

Why doesn't anyone right write?

When it comes to talk the talk and walk the walk, writer Donna Lynn Rhodes puts her money where her mouth is and gives us all a lesson or two.

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Me and my friends are going to the movies.

If that sentence doesn't make you cringe then you definitely need to keep reading.

I know our schools are facing huge budget cuts and it was adios art, music and P.E. – but did they eliminate English class, too? I don't mean English as a second language, I mean English as a first language. And if they did take English out of the curriculum, I dare say at least your kids and their friends have an excuse. What's yours?

A few months ago, two friends asked me if I would teach them some simple grammar rules – probably because they are sick of me correcting them – and I said, sure. When another friend asked me last week, I realized that this would make a great column.

So, do you know when to use the following words correctly?

Me and I

Done and Finished

To and Too

Further and Farther

Compliment and Complement

Lie and Lay

Effect and Affect

Into and In to

Even I get confused sometime and I have to look them up. But I promise if you follow along you are going to be smarter than you were three minutes ago.

Ready?

Me is. See? It doesn't sound right. You would never say "Me is." So why would you start a sentence with Me? I'm sure there are exceptions to every rule, but we're not talking about exceptions here, we're talking the norm.

OK, with I so far? Doesn't sound right, does it? So why would you write under a picture you post on Facebook "Rick, Ben and I"? It should say Rick, Ben and me. Why? Let's say that you were sitting next to me and showing me photos. You would say, "This is Rick before we were married." Or "Here's a picture of Ben when he was a baby." And when you got to one of you, you wouldn't say, "Here's a picture of I with long hair." Therefore, the picture of the three of you should be tagged Rick, Ben and me. If you're not sure, just take everyone else before you away and you'll know if it's right. Same thing with starting with 'me.' It's not "me and my friends are hungry," because you would never say "me is hungry" unless of course you're a caveman. I am hungry. My friends and I are hungry.

Told you it was easy — but wait. We're not done yet.

Wrong. We're not finished yet.

What's the difference between done and finished?

Cakes get done, people get finished. I'll say it again. Cakes get done, people get finished. So, we're not finished yet.

To, too and two. I only threw this one in because if you're reading this and don't know the difference then English really is your second language. I think everyone knows two is a number but what about to and too? I bought two apples today but they are too mushy to eat.

I have two pairs of black shoes but they are too tight to wear. Too means also or more than enough. And how can you remember that? Too has more 'o's' than to.

Shall we move further along? Or is it farther along? Just remember this sentence: Let's walk a little farther before we discuss it any further. Far is a physical distance. You wouldn't say how fur is Chicago from here; you'd say how far is Chicago from here. If you can substitute the word furthermore in a sentence, then using the word further probably is correct. You wouldn't say how much furthermore do we have to drive to get there. So you know that further isn't correct and it should be farther. Remember, let's walk a little farther before we discuss it any further.

There is actually a word for these little rhymes and silly ways of remembering things. They are called mnemonic (the m is silent) phrases: I before e except after c. Or, 30 days hath September, April, June and November.

Well, now you know two more. Cakes get done, people get finished. And, let's walk a little farther before we discuss it any further. How fun is this? Wish I learned this in school the first time around but I was too busy passing notes and doodling to pay attention.

People will start to compliment you on your good grammar. Or is it complement? You may not have been aware there is a difference. There is, and here's a way to remember it: I complimented him on his tie because it complemented his shirt. A compliment (with an i) is when you admire something. Complement (with an e) is when something enhances something else. The way to remember it is that "I" give you a compliment and it has an 'i' in it. Complement with an e is when it enhances something. By the way, if something is free of charge, it's complimentary not complementary. Just thought I'd throw that one in for free. With my compliments.

Are you exhausted from all this learning? Maybe you should lay down. Or is it lie down?

Hens lay eggs. But if you were walking by the henhouse and decided you wanted to watch, then you would lie next to the hens and watch them lay their eggs. Still don't get it? Try this: I'm going to lay this bear skin rug on the floor and lie naked on top of it.

A lot of people – oh, by the way, there is not such word as alot – are affected by bad grammar. Oh wait. Are they effected or affected?

Affect means to influence and effect means to cause. Think of it this way: The game will affect the standings, which will effect changes in the team. If you're not sure, use effect and you'll be right 90 percent of the time.

So how much have you learned? Just wait until you watch the weather report on TV tonight and they say it's going to get colder the further east you go. You're going to put a cocky grin on your face and say, "Don't they know it's the farther east you go?"

You're getting in to it aren't you? Or is it into it? OK, one more. Into is when there is physical movement involved: Please put the ice cream into the freezer. As opposed to, I don't have any ice cream because my mom wouldn't give in to my demands.

So you went and read this article – no! I'll cover sentence structure in another column. And if you want, I can help you with Good and Well, Fewer and Less, More Than and Over, Then and Than, Him and Her and He and She, Who and Whom and many others.

I'm done. I mean my work here is finished.

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