

Not Grammatically Correct? Worry Not.

A sentence that isn't grammatically correct can sometimes work better for you than if it was right. But you have to know what it should be, so that you can get the proper emphasis in your copy.

For all you out there who passed through your secondary education in the subject of the English Language, you might not like what we copywriters do to it. But there is a reason. Case in point - never start a sentence with a conjunction (and, but etc.) - I'm always doing it. The reason is: it flows better; or it stands out better; more emphasis.

To give an example of this, let's say that you are writing copy for a direct sales campaign, in which you want your audience to know why your product is superior to all the others that are out there in the market place. You can of course list all the products good points as bullets. It works, it's clean and clear. But it's been done to death. What about something like this:

It's cheaper. And it lasts longer. And it doesn't cost so much to run. And it's portable. And it comes in six different colours. And it's waterproof. And it will withstand knocks. And it has a great memory. And you get the picture - please don't try and think what "it" is - I have no idea.

Grammatically, it's a horror show. But it's a way of creating interest. Remember that writing copy is different from other forms of writing. You wouldn't want to write something like the above in a formal letter, but there is a chance you might say something it. It has a flow to it, and in that flow, some readers will find themselves carrying on down the page - which after all, is the very essence of what you are trying to do - to get the reader to the bottom of the page.

And don't be afraid of the cliché. Sneered at by other writers, the cliché is a great ally of the copywriter. One of the very best is "Free Offer" - don't you just love it? Last few; or exclusively yours; or limited offer - there's quite a few of them, and they are fair game for the copywriter. It stimulates interest, gets the reader wanting to find out more. It makes the reader feel that they might be getting something special, and that's what we all want isn't it?

Grammar is at the very heart of the English language, and I would defend it to the hilt in most cases. Without it, making sense of a single line can be troublesome - remember that book "Eats Shoots and Leaves"? But never be afraid of writing something that is incorrect, so long as you're sure that it conveys the meaning you want it to. And in the way you want it to. It can be extremely powerful, and should be part of every copywriter's arsenal.