

7

The Hamilton College Writing Center presents

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS OF WRITING

The Seventh Deadly Sin: Committing Pet Peeves

Learning to write clearly and effectively is a central part of your education. As the *Hamilton College Catalogue* notes, “The College expects its students to think, write and speak with clarity, understanding and precision.” Below is a list of professors’ pet peeves you should consider as you aim for “clarity, understanding and precision” in your writing.

PET PEEVES

utilize vs. *use*

singular/plural disagreement

bloated diction

inflated, imprecise words

misuse of *prove/proof*

burying the subject

unnecessary subordinate clause and passive voice

use of *I* as object

indefinite antecedent

loose vs. *lose*

treating *data* as singular

than vs. *then*

vacuous first sentences

affect vs. *effect*

less vs. *fewer*

use of *impact* when violent implications are inappropriate

general sloppiness

EXAMPLES OF INCORRECT USAGE

Descartes *utilizes* the wax argument to show that we know physical objects with the mind, not the senses.

The *student* finished the essay, only to discover that *their* printer did not work.

Once liberty is *actualized*, justice will burgeon.

The lifestyles of the majority of individuals were difficult due to what society *utilized* against them.

The results *prove* that our hypothesis was correct. (A study *supports* a hypothesis, not *proves* it.)

The significance of the study *is that there is*....

There was one factor *that was ignored by the “con” side*:

They went with Dido and *I* to tour the Colosseum. The family came to see David and *I* perform.

President Johnson’s ignoring of George Ball’s Vietnam memo proved disastrous for *him*. (for whom?)

Forecasters fear that stocks will *loose* value next year.

The *data shows* that medication affects ADHD symptoms.

The data indicate that Americans work more hours *then* Europeans.

Scientists have studied DNA for years.

We studied the *affect* of the angle on acceleration.

Bush got *less* votes than Gore in 2000.

The poem has a subtle, gradual *impact* on the reader.

The English department cares too much about grammar and spelling

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO VIEW ALL SEVEN DEADLY SINS OF WRITING VISIT:
www.hamilton.edu/writingresources

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