

DEPARTMENT OF MASS MEDIA
DIAGNOSTIC EXAM STUDY GUIDE

Below is a sampling of things with which you should be familiar if you wish to do well on the Department of Mass Media diagnostic examination. While this study guide is not intended to be exhaustive, it gives a good idea of many of the basic things over which you will be tested.

Spelling: Common words (e.g., prejudice, cemetery, unnecessary, neighbor, occurred, accidentally, forty, embarrass) – nothing too obscure or seldom-used.

Vocabulary: Also common words (e.g., mundane, pompous, foil, idyllic) – match them with a synonym.

Grammar, punctuation, word choice:

noun/pronoun agreement: they vs. he/she/it; their vs. his/her/its
subject-verb agreement: is/are; was/were; has/have
try to/try and
affect/effect
lie/lay
less/fewer than
it's/its
that/which
on/onto (*and* in/into)
to/too/two
they're/their/there
compared with/compared to,
who/whom *and* whoever/whomever *and* whose/who's
I/me *and* he/him *and* she/her (e.g., "If it were up to Jana and I me, we would cancel the party.")
comma splices (sometimes called *comma faults* or *run-on sentences*)
commas with appositives and with essential/non-essential (restrictive/non-restrictive) clauses/phrases
commas separating independent (but not dependent) clauses joined by a conjunction (such as *and*, *but*): "He loves baseball, and he never misses a game" vs. "He loves baseball and never misses a game."
sentence fragments
redundancies (e.g., mandatory required courses: widower man)
dangling modifiers
compound adjectives (hyphenation: e.g., need hyphen in "rat-infested house" but not in "boring biology lecture")
possessives (e.g., women's, not womens': "Bill's and Betty's bicycles were stolen" vs. "Bill and Betty's house caught fire" {individual vs. joint possession})
neither/nor *and* either/or with number of verb (singular vs. plural)
none usually means "not a single one," and so it almost always takes a singular verb, as in "None of the stores *sells* (vs. *sell*) that item."

STUDY RESOURCES: *The Associated Press Stylebook* will help you review for parts of the exam; it is required in MASS 221 and is inexpensive. Any one of countless basic English grammar texts also will help you prepare. Consider Kessler & McDonald's *When Words Collide*; Strunk & White's *Elements of Style*; Brooks, Pinson & Wilson's *Working With Words*; Arnold's *Media Writer's Handbook*. Grammar review material also is abundant online.

Exam takes approximately an hour. You will only need to bring a no. 2 pencil. Don't forget to write down the day and time you are registered to take the exam. Tests are given in Nelson Hall 138. Questions? Call 389-6417 or 389-5522.