

## Re: Where to start?

**Source:** <http://www.derkeiler.com/Newsgroups/sci.crypt/2004-02/1385.html>

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**From:** Joe Peschel ([jpeschel\\_at\\_no.spam.org](mailto:jpeschel_at_no.spam.org))

**Date:** 02/18/04

Date: Wed, 18 Feb 2004 20:56:20 -0000

Richard Heathfield <[invalid@address.co.uk.invalid](mailto:invalid@address.co.uk.invalid)> wrote in  
[news:40335630@news2.power.net.uk](mailto:news:40335630@news2.power.net.uk):

> *Joe Peschel wrote:*

>

> <snip>

>

>>> *Interestingly, I disagree that the "traditional style" to which Mr  
>>> Gwyn refers /is/ traditional. I /think/ it was introduced by  
>>> American printing houses for a technical reason to do with the  
>>> fragility of type, although of course I could be mistaken about  
>>> that.*

>>

>> *I think you are mistaken.*

>

> *I tried to find some supporting evidence for this (since I really am  
> not just making it up), but I couldn't seem to find the right Google  
> incantation. I may look again this evening.*

>

Good luck!

>>>> *Is the writing poor? For most, it's probably not. For Gwyn? Yes,  
>>>> and it requires editing to be standard Gwynian prose.*

>>>

>>> *That doesn't look so bad to me. And let's not forget (quoth he,  
>>> beginning a sentence with a conjunction!) that none of us get paid  
>>> for this.*

>>

>> *There's nothing wrong with beginning a sentence with a conjunction  
>> now and then.*

>

> *It should, however, be done sparingly.*

Yup.

> *I recall a book by, I think,*

> *Joseph Conrad, in which the very first sentence started with "And", to*

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> *great dramatic effect. Conrad wasn't a native English speaker,*

Conrad was born in Poland and moved to England when he was 21, I think. Of the Conrad novels on my shelf, I found none that begin with "And." Maybe you are thinking of someone else. On the other hand, Conrad quotes Chaucer at the beginning of *The Mirror of the Sea*. Is that it?

Look at some of the on-line stuff of Conrad. Search for "And." He uses it quite a bit.

> *but*

> *that sentence was /so/ effective that I don't think it was accidental.*

> *I also think it would have been far less effective if over-used.*

>

>>> *Oh, you /do/? Where do I sign up, then? :-)*

>>

>> *Sign up?*

>

> *For being paid for composing Usenet articles.*

If you find someone willing to pay, lemme know! (Chew on that spelling for a while folks.)

>

>

>> *I meant Gwyn should have edited his message a tad before he sent*

>> *it.*

>

> *Well, my point is that we shouldn't necessarily have to be*

> *word-perfect when composing Usenet articles. I know I make mistakes of*

> *grammar, punctuation, and even (on occasion) spelling when writing*

> *Usenet articles, and that doesn't even include typos. I wish I didn't,*

> *but that's life. I can live with my level of inaccuracy, and so can*

> *most readers. I suspect Mr Gwyn has much the same opinion.*

>

I make mistakes, too, and I can bear my level of inaccuracy, but Gwyn often tries to appear expert on just about everything. His expertise, though, does not extend to writing. He's not bad. He is just not the expert he would have you think.

>

>>> *My point is simply that Mr Gwyn gives freely of his time to*

>>> *participate in this newsgroup (as do you), and I think we can come*

>>> *up with better uses of that time than trying to browbeat him into*

>>> *using illogical punctuation.*

>>

>> *I'm not browbeating him. I'm trying to persuade him to use standard*

>> *American English.*

>

> *Forgive the colourful expression, please. I didn't mean it to be taken*

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> *literally. :-) I think your chances of persuading Mr Gwyn of doing  
> anything he doesn't want to do are remarkably low. I suppose my  
> chances of persuading /you/ are pretty low, too. But that's Usenet for  
> you!*

Oh, well.

>  
> <snip>  
>  
>>> *I think sci.crypt generally has a high opinion of your contributions  
>>> to this newsgroup, and is therefore somewhat surprised by this  
>>> rather uncharacteristically illiberal stance you're taking. Of  
>>> course, this can be explained very easily by the fact that it's your  
>>> subject, so to speak. (I suppose I am similarly illiberal when it  
>>> comes to C programming.)*  
>>  
>> *Yes.*  
>  
> *And the crowd roared its approval. Could reality be gaining a foothold  
> on the conversation? It was a slim hope, but a hope nonetheless.*  
>  
>  
>>>> *Funny thing is my  
>>>> criticism of Doug's writing is correct. And Doug knows it. I think  
>>>> you know it, too, Richard.*  
>>>  
>>> *I know that you are correct in identifying the difference between  
>>> Doug's style and the American style. I am not so sure that you are  
>>> correct in perceiving it to be a problem.*  
>>  
>> *It is a problem if Americans think Gwyn's punctuation style is the  
>> correct style for Americans to imitate.*  
>  
> *Americans who use sci.crypt as a writing style guide are likely to  
> have far greater problems than (what you consider to be) misplaced  
> punctuation.*

I mean those American kids who read sci.crypt, recognize that Gwyn is a smart guy, and try to emulate him and his writing.

>  
> <snip>  
>  
>>> <snip>  
>>  
>> *Hey, why did you snip this:*  
>>  
>> *I really thought he would write, "Oops."*  
>>  
>> *He didn't.*

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>>  
>> *A strange-looking dog barked, the gates opened, and the  
>> discussion, with a few weird flames, has burned on.*  
>>  
>> *I liked that part.*  
>  
> *So did I, but the article was very long, and I felt obliged to snip  
> where I could (as I have also done with this reply).*

And here it is again. Yippie!

>  
> <snip>  
>  
>>>> *It's not /wrong/ to punctuate "like this". It's just a different  
>>>> style to the style to which you are accustomed. That doesn't make  
>>>> it wrong.*  
>>>>  
>>>> *Yeah, it's wrong. Try sending an ms punctuated /like/ that to an  
>>>> editor.*  
>>>> :-)  
>>>>  
>>> *I did. They "corrected" it, much to my annoyance.*  
>>  
>> *Get it right next time!*  
>  
> *According to my lights, it /was/ right. Their "corrections" were, in  
> my opinion, incorrect.*

Repeat after me, "The editor is always right."

>  
>>>> *I do get a bit peeved, though, at folks who feel the need italicize  
>>>> or emphasize so many words so often.*  
>>>>  
>>>> *That's me! I can't help it. I write as I speak, and my speech  
>>>> includes a great many emphases. I can actually /pronounce/ italics!  
>>>> (And parentheses.)*  
>>>>  
>>>> *BTW you missed "to" (after "need"), and misspelt "italicisNo, let's  
>>>> not go there – we're in enough of a mire as it is, methinks.*  
>>>>  
>>>> *Yes, I missed "to."*  
>>>>  
>>>> *If I mentally substitute "to." in the original sentence, I get:*  
>>>>  
>>>> *I do get a bit peeved, though, at folks who  
>>>> feel the need to. italicize or emphasize so  
>>>> many words so often.*  
>>>>  
>>>> *That's why I think the American way is – well, perhaps "silly" is too*

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> *strong a word, but it doesn't seem to me to make much sense.*

That's because you've been using a different style all of your life. Stick with the one familiar to you. If you try writing much in American English, you'll end up making more mistakes than you would if you were writing British English. If the tables were turned on me, I'd be making more mistakes, too.

>

>> *Oops, but italicize is spelled correctly.*

>

> *For Americans, yes. (Actually, both spellings are listed in my English dictionary, with the -ize ending /not/ marked as "NAmerican"; some Englishmen obviously disagree with me about that ending.)*

I noticed that some Brits disagree with you about the -ise and -ize matter. I have no idea which -ending is standard British usage. Good thing I don't try to write for British publications. I don't put petrol in my car, either, but I think I'll now slam the hood down on this message and go have a pint of ale. Slamming the bonnet, for some reason, sounded goofy. :-)

J

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When will Bush come to his senses?  
Joe Peschel  
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