

Comma Chameleon

The little comma packs quite a punch in determining the meaning of a sentence. Learn more in this issue of *KB CommEntary*.

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
- Writing standard operating procedures for lab equipment
- Formatting and revising manufacturing standard operating procedures, work instructions, forms, logbooks, and batch records for 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

Comma Clause

You know we love commas. They make lists easier to read and give us a chance to catch our breath by indicating pauses in sentences. But sometimes they really punch above their weight, grammatically speaking, because their inclusion or lack thereof can completely change the meaning of a sentence.

Take restrictive and nonrestrictive clauses, for example. To refresh your memory, a clause is a group of words that contains a *subject* and a *predicate* (in simplest terms, a noun and a verb). A restrictive clause limits (restricts) the meaning of the noun before it. It is essential to the meaning of the sentence and therefore is never set off by commas. For example:

My friend Paul who lives down the street owned a restaurant.

In this sentence, *who lives down the street* is a restrictive, or essential, clause. It specifies which of my friends named Paul owned a restaurant—the one who lives down the street. If you remove the clause, it changes the meaning of the sentence.

Conversely:

My friend Paul, who lives down the street, owned a restaurant.

In this sentence, the commas identify who lives down the street as a nonrestrictive, or nonessential, clause. In this case, what's important is that my friend Paul owns a restaurant. The fact that he lives down the street is nice to know but not essential.

Now let's consider this sentence:

The shoes which I bought yesterday are very comfortable.

If you're in Ireland or the UK, this sentence means that the specific pair of shoes you bought yesterday is very comfortable. But in the US, we correctly use *that* rather than *which* in restrictive clauses, as follows:

The shoes that I bought yesterday are very comfortable.

If, on the other hand, you mean to say that the shoes are really comfortable, and by the way, you just bought them yesterday:

The shoes, which I bought yesterday, are very comfortable.

Please note that *which* correctly introduces a nonrestrictive clause no matter where you live.

Commas—the little guys that make a big difference!

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

Sincerely,

Kathy

Kathy Breuninger

KB COMM

kbcommllc.com

