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7 Marian Avenue  
Armadale WA 6112

Telephone (08) 9399 4917 mob. 0428 111 951

... a few words about more effective communications

[www.markschneider.net.au](http://www.markschneider.net.au)  
[westernwriter@westnet.com.au](mailto:westernwriter@westnet.com.au)

## Words Polished While You Wait



In business clear communications really counts. There's just no excuse for tortured syntax and sentences you have to read several times to understand.

You may be dealing with complex technical issues in your business but that's no reason why your reports can't be written as concisely and clearly as possible.

When you're producing reports for the public it's essential that your customers aren't wasting their precious time ploughing through the bad writing of someone who might be technically adept but who's not exactly George Orwell.

If you've got a report that needs to go public why not turn it over to me for a final professional editing?

In my writing career I've had to get my head around many challenging topics from compressed air technology and agricultural chemicals to pig immunisation and GPS navigation systems.

Recently I was asked to edit a geologist's report on a coal deposit.

I managed to reduce its length by several hundred words, greatly tightening it up and improving its readability.

Depending on my work load, I can frequently edit reports and get them back to you within days.

So if you're worried that report that's just dropped into your in-tray is as clear as mud and needs a bit of editing, why not give me a call today?

## Howzat? Where Did Those Weird Cricket Words Come From?

With the football season now drawing mercifully to a close for Dockers and Eagles fans alike the minds of sporting buffs will soon be turning to cricket, their appetites whetted by an engrossing Ashes series.

You'd have to feel sorry for any immigrant not from a British Commonwealth country who arrived here and took it upon themselves to understand the game.

If the rules of the game (sorry, make that the *laws* of the game) aren't complex enough there's the language of cricket which borders on the bizarre.

Try explaining this to a newcomer:

*Flintoff is on strike, and Ponting has set an attacking field, with two short legs, a silly point, and a man out on the pull at deep third man.*

It's all very weird. Just where do all those odd words come from?

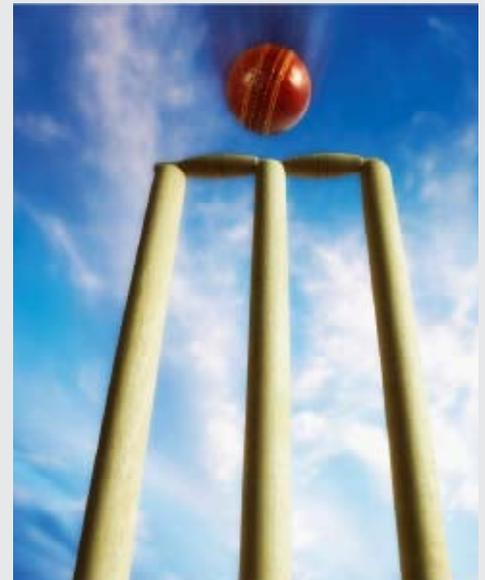
Well here's a guide to a few of them, though the list is by no means comprehensive:

**Silly:** This description of any position very close to the batsman is surprisingly straightforward – you'd have to be silly to stand that close to the batsman!

**Gully:** The name suggests a narrow channel or "gorge" between points and slips.

**Point:** This comes from cricket's early days when the position was called "point of the bat" – no more than three and a half yards from the batsman.

**Slips:** This has its origins in an early description of the long stop "required to cover many slips from the bat".



**Cover:** Originally this position referred to "The man who covers the Point and Middle Wicket."

**Googly:** Googly may have its origins in Australia in the 1890s where it was used to describe a delivery that mystified a batsman so much it made their eyes "goggle".

**Duck:** A duck's egg resembles a 0, so a batsman who is dismissed without scoring has made a 0, or made a duck.

**Crease:** Creases or "furrows in the surface" were originally cut into the turf before the introduction of painted white lines at about the time of W.G. Grace.

**Yorker:** Yorker is thought to derive from a bit of 18th or 19th Century regional prejudice against those from Yorkshire where "to pull yorkshire" on a person was to trick or deceive them.

A similar explanation has been suggested for the racist origins of bowling a Chinaman – a ball of rare deviousness and cunning.

# Texting Abbreviations Are Nothing New

In the last edition I railed about the increasing use of texting in everyday English, that annoying tendency to condense words that U R increasingly Cing everywhere (C wot I mean!).

Well I was interested to learn recently that technologically-driven abbreviations are nothing new.

Those of us of a certain vintage will remember the telegram, those urgent and important little messages that travelled electronically but were usually hand delivered to you.

They were frequently the bearers of very bad news but one that was always welcomed was the telegram from the Queen on your 100th birthday.

Telegrams were the state-of-the-art rapid telecommunications technology of their day and as the telegram companies charged by the word, brevity was the order of the day when writing one.

Accordingly "a," "the," "we," "I," and "that" tended to vanish from telegrams and all punctuation entirely disappeared by necessity.

Some really extreme forms of

telegraphic word crunching were employed by foreign correspondents.

*How To Write Telegrams Properly*, Nelson E Ross' indispensable 1928 guide to the art, reports that a foreign correspondent might write:

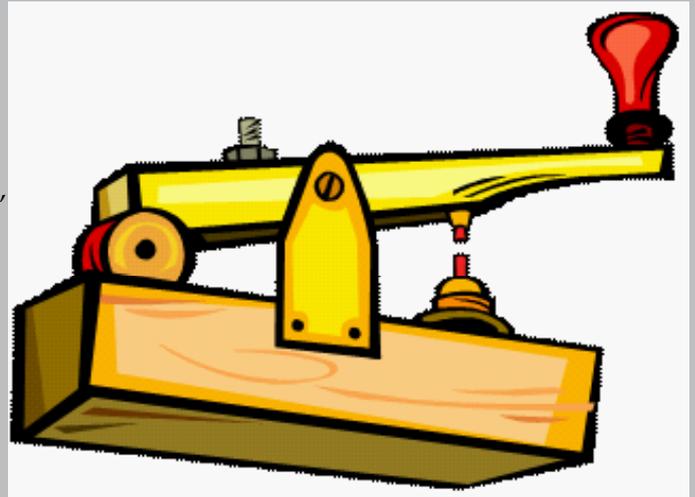
"The enemy has not yet been met or even seen on account of the entanglements thrown up during the night," etc.

But when revised for the cable, this dispatch might read:

"Enemy unmet unseen account entanglements upthrown night."

Pity the poor sub-editor who had to sort out that lot on arrival.

Codes were liberally used, especially in business telegrams, according to Nelson Ross' guide, so that "sell 10,000 bushels of May wheat at \$1.45 1/4" might be coded



into "Sell barney stoke," which reduces the message to three words. In this instance, "barney" means 10,000 bushels of May wheat. "Stoke" means "1.45 1/4."

The telegram may have gone the way of the dodo, a casualty of the age of email, but one by-product of the technology still survives today.

The Western Union money transfer dates back to 1871 and is still going strong in the internet age as a quick and reliable way to transfer money around the world.

## Grammar Tips and Tidbits

from Angela Smith\*

We use abbreviations every day when we're writing.

Most of you know that abbreviations that are pronounced as words are called acronyms - think of NATO, AIDS, or OPEC.

But did you know that abbreviations that are pronounced one letter at a time are called initialisms?

According to The Gregg Reference Manual, 10th Edition, abbreviations like FBI, HTML, IBM, and DVD are technically initialisms, not acronyms.

That's a new one for me! Apparently not every grammar authority makes this distinction, so don't feel bad if you've never heard the term "initialisms" until now.

When you're using acronyms, you need to watch for redundant phrases.

Be sure you don't follow an abbreviation with a word that's already part of the abbreviation.

A perfect example of a redundant acronym is PIN number. You wouldn't say "Personal Identification Number number," would you?

Here are some other common redundant acronyms to look out for:

- ATM machine
- UPC code
- HIV virus
- LCD display
- ABS system
- PDF format
- VIN number
- SAT test
- NAFTA agreement

So just remember to shave off that last unnecessary word when using acronyms and initialisms, and you'll be fine:

I hope you don't forget your PIN the next time you're at the ATM!

**\*You'll find more grammar tips and tidbits on Angela's web page: <http://www.accu-assist.com/grammar-tips-archive.htm>**

## Misused Words

from Paul Brians' *Common Errors in English Usage*

### Weather/Whether/ Wether

The climate is made up of "weather"; whether it is nice out depends on whether it is raining or not. A wether is just a castrated sheep.

### Precedence/Precedents

Although these words sound the same, they work differently. The pop star is given precedence over the factory worker at the entrance to the dance club. "Precedents" is just the plural of "precedent": "If we let the kids adopt that rattlesnake as a pet and agree to let them take it for a walk in Death Valley, we'll be setting some bad precedents."