

Syntax relief

Please, grammar, don't hurt 'em

These are scary times for copy editors. Well, these are scary times for Earthlings in general, but especially for us copy editors.

Those unreliable spell- and grammar-checkers installed on personal computers have lulled the lazy into thinking all is well and conjugated in the universe. Hardly.

E-mails, text messages and The Artist Currently Known as Prince deserve some of the blame for enabling the degradation of our language. If Elvis Presley ever comes out of hiding, he can rerelease his 1960 classic as "r u lone-some 2nite." LOL. :)

But it all starts at the top: As with most problems presently plaguing the planet, we can point our fingers directly at Dubya. It came as no shock that a Bush couldn't string together a sentence—his father prepared us for that disappointment—but it sure was hard to switch gears after the impressive verbal gymnastics of the Clinton administration. In one election, we went from "It depends on what the definition of 'is' is" to "Is our children learning?"

It literally makes me sick to my stomach.

I realize most folks don't concern themselves with dangling modifiers and split infinitives, but when it's your line of work, it's easy to obsess.

For instance, every time I see a blooper on a business sign, I actually fantasize about sneaking by in the middle of the night and fixing it with a can of spray paint. ("ENTERANCE AT REAR" springs to mind—the typo screamed from the side of a building at Southeast 50th and Foster for years.) I'd even be willing to risk arrest for vandalism, because I've already got my defense strategy figured out: I'll plead for mercy from the court because my crime served a greater good—eradicating error!

I know what you're thinking: Get a life. You haven't heard the half of it.

While listening to the title track of my favorite Madonna album, *Erotica*, I recently became distracted by the line, "Only the one that hurts you can make you feel better...only the one that inflicts the pain can take it away." Fine lyrics, certainly, but I found myself re-writing them in my head instead of singing along. (I would've substituted "who" for "that." "That" should be reserved for inanimate objects...unless perhaps Madge's goal was to objectify?)

Another dilemma arises every time I compile the calendar of events. You wouldn't believe how many people are "hosting" events in this town. The Associated Press, which compiles the style bible that most newspapers follow to the letter, insists that "host" is a noun, not a verb, but Webster's New World Dictionary says otherwise. Whom to believe? I eventually caved on that one, so "host" is now acceptable as both a noun and a verb in the pages of *Just Out*.

Sadly, this is what keeps me up at night.

The AP means well, striving for consistency from publication to publication. When a word has two possible spellings, I can typically turn to the guide for an answer: Use "ax" instead of "axe," "gray" instead of "grey," "adviser" instead of "advisor," etc. It also lists a ton of other technicalities about proper names. (Did you know "Dr Pepper" has no period? Hmm!)

With my brain swimming with all this trivia, it would be a shame to keep it all to myself. So, I humbly offer these helpful hints on how you can do your part to make the world a safer, smarter place:

- "Okay," "emcee" and "deejay" are not



Jim's Closet
by Jim Radosta

THE TOP SHELF

It's a sharp Tony Award winner. It's a heartwarming ode to baseball. It's a complex examination of homophobia and racism and where the two collide.

But at the opening night reception for *Take Me Out*—continuing through July 3 at Artists Rep—the conversation focused mostly on those lengthy shower scenes. A fellow journalist commented on the ample swing of the leading man's bat, and one of the actors balked at the size of his own nubber. Clearly, we need to get our minds out of the dugout.

While we're on the subject of Tonys, tune in 8 p.m. June 5 on CBS to cheer for dyke thesp *Cherry Jones*, the frontrunner for Best Performance by a Leading Actress in a Play for *Doubt*.

"I didn't want to do it in front of all the cameras, but I wanted to take him in the back and kiss him on the mouth."

—Formerly homophobic Philadelphia 76er Allen "The Answer" Iverson, upon learning May 24 that his new head coach is Maurice Cheeks, who was fired by the Portland Trail Blazers in March.

words, so it's OK to stop using them.

• "ATM machine," "PIN number," "potluck dinner" and "pickup truck" are redundant. Why waste the ink and the paper? Resources are scarce!

• There's no such thing as a "first annual" event. You can proclaim a "first-ever" event in hopes of having another one 12 months later, but until such time, it can't be considered "annual."

• Another common mistake is the term "one-year anniversary." Every anniversary is a "one-year anniversary"; the appropriate term is "first anniversary."

• "Bus" is how you desegregate schools and clear dishes at a restaurant. "Buss" is an archaic synonym for "kiss." To avoid confusion, even though it looks funny, the verb forms of "bus" should be "bused" and "busing." So, the next time you see misspelled signs saying, "No change for busses" or "Thanks for bussing your table," don't take them literally.

• Speaking of which, the L word is literally misused 99 percent of the time—this sentence included. If you say, "He was literally beaten to a pulp," then he'd better look like orange juice. Instead, try "nearly," "practically" or "virtually."

• When you tell someone, "I feel nauseous," you're inadvertently insinuating that you induce nausea in other people. What you mean to say is, "I feel nauseated." Unless, of course, you're George W. Bush. **JR**

Arts and Culture Editor JIM RADOSTA needs your feedback. Write to jim@justout.com.

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