

# Unpacking the begged question

By  Sarah Heuer

19 Feb 2016

Dictating style is dangerously controversial. I'm not sure I can address the issue without alienating you, dear reader... but it's something I'm passionate about - so I'd like to try.



Last Monday, after three messages in one hour sent my blood pressure up to the hypertensive, hyperbolic stratosphere of spleen, I decided to crowdsource a list of popular phrases that frustrate my fellow pedants. I needed some backup.

We, the grammaristas, are the writers, editors, content managers, and communication consultants. We can't let apostrophes slide and clichés make us spit. (Imagine an English teacher's voice in your head, *a/ways*... you'll understand how this sometimes makes us bad company.)

We are those who cringe when others pick the low-hanging fruit. We often use; we rarely utilise. We are those who could revert, but prefer to respond... we never, ever, revert back.

Does this sound like someone you know? Here's how you can foster a happy working relationship with your pet pedant.

## 1. Unless you're paid per word, cut down

'Action accordingly' means 'do your job', and that's quite blunt, don't you think? You can probably omit it.

'Please be so kind as to accept the expression of my distinguished salutations.' I'm cheating here: this one is translated from French, but it illustrates the point perfectly. It just means 'best wishes'!

'Please be advised...'. Is this necessary? You're providing information, so it goes without saying, literally. As one of my sources shared: *I was sent an email starting with 'Please be advised' and I wanted to cry. Partly because I was being advised that the sender was out of office. That's the type of advice I don't appreciate.*

## 2. Getting the little things right gives a great impression

'With regards to' – the only time there is an 's' at the end of 'regard', as a very dear colleague explained quite simply, is when you send 'kind regards' or 'regards to your mother'.

'May you please' – 'may' denotes permission, so it won't fit if you're asking for something. Similarly, you can never 'kindly request'. 'Please be so kind as to help' is better.

'I trust this finds you well.' (One of my journalist friends believes that a kitten dies every time this is written.) It's best never to assume anything, even the health and happiness of others. If they woke up grumpy, they might be growling at you instead of getting on with things.

## 3. Malapropisms (Google this one for a good time)

These are commonly confused words that could reduce your credibility; for example: 'for all intensive purposes' instead of 'for all intents and purposes'.

There are hundreds of these tricky pitfalls. Although we all slip up sometimes, especially in our second or third language, it's worth making an effort. Especially when corresponding with a prospective client or employer.

Before you send me loads of (possibly justified) hate mail, for being a snob, a reactionary, or worse: as with diets, dumbbells and dentist appointments, making an effort is worth it. Yes, we grammar nerds may be the minority. But because of our perfectionism and attention to detail, we are often the people you'd really like in your corner when you have a crisis.

We don't ask much, and we're wonderfully efficient when we're happy.

So, here's to thanking you in anticipation of your empathetic and prompt response ;)

*\*Note that Bizcommunity does not necessarily share the views of its contributors - the opinions and statements expressed herein are solely those of the author.*

## ABOUT SARAH HEUER

Has been in the language and communication business for 15 years. She holds CumLaude Honours degrees in English Literature and Publishing. She has lectured Journalism, taught English, and written and edited in a variety of sectors, including law, the culinary world, secondary and tertiary education, psychology, the arts, finance and economics, and marketing. In her spare time, she toys with the idea of writing a best-seller. She is currently head editor and copywriter at inSite Innovative Education Solutions.

- Talk to the face, cause the brain ain't sure - 16 May 2016
- Don't be a Christmas tree! - 28 Apr 2016
- Breaking Beautiful - the science of simple - 5 Apr 2016
- Unpacking the begged question - 19 Feb 2016
- Can we cure clickbaiting? - 22 Jan 2016

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>