When you receive your graded paper back, you will see that your Writing Instructor has used various abbreviations in his or her comments. This Writing Evaluation Abbreviations document provides explanations for these abbreviations. Many times, your Writing Instructor will not correct an error or improve awkward or problematic phrasing or sentence construction for you; he or she will provide the abbreviation that will enable you to see where there is a problem; the abbreviation explanation will help you understand how to improve. To fully understand the abbreviations your Writing Instructor is using (and to continue to improve your writing), find the abbreviations your Writing Instructor has used and give careful attention to the explanations provided.

For further information about grammar, punctuation, wording, phrasing, and sentence structure, the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/659/04/) is very useful. Many of the evaluation abbreviations/explanations below show the OWL url for further information on a particular writing issue.

The consultants at the University of Pittsburgh Writing Center (WC) can help you with any writing questions you have, including questions about grammar, punctuation, wording, phrasing, and sentence structure. Make an appointment at Pitt’s WC at http://www.writingcenter.pitt.edu. You can also contact your Writing Instructor for further assistance with any writing questions or issues, including those noted here.

**frm** Incorrect formatting; check format specifications

**cit** Missing in-text citation and/or problem with format of citation

¶ New paragraph needed

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/606/1/; especially “Adequate development” and “When do I know to start a new paragraph”

⚠ This word, phrase, or punctuation should not be here

^ Something is missing, here

**sp** Misspelled word

**b/spec** Be more specific; include all relevant details, examples, data, explanations; “show” all relevant specifics

- *for example:* if, in your Assg. 1 you wrote, “I plan to join a few clubs that might be useful,” you also needed to have provided the specifics that will clarify which clubs you might join and why those particular clubs might be useful to you; you also needed to specify what you meant, in this context, by “useful.” If/where you have not included these kinds of specifics, you will see b/spec noted on your paper.

- *another example:* If, in a paper about innovations in fuel efficient transportation, you write, “The new Terrafugia Transition flying car is fuel-efficient,” you need to show what you mean by “fuel-efficient.” For readers to understand what you mean by “fuel efficient,” you need to provide additional details about the type of fuel the vehicle will use and compare this vehicle’s performance to other standards. Does “fuel efficient” mean the Terrafugia vehicle gets nearly the same mpg of standard unleaded gasoline as current hybrid cars such as the Prius or the hybrid Toyota Camry? Does “fuel efficient” refer to the Terrafugia’s use of standard unleaded gasoline as compared to the smallest Cessna’s use of aviation fuel? Always make sure all necessary clarifying, supporting, comparative details are present—do not assume your readers will automatically understand your terms and claims.

**mng** Meaning unclear, often due to insufficient details; can also be due to illogical arrangement of ideas or explanations, inaccurate word choice, or problematic syntax

**awk** Awkwardness in wording, phrasing, sentence construction, syntax, and/or diction; often the result of wordiness, faulty parallelism, confusing arrangement of elements in a sentence, and/or lack of concision

**transit** or **conn** Insufficient or awkward transition and/or connection; be careful about explaining—specifically writing about—clear connections/relationships among items within a paragraph or a section, and be sure to clarify how one section or information area of a paper connects to the other sections/areas

**rel** Relevance—how is this information relevant? How is this information relevant/important to the paper-as-a-whole and/or to the immediately surrounding ideas.descriptions/explanations? The relevance/importance of this information needs to be more fully, specifically explained.
**hyp** Hyperbole—particular word choice/ phrasing creates an exaggerated, difficult-to-believe description or explanation

- For example: “I will be the best student in the history of Engineering 0011” Really?!? Can you provide concrete examples and descriptions that support this (hyperbolic) claim?
- A better, more clarifying and credible claim might be: “My plan is to complete Engineering 0011 with a grade of between 93 and 100. Though it is only the second week of the semester, I already realize that to make this plan work, I will need to use all the resources available to help me, including meeting, regularly, with my 0011 instructor and 0011 T.A. and with an 0011 tutor.”

**wc (word choice) or ww (wrong word)** Is this word the correct word; is this word or phrase the best, most clear, most accurate word or phrase for this situation and audience? [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/660/01/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/660/01/)

- **ww**: the word or phrase is incorrect: for example, using “conscious” when the correct word is “conscientious,” or using “affect” when the correct word is “effect,” or using “advise” when the correct word is “advice”
- **wc**: the accuracy/authority of the word or phrase might be questionable: for example, using “clearly more efficient,” when there is no accompanying evidence for the claim of “clearly”
- **wc**: the word or phrase might promote an awkward or problematic tone: for example, in the phrase “my salutary and revered poise as a leader,” the words “salutary” and “revered,” added in with “poise” create an exaggerated tone, which makes the author look as though he or she is trying too hard to sound “scholarly” or “educated.” Writing “I found that I was a well-liked, effective team leader” begins to get the point across much more clearly and credibly (of course, the details that will support the statement/claim also would need to be provided).

**w** Wordy—check, especially, for unnecessary prepositional phrases and/or ineffective use of passive voice or of forms of “to be” [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/539/02/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/539/02/) [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/539/05/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/539/05/)

**red** A particular kind of “wordiness”—redundancy; unnecessary/repetitive words

- For example, “I decided to postpone until later filling out the application.” is repetitious/redundant. Using both “postpone” and “until later” in the same phrase when referring to the same timing and action is redundant; redundancy = “wordy,” and negatively affects flow, concision, and clarity.
- The sentence should simply say: “I decided to postpone filling out the application.”

**rep** Repetitious, often due to using the same general word or phrase multiple times rather than clarifying, exemplifying, explaining the contextual meaning of the word or phrase

**sent or ss** Problematic or incorrect sentence structure or sentence clarity; often the result of misplaced or dangling modifiers; can also be due to faulty parallel structure (see //, below) or a confusing sequence of phrases within the sentence [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/711/1/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/711/1/) [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/604/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/604/01/)

**// or parallelism** Awkward or faulty parallel structure; items in a sentence have been structured as parallel, but the parallel is not grammatically or stylistically carried through [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/623/01/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/623/01/)

- For example: “We will take the samples to the lab, then be going to room 138, then Einstein’s for lunch,” is an example of faulty parallelism. The sentence should be, “We will take the samples to the lab, then we will meet in room 138, then we will go to Einstein’s for lunch.”
- For example: “I like to solve problems, be building models, and to design engines” should be “I like solving problems, building models, and designing engines.”

**frag** Sentence fragment; a “dependent clause” without all the elements of a basic complete sentence—remember, even a sentence that looks lengthy might be a “fragment” [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/620/01/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/620/01/)

- For example, the underlined sentences are fragments. “Currently, I am doing well in all of my engineering classes. Including Honors Physics and Honors Chemistry. Also, Engineering Writing.” These underlined sentences do not have a subject and a verb. They are phrases that should be connected to an “independent clause” (or a “main clause,” or simply, a “complete sentence”), or that should be rewritten as a complete sentence.
- Here are the correct, complete sentences: “I am doing well in all of my engineering classes, including Honors Physics and Honors Chemistry. I am also giving serious attention to the Freshman Engineering Writing Program assignments and expectations.”

**run-on** Run on sentence; two or more independent clauses (two or more complete sentences) are combined without necessary, correct punctuation [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/engagement/2/1/33/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/engagement/2/1/33/)

- For example, this is a run-on: “There are 560 first-year engineering students at Pitt for me this is wonderful.”
- There are several ways to correct this run-on (and improve clarity!):
  - make the run on into 2 sentences (adding additional clarity!) “There are 560 first-year engineering students at Pitt. For me, being among so many students is wonderful.”
- use a coordinating conjunction within the sentence (adding additional clarity!): “There are 560 first-year engineering students at Pitt, but having this many people around is wonderful, for me.”
- use a semi-colon within the sentence: “There are 560 first-year engineering students at Pitt; having this many people around is wonderful, for me.” (Also see cs—comma splice—below)

**cs** Comma splice; two “independent clauses” (complete sentences), with no coordinating conjunction in between, have been linked with only a comma; when linking independent clauses without a coordinating conjunction, a semi colon must be used, or each independent clause must become “its own” sentence.

- **For example,** this sentence has a “comma splice”: “Martina and Keri were going to lunch, they decided to text Luce to see if she wanted to join them.” Because “Martina and Keri were going to lunch” is an independent clause (complete sentence) and “they decided to text Luce to see if she wanted to join them” is an independent clause (complete sentence), **there must be a semicolon (not a comma) between the two clauses:**
  - This is the correctly punctuated sentence: “Martina and Keri were going to lunch; they decided to text Luce to see if she wanted to join them.” Each independent clause could also become its own sentence: “Martina and Keri were going to lunch. They decided to text Luce to see if she wanted to join them.”

**choppy** Paragraph or section presents information in no clearly logical order and/or transitions between sentences, paragraphs, and/or sections are weak and do not contribute to cohesion/clarity

**p or punc** Punctuation error; punctuation errors can include missing or misplaced/misused commas; missing or misplaced/misused semicolons or colons; incorrect use or placement of quotation marks

- **Examples:** OWL can help you understand punctuation rules and practices. An OWL search for a particular punctuation mark and its uses will lead you to clear and useful information. For example, searching OWL for “commas” will lead you to a very helpful PPT “Conquering the Comma” ([http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/692/1/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/692/1/)), as well as to a “Quick Guide to Commas” and “Extended Rules for Commas.”

**lc or uc/cp** use lower case, instead of upper case (the word is incorrectly capitalized) or use upper case/capitals (the word should capitalized)

- **For example:** “I decided Chemistry was the field for me.” In this sentence, “chemistry” is referring to an entire field of study or work, not to a particular company or university department; thus, lower case is correct

- **For example:** “Shigeru Amemiya, from Pitt’s department of chemistry, will be teaching this semester.” In this sentence, “Department of Chemistry” refers to a particular, named department at Pitt. The name of the department must be in “upper case” or capitalized.

**poss** The correct possessive form is either missing or is incorrect; be sure you are not mistaking a plural for a possessive (or vice-versa). [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/621/01/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/621/01/)  [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/engagement/2/1/46/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/engagement/2/1/46/)

- **For example,** “Lynnes” is incorrect in this sentence: “I used Lynne’s book to study for the exam”
- “Lyne’s” is a possessive in this sentence (the book belongs to Lynne), so an apostrophe is required: “I used Lynne’s book to study for the exam.”

**vt (verb tense) or vf (verb form)** Error or awkwardness in verb tense or verb form

- **For example:** If you write, “When I asked my instructor about a wrong exam answer, she helps me understand how I missed an important step,” you are mixing up verb tenses. The sentence should be: “When I asked my instructor about a wrong exam answer, she helped me understand how missed important steps.”

**agr** Subject-verb agreement error or awkwardness

- **For example:** in the phrase, “The scientist run the program…” the subject (scientist) is singular, but the verb form (runs) is only used with a plural subject, so the subject and verb do not “agree” in number. The sentence should be, “The scientists run the program…” or “The scientist runs the program…” [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/599/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/599/01/)

**pn ant** Error or lack of clarity in pronoun-antecedent agreement

- Be especially careful not to use indefinite demonstrative pronouns (this, that, they, their, it, it is) in place of the nouns and/or details necessary to maintain clarity. Using “this,” “it,” “they,” or “it is” at the beginning of a sentence or paragraph can cause significant confusion. Be sure readers can always and immediately see which noun a pronoun refers to. [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/595/01/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/595/01/)