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TiDbits on writing[®] part 5

LETTER FROM TD

We hope you enjoy Part 5 of our series, *TiDbits on Writing*[®].

These practical tips will help you tackle some of the major stumbling blocks in writing on the job – whether preparing reports, proposals, or even e-mails. We'll cover issues such as how to write with clarity, how to make subjects and verbs agree, and even how to use proper punctuation.

Enjoy! And happy writing!

— *Laura Winterroth*
Managing Director



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TiDbits

Published by TD Consulting Group
19 Court Street, Suite 301
White Plains, NY 10601
914-948-8065 fax 914-948-8064
info@tdgroupusa.com
www.tdgroupusa.com

When Subjects Rule

The other day I overheard a young man making plans to go to the movies: “*Me and Steve will meet you at 8 o’clock.*” *Me and Steve?* I decided that debugging the common misuse of “me” – and its alternative “I” – would be a great topic for *TiDbits*.

We begin by distinguishing between what are called **subject pronouns** and **object pronouns** (see chart below). Both types of pronouns take the place of any noun (person, place, or thing), but they serve different functions.

SUBJECT Pronouns	OBJECT Pronouns
I we	me us
he they	him them
she	her
Doers	Receivers

Subject pronouns are the DOERS of the action; object pronouns are the RECEIVERS of the action. It’s that simple.

Let’s look at the three common places where we use subject pronouns.

Doers of the Action

Eli throws footballs.

S V O

Here, *Eli* is the DOER of the action, the subject (S); *throws* is our verb (V); and *footballs* are the RECEIVERS of the action, or objects (O). Now, when we substitute a pronoun for *Eli* and *footballs*, our sentence reads like this:

He them
Eli throws *footballs*.
S V O

He replaces *Eli*, the actor; *footballs* – the objects *acted upon* – becomes *them*. Returning to our sentence “*Me and Steve will meet you at 8 o’clock,*” we readily see the need to change it to “*Steve and I,*” because only the pronoun “I” can be the DOER of action – “me” can never act. (Plus, out of courtesy, we put “Steve” first.)

After *Than* or *As*

We also use subject pronouns when we make a comparison using *than* or *as*.

Claire wrote faster than I.

Bill is as tall as he.

What would you substitute for *Mary* in this sentence?

Paul sang as well as Mary. _____

Answer: *Paul sang as well as she.*

After any form of “*To be*”

And, finally, we use subject pronouns *after* any form of the verb “to be” – *is*, *was*, *were*, *will be*, and so on.

“Was it *Eli* who won the game?”

“Yes, it was *he*.”

“If it were *I* who lost the game, I’d be upset.”

Sometimes, correct grammar can *sound* wrong because, like the young man quoted earlier, we get used to *saying* it wrong. Make the effort to get it right in speech and it will be a breeze when you sit down to write! □