**What about grammar?**

**First, what is it?**

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| **Grammar**is the system and logical structure that allows speakers of a language to understand one another’s clauses and sentences. | **Usage**is the system of expectations the govern whether a unit of language is is “correct.” Most academic and technical writing uses Standard Edited American English. | **Style**refers to the range of choices within Standard Edited American English that might be preferred in different disciplines or genres: for example, level of formality, length and density of sentences, preference for active or passive voice, and so on.  |

**Why are these distinctions important?**

Ideally, you will be directing students to resources (see below) that will help them understand usage conventions. Using precise and accurate terminology will help students find useful resources and understand how to apply the information to their writing. For example, if a student is writing using an informal or conversational style, feedback that refers to their grammar will likely lead them to resources that are more confusing than illuminating. In this case, it would be more productive to identify a few markers of formality (such as third person, elevated and precise diction, impersonal address, few idioms or abbreviations, and tightly-structured sentences) that students could apply in revision.

**Tips for giving feedback on usage and style:**

* **Remember that usage errors are a lower-order concern**. Don’t spend time commenting on usage in early drafts that will require higher-order revisions.
* **Address usage problems as they appear in students’ own writing.** Decontextualized usage exercises tend to have little impact.
* **Identify patterns.** Marking every instance of an error can be time-consuming for you and overwhelming for the student. Instead, mark instances occurring in a single page, section, or paragraph, explain how to identify the problem, and ask the student to address the problem throughout the draft.
* **Limit the number of patterns to work on in a single draft.** For frequently recurring or major concerns, focus on one. For minor concerns, related concerns, or those that are relatively rare, you might address two or three in a draft.
* **Make use of resources.** If you provide feedback digitally using the comment functions in Word, Google Docs, or Blackboard, link to resources that define the error and explain how to correct it. Such resources include [Tip Sheets from UCA’s Center for Writing and Communication](http://uca.edu/cwc/quick-help/tip-sheets/), the [Purdue Online Writing Lab](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/5/), and websites like [Grammar Girl](https://www.quickanddirtytips.com/grammar-girl).