

Here are some notes I put together after reviewing our group feedback story for this month. These common mistakes are easy to correct and make our text much cleaner.

1. **Adverbs.** Mark Twain's take on adverbs is, "If you see an adverb, kill it." Adverbs are sometimes valid and useful, but they are overused, mostly to prop up a weak verb. A strong, well-chosen verb tends to eliminate the need for an adverb. My rule is: reach for an adverb only after you've decided there isn't a better verb that does the job.

The man ran quickly to catch the bus.

The man rushed/raced/dashed/sprinted to catch the bus.

2. **Commas and periods.** Always put commas and periods inside quotation marks, even with lists: *I heard a confident voice sing "You Are My Sunshine," "Love Me Tender," and "Rockin' Robin."*
3. **Interior monologue.** Italicize interior thought and put it in the present tense.

Why are they doing that?

4. **Said.** There is nothing wrong with repeating *said* when writing dialogue. People read right over it. If you try to replace *said* with *commented*, *retorted*, *murmured*, *blurted*, *declared*, *remarked*, *countered*, *rebuked*, etc., it gets tiresome, and the reader pays more attention to the dialogue tags than what is being said.
5. **Commas with dialogue.** When writing dialogue, you must use a comma before the closing quotation mark and attribution.

"Come with me to the dance," Renee said. "It will be fun."

6. **Time.** Use four digits to show time, 1:00 p.m., not 1 p.m.
7. **a.m., p.m.** These designations use lowercase letters and periods.
8. **Compound words.** Check compound words to see if they are two separate words, hyphenated, or one word—*backyard*, *front yard*, *in-depth*. You can type the word(s) in question into an online search engine followed by the words *Merriam* and *Webster* to see the current status of such words or phrases.