

Forum:[Hack Forums](#)

Thread: [Six obscure grammatical nuances](#)

Rivalry - June 29, 2014, 2:31 am

I was going through my threads and found this from ages ago. It was posted in a group SF, so I thought I'd drag it out for everyone to see. I don't profess to have perfect (or even good) grammar, but these are some oddball grammatical niches that everyone forgets about.

'That' vs. 'Which'

'I have a bike, which is red.'
'I have a bike, that is red.'

'There's a colour that I like, but I forget what it's called.'
'There's a colour which I like, but I forget what it's called.'

This one is simple! One can only use 'which' after a comma, unless the sentence requires it in some other form, obviously (for instance, 'Which one do you prefer?').

The Oxford Comma

'You can get the bike in red and gold, blue and teal, and yellow and black.'

This isn't always strictly necessary, but it looks good and can improve clarity of a list. Essentially, the Oxford Comma is a comma placed before an 'and' in the last item of a list, as above.

Spoiler [\(Click to View\)](#)

'Less' vs. 'Fewer'

'I own fewer dogs than you.'
'I own less dogs than you.'

'I have less money than you.'
'I have fewer money than you.'

Many people get this only partially right. Use 'fewer' when referring to something in the plural, and 'less' when referring to an unquantifiable object, or something without a plural (for instance, time is a good example).

'Who' vs. 'Whom'

'Who sent you?'
'Whom sent you?'

'To whom did you send the letter?'

'To who did you send the letter?'

Basically, 'who' is a nominative pronoun (like 'he', 'she', 'it' etc), but 'whom' is in the accusative (like 'her', 'him' etc).

'Practice' vs. 'Practise'

'I'm going to band practice.'

'I'm going to band practise.'

'I'm going to practise for band.'

'I'm going to practice for band.'

This causes many unnecessary problems, because it goes like 'advice' and 'advise'. 'Practice' is the noun (just like 'advice'), whilst 'practise' is the verb (like 'advise'). If you're ever unsure, substitute 'practice/practise' in your sentence for 'advice/advise' and see which makes sense.

'Disinterested' vs. 'Uninterested'

'The referee was disinterested in the game.'

'The referee was uninterested in the game.' Could technically be right, but you get the idea.

'I'm totally uninterested in Geography.'

'I'm totally disinterested in Geography.'

They aren't synonymous, so don't treat them as such! Basically, someone who is 'disinterested' is unbiased or impartial, whereas someone who is 'uninterested' is bored, or doesn't care about whatever the context happens to refer to. For example, a judge would be disinterested in his court case, but (hopefully) not uninterested.

Welp, now you know, I suppose. ?

RIPPER - June 29, 2014, 2:47 am

Good post, OP. Thanks for posting this. :)

declanL - June 29, 2014, 2:50 am

Nice one! I knew about the fewer and lesser situation. I think though most supermarkets you can go to certain tills that say '10 items or less' which of course is wrong! It should be '10 items or fewer'.

I think all of HF should have a mission to complain at supermarkets about their bad grammar. ?

GrandTheftHorsePart2 - April 22, 2015, 7:18 am

The "That Vs. Which" was very helpful. Thanks for pointing this out OP! ?