts of a sentence, including subjects and objects. We were taught to use *who* if it's the subject of a sentence or clause and *whom* if it's the object of a preposition or verb.

You might not remember all the nuts and bolts of sentence construction, and reading this rule may have made your eyes glaze. But hang on, because I have an easier way to tell when whom is appropriate, thanks to Mignon Fogarty, AKA [Grammar Girl](#).

Whom, Simplified

All you need to do to see which is correct is substitute *he* for *who* or *him* for *whom* in the sentence or phrase. If *him* is correct, use *whom*.

For example, in the advertisement that got my red pen in a tizzy, substitute *He* for both *Whos* and you will see what I mean. You wouldn't say "He Knows He," would you? Therefore, the second *who* should be *whom*: "They Say Washington Runs on Who Knows Whom." I am a big fan of mnemonics, so I can always remember *him* goes with *whom*, as they both end in the letter *m*.

After all, Hemingway's bell tolled for *him*, not *he*.

Whom may have lost some of its luster, and there are many who think its use is pretentious, but you must admit that this is a pretty clever trick. Now you can wow all your friends the next time you watch *Dr. Whom*.

And please remember, *when it has to be right*, KB COMM is here to help.

Sincerely,

Kathy

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KB COMM

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