Good Writing Practice

Syntactic punctuation distraction

Comma: Over-usage Part 2

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Introduction

Coordinated noncore sentence constituents are likely to be disrupted by unnecessary comma punctuation.

Between coordinated adjectives

Example

(The Introduction section: research problem background)

The soluble truncated form of HA was generated by substitution of codon L (20) for the first trans membrane residue (TS14) containing the stop codon TGA.

Revision

The soluble truncated form of HA was generated by substitution of codon L (20) for the first trans membrane residue (TS14) containing the stop codon TGA.

Notes

The comma-separation is considered acceptable because the meanings are coordinatable (i.e., soluble and truncated each modifies form) – not cumulative (soluble modifies truncated form). However, soluble is emphasised by its comma-marked segregation.

Soluble and truncated are adjectives of form, so their positions are inter-changeable, and the adjectives are coordinatable by and.

Another consideration is whether the sequence soluble truncated does adhere to placement of adjectivals before a noun, whereby the innateness of the noun increases with proximity; thus, truncated is more innately descriptive of form than is soluble, and soluble may even be a consequence of truncated.

Another type of distraction is a slight misreading possibility that two forms (soluble and truncated) exist; however, the singular word form and verb was indicate otherwise. Overall, usage of either the comma or the and is distracting. Both may be eliminated.

Between parallel noun clauses

Example

(The Introduction section: hypothesis)

It is possible that these two types of tumours originate from common pax3- and pax-7-expressing cell and that subsequent genetic alterations drive the cells into different outcomes.

Revision

It is possible (1) that these two types of tumours originate from common pax3- and pax-7-expressing cells and (2) that subsequent genetic alterations drive the cells into different outcomes.

Notes

The comma between the two dependent noun clauses is disruptive by segregation, the disruption indicating a contrast. However, numbering the coordinating noun clauses coheres these clauses, their parallelism, and their relation.