Grammatical Challenges: Points to Ponder
Use the **possessive form** with a **gerund**.

**Proper**

- I really appreciate your helping with this initiative.
- They would appreciate its being included on the program.
- All assumptions are based on his getting well soon.

**Improper**

- I really appreciate you helping with this initiative.
- They would appreciate it being included on the program.
- All assumptions are based on him getting well soon.
Which is correct?

• It was a good business plan, and I did not mind him profiting from it.

• It was a good business plan, and I did not mind his profiting from it.
Which vs. That

- “Which” is preceded by a comma.
- “That” is not preceded by a comma.
Which vs. That

Proper
• He maintains high standards, which are very helpful to him in meeting his goals.
• He maintains standards that are very helpful to him in meeting his goals.

Improper
• He maintains high standards, that are very helpful to him in meeting his goals.
• He maintains standards which are very helpful to him in meeting his goals.
Which are correct?

• She has attained the rank of full professor, which is a laudable achievement in today’s competitive academic environment.
• She has garnered publicity that will help the project.
• She has attained the rank of full professor that is a laudable achievement in today’s competitive academic environment.
• She has garnered publicity which will help the project.
Use the singular form for organizations

**Proper**
- The Association is proud of its accomplishments.

**Improper**
- The Association is proud of their accomplishments.
Which is correct?

- The College hopes to achieve their fundraising goals.
- The College hopes to achieve its fundraising goals.
Lie vs. Lay

Proper
- In the meeting, he laid out several alternatives.
- I will lay down my burden.
- Let’s go lie out in the sun and relax.
- He has laid down the gauntlet.

Improper
- In the meeting, he lay out several alternatives.
- Let’s go lay out in the sun and relax.
Which is correct?

• I plan to lay down on the sand at the beach.

• I plan to lie down on the sand at the beach.
Sank vs. Sunk

Proper
• The boat sank.
• The boat has sunk.

Improper
• The boat sunk.
Which is correct?

• The ship on which I was riding sunk, but we were rescued.

• The ship on which we were riding sank, but we were rescued.
Hang vs. Hung

Proper
• Maria hung up her coat.
• Sue hangs the wallpaper very well.
• Since John has been convicted of the crime, he will be hanged.
• She hanged herself.

Improper
• Since John has been convicted of the crime, he will be hung.
• She hung herself.
Which is correct?

• Mary Surratt was convicted and subsequently hung.

• Mary Surratt was convicted and subsequently hanged.
Authorities may disagree

• Her strategy has **proved** to be very useful.
• The group has **striven** to meet its goals.

• Her strategy has **proved** to be very useful.
• The group has **strived** to meet its goals.
When in doubt...

- Be guided by how the phrase appears in related materials.
- Do a search in the *New York Times* or *Washington Post*. 
Avoiding common pitfalls

• “Accommodate” has two “m’s.”
• The word “irregardless” does not exist!
• There is “a rat” in “separate.”
• Use “i” before “e,” except after “c” (e.g., receive)
Which is correct?

• I hope to receive separate accommodations regardless of financial considerations.

• I hope to receive separate accommodations irregardless of financial considerations.
Happy Grammatical Sailing!