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## Editing: Meaningful Word and Punctuation Choices

The English language can be confusing because it has so many seemingly arbitrary rules, and not all resources that explain these rules make them accessible beyond rote memorization. The missing element in many resources is a method for retaining that information logically. Specifically, putting the rules of grammar in terms of how they interact with meaning creates a link that facilitates comprehension.

### Strategy: Stop, Translate, and Decide

No definitive list of steps can be a one-size-fits-all solution to every issue, but a general set of steps can help you engage logically with a challenging concept. The strategy outlined in this handout is divided into three steps: stop, translate, and decide.

To stop is simply to pause for enough time to consider meaning. This step is mostly self-explanatory, but it is crucial to remember that this method involves more critical thinking than tacit knowledge.

To translate is to break a sentence down to its core meaning. This step requires looking precisely at definitions and syntax.

To decide is to pick the most appropriate option according to the translation.

The rest of this handout will walk you through some examples of this strategy in practice and ask you to complete some activities to practice the strategy yourself.



vs.

- a. The documentary affected changes in global policy.
- b. The documentary effected changes in global policy.

Stop: Look up the definitions of these two words. Write them below.

*Affect:*

*Effect:*

Translate:

- a.
- b.

Decide:

- a.
- b.

v

- a. I do not know if Marina likes to eat chicken or pork.
- b. I do not know whether Marina likes to eat chicken or pork.

Stop: Look up the definitions of these two words. Write them below.

*If:*

*Whether:*

Translate:

- a.
- b.

Decide:

- a.
- b.

v

- a. Oscar complements -go-lucky attitude.
- b. Oscar compliments -go-lucky attitude.

Stop: Look up the definitions of these two words. Write them below.

*Complement:*

- a.
- b.

v

- a. I035 52.464 TmJTJE~~B~~TF3 12 Tf1 0 0 1 3veT1be

	the clearest choice.
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	led them to think that she did not attend the meeting.
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1.

- a. I do not want to study because I have a lot of homework.
- b. Because I have a lot of homework, I do not want to study.

Translate:

a.



- a. I care so little about how much you like doing your homework that I could not care any less.
- b. I care at least somewhat about how much you like doing your homework, so it is possible that I could care less.

Decide:

- a. Yes. This example is acceptable if writers mean to say that they do not care at all whether you like to do your homework.
- b. No. This example is unacceptable as a way for writers to say that they do not care whether you like to do your homework. If they mean to say that they *do* care, there are

a.

they do not want to study, and their having a lot of homework is why.

b. Yes. This example is acceptable if writers mean to say that they do not want to study, and their having a lot of homework is why. The comma clarifies the sentence by proving that

2. Translate:

a. At the church, the religious experience I had was deep.

b. At the church, the experience I had was deep and religious.

Decide:

a. Yes. This example is acceptable if writers mean to say that they had a religious experience that was deep.

b. Yes. This example is acceptable if writers mean to say that they had an experience that was both deep and religious.

3. Translate:

a. Jerry looks like an appealing meal.

b. I am telling Jerry that I would like to eat.

Decide:

a. Unlikely, but yes. This example is acceptable if

