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FOGARTY:

Grammar Girl here. March 4th is National Grammar Day, so I've created a special grammar-related top 10 show to celebrate the occasion. Organizer Martha Brockenbrough, who writes about grammar and language for Encarta, has fun suggestions for National Grammar Day, including holding a good grammar potluck at your office or school. She also suggests correcting other people's grammar. But I hope that instead of marching into grocery stores and scratching out misplaced apostrophes, people will spread the word about the language myths that well-meaning people argue about every day in offices around the world.

To help you along that path, here's my list of Grammar Girl's Top 10 Language Myths.

Number 10-- a run-on sentence is a really long sentence. Wrong. They can actually be quite short. In a run-on sentence, independent clauses are squished together without the help of punctuation or a conjunction. If you write, "I'm happy, I'm glad" as one sentence without a semi-colon, colon, or a dash between the two independent clauses, it's a run-on sentence, even though it has only six words.

Number nine-- you shouldn't start a sentence with the word however. Wrong. It's fine to start a sentence with "however," so long as you use a comma after it when it means nevertheless.

Eight-- irregardless is not a word. Wrong. Irregardless is a word in the same way ain't is a word. They're informal. They're nonstandard. You shouldn't use them if you want to be taken seriously, but they have gained wide enough use to qualify as words.

Number seven-- there's only one way to write the possessive form of a word that ends in s. Wrong. It's a style issue. For example, in the phrase Kansas' statute, you can put just an apostrophe at the end of Kansas, or you can put an apostrophe s at the end of Kansas. Both ways are acceptable.

Number six-- passive voice is always wrong. Wrong. Passive voice is when you don't name the person who's responsible for the action. An example is the sentence, mistakes were made, because it doesn't say who made the mistakes. If you don't know who is responsible for an action, passive voice can be the best choice.

Number five-- i.e. and e.g. I mean the same thing. Wrong. E.g. means for example and i.e.

means roughly, in other words. You use e.g. to provide a list of incomplete examples, and you use i.e. to provide a complete clarifying list or statement.

Number four-- you use "a" before words that start with consonants and "an" before words that start with vowels. Wrong. You use "a" before words that start with consonant sounds and "an" before words that start with vowel sounds. So you write that someone has an MBA instead of a MBA because even though MBA starts with M, which is a consonant, it starts with the sound of the vowel e-- MBA.

Number three-- it's incorrect to answer the question, "How are you?" with the statement I'm good. Wrong. "Am" is a linking verb and linking verbs should be modified by adjectives such as "good." Because "well" can also act as an adjective, it's also fine to answer "I'm well." But some grammarians believe "I'm well" should be used to talk about your health and not your general disposition.

Number two-- you shouldn't split infinitives. Wrong. Nearly all grammarians want to boldly tell you that it's OK to split infinitives. An infinitive is a two word form of a verb. An example is "to tell." In a split infinitive, another word separates the two parts of the verb. "To boldly tell" is a split infinitive because boldly separates "to" from "tell."

And now, the number one grammar myth, which my Twitter friends chose over splitting infinitives-- number one-- you shouldn't end a sentence with a preposition. Wrong. You shouldn't end a sentence with a preposition when the sentence would mean the same thing if you left off the preposition. That means "Where are you at?" is wrong because "Where are you?" means the same thing. But there are many sentences where the final preposition is part of a phrasal verb or is necessary to keep from making stuffy stilted sentences-- "I'm going to throw up," "Let's kiss and make up," and "What are you waiting for?" are just a few examples.

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You can find more information about each of these grammar myths in the Grammar Girl archives at quickanddirtytips.com, where you can also find my contact information and all the other great Quick and Dirty Tips podcasts, such as Money Girl and Legal Lad.

Thanks to everyone who has voted on the cities I'll be visiting this summer. I'll probably announce the results the week after next. The tour is to promote my print book, which is

coming out in July.

And I just found out that you can preorder the book online. Right now it's available at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com), [booksamillion.com](https://www.booksamillion.com), and you can also preorder it from your local bookseller by searching [bookstands.com](https://www.bookstands.com). I imagine it will also be available soon online through Powell's and Barnes and Noble. So preorder it now to get an extra 5% off, and you'll also be one of the first people to get it when it comes out in July.

That's all. Thanks for listening, and happy National Grammar Day.