## Words and Phrases
*Beth Bailey*

As people communicate, they discover new and unique things about words and phrases. In fact, many have found that there IS such a thing as language trivia. To get you started exploring language, here are a few trivial things about our language from "Cocktail Party Fodder," an article published by Sarah Montoya in the April 1998 issue of *OfficePRO Magazine.*

Authorities say that just nine words account for one quarter of spoken and written English: "and, be, have, it, of, the, to, will," and "you" in descending order of use. The next five are "I, a, on," and "that is." Similar studies show slight variations, so if your reference states something different, don't worry - it's all relative.

Can you guess what "barefaced, frugal, dwindle," and "summit" have in common? Those words are among hundreds or thousands coined by Shakespeare, says Bill Bryson, author of *The Mother Tongue.*

There is at least one English word that contains five pronouns within it. The word "ushers" contains the words "us, she, he, her," and "hers." Try working that tidbit into a conversation!

"E" happens to be the most frequently used letter in both English and French. In English, the letters occur in this descending order of frequency: E, T, A, O, S, I, N, R, H, L, D, C, U, M, Y, B, P, W, F, G, V, K, J, X, Q, and Z. More words begin with "S" than any other letter.

## PREMAS Documentation Project
*By Lisa Firkins*

In April of this year, the GIS Publications Team was asked to assist with PREMAS/IBS implementation by developing training documentation and an HTML-based repository for a set of existing of MS Word and Robohelp files.

PREMAS/IBS is the new oil and gas accounting system for Land, Revenue, and Production. The PREMAS/IBS applications operate on the SME 2.0 (Windows NT) platform and are being rolled out along with SAP as part of Everest and the Mobil Millennium project.

To date we have successfully redeveloped more than 1000 pages of documentation, using the standards and template developed for Mobil's SAP documentation. Trainers are being trained, and at the same time, are using their classroom experience and business expertise to provide valuable feedback to the Pubs Team. Thanks to this very dedicated and organized cooperative work effort, training materials for end user training will be accurate, effective, and concise. Whether you get sprinkled, dunked, or immersed in PREMAS/IBS training, rest assured that before it is through you will be fully armed and prepared to do your job to its fullest potential!

When end user training is completed this fall, we look forward to wrapping up the project by performing a large-scale HTML Transit conversion of all training materials to InfoDB (SAP's training tool and documentation repository). This information will ultimately be available for access via the World Wide Web on Mobil's Intranet, and will be organized both by role and by process.

A special thanks to Pubs Team leader Beth Bailey and to the very hard-working Danny Seales for their continued support throughout this project. Based on our personal experiences, Danny and I have compiled some helpful advice for dealing with 'Word Weirdness', which we will pass

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along in a future issue of this newsletter. Thanks also to the DOMAIN, Revenue, and Production team leads, core, and extended team members. They really care about getting this job done right, and it shows.

### Available Information
*Beth Bailey*

In the last issue, a number of publications were identified in which Mobil organizations were communicating by publishing and distributing information. Since that issue, additional publications have been released

The June edition of *I/T News* has been posted to the MTC website http://www.mtc.mobil.com/itnewsletters/index.html. Susan Dunham has been presenting the I/T News for the MTC Upstream personnel and their clients.

The *Mobil GIS News*, a quarterly report to Mobil from Global Information Services (GIS), is available in printed format and online in PDF format from the Global Information Services Online web site at http://www.internal.mobil.com/gis/index.html. From the Site Index or Home Page, select **GIS Quarterly** to launch Adobe Reader.

### Reference Resources
*Beth Bailey*

At some time, each of us has looked to a reference book to provide needed information. Here is a list of possible places to look.

| Title | Author | Publisher | Date Published | ISBN |
|-------|--------|-----------|----------------|------|
| *Mastering FrameMaker 5* | Tom Neuburger | Sybex, Inc. | 1996 | 0-7821-1712-0 |
| *Managing your Documentation Projects* | JoAnn T. Hackos | John Wiley & Sons | 1994 | 0-471-59099-1 |
| *Dynamics in Document Design* | Karen A. Schriver | John Wiley & Sons | 1996 | 0-47130-6363 |
| *Standards for Online Communication* | Joann T. Hackos Dawn M. Stevens | John Wiley & Sons | 1997 | 0-47115-6957 |
| *The Elements of Technical Writing* | Gary Blake Robert W. Bly | Macmillan General Reference | 1995 | 0-02013-0856 |
| *Handbook of Technical Writing* | Charles T. Brusaw Gerald J. Alred | St. Martins Press | 1997 | 0-31216-6907 |
| *Converting Content for Web Publishing* | Janine Warner, Ken Milburn, and Jessica Burdman | New Riders Publishing | 1996 | 1-56205-685-9 |
| *United States Government Printing Office Style Manual* | | United States Government Printing Office | 1984 | |
| *Developing Online Help for Windows* | Scott Bogan, David Farkas, and Joe Welinske | International Thompson Computer Press | 1995 | 1-85032-219-8 |
| *Art of Indexing* | Larry S. Bonura | John Wiley & Sons | 1994 | 0-47101-449-4 |
| *Designing and Writing Online Documentation* | William Horton | John Wiley & Sons, Inc. | 1994 | 0-471-30635-5 |
| *Science and Technical Writing: A Manual of Style* | Philip Rubens | Henry Holt Publisher | 1994 | 0-80503-091-3 |
| *Technical Editing* | Judith A. Tarutz | Addison-Wesley Publishing | 1992 | 0-201-56356-8 |
| *Technical Communication*, 4th ed. | Rebecca E. Burnett | Wadsworth Publishing | 1997 | 0-53451-605x |
| *The Professional Writer: A Guide for Advanced Technical Writing* | Gerald J. Alred | St. Martins Press | 1991 | 0-31200-2483 |
| *Read Me First! A Style Guide for the Computer Industry* | Sun Technical Publications | Prentice Hall Computer Books | 1997 | 0-13-455347-0 |
| *The Microsoft Manual of Style for Technical Publications* | | Microsoft Press | 1995 | 1-55615-939-0 |
| *Elements of Style* | William Strunk E. B. White | Allyn & Bacon | 1979 | 0-02418-190-0 |
| *Chicago Manual of Style,* 14th Ed. | | University of Chicago Press | 1993 | 0-2261-0389-7 |
| *English Composition and Grammar: Introductory Course* | John E. Warriner | Harcourt Brace & Co. | 1988 | 0-15311-7362 |
| *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary,* 10th Ed. | | Merriam Webster | 1996 | 0-87779-7099 |

## ISO is Alive and Well at Mobil
*Nancy Lonsway*

The GIS Asset Management department has designed a template to document the procedures for managing IS assets. In addition to providing a consistent format for the procedures, this template complies with ISO 9000 standards.

The template has a cover page that identifies the procedure and contains two tables: one for sign-offs approving the procedure and another for recording changes to the document. There are placeholders in the template to document the purpose and scope of the procedure, the steps to complete the procedures, and the titles of the individuals who perform the steps. A placeholder for the records that are required or generated by the procedure follows the steps, along with another placeholder for definitions.

A table to cross-reference related documents is provided, not as a requirement of ISO 9000, but as a tool for the reader who may need to perform other functions related to a procedure. Instructions that explain the type of information needed within each placeholder are included in the template.

The template was created in Microsoft Word 97 and can easily be converted to an earlier version of MS Word. The GIS Publications Team maintains a copy of the template on Mobil's network. If your department is writing procedures and you desire a copy of this template, you can access it at: i:\Pubsteam\Standard\ proctemp.doc.

If you want more information, contact Elizabeth Bailey at BM 322-5072.

## Graphics Questions?
*Beth Bailey*

In each issue, I try to have an article dealing with tips and tricks for specific applications. Within the next couple of issues, I'd like to have some answers for any graphics questions you have as they pertain to printed or online documentation.

Please, send your graphics questions to me at elizabeth_l_bailey@email.mobil. com.

## Offsetting Writer's Block
*Beth Bailey*

Having problems creating a paragraph for your document or stuck coming up with the next idea for your version of the great American novel? Many of us have problems getting through a writer's block. Here are some suggestions that you may find effective.

### Listen to Music
This is NOT the article for which you have been waiting to prove to your boss that you should be allowed to listen to your boom-box at your desk. Clinical psychologists tell us that certain kinds of music are more soothing than others including Baroque music. In some studies, Baroque music improved a test subject's ability to learn and perform certain tasks. This is one of the reasons that employers provide music services such as Musak in an office environment.

For many of us, background music greatly eases our creative anxieties, while for others, music grates on the nerves. However, music has been found to encourage our right brain to become more active and bring out our subconscious ideas. It's been said that even five or ten minutes of music may be enough to turn a sour creative mood sweet again.

### Find the Hidden Message
Often there is a subconscious reason why we balk repeatedly on a task. Look for the thought which explains the urge to procrastinate and attempt to fix it. Walk through questions pertaining to a task and answer them honestly. Afterward, take the steps necessary to make it right and complete the task.

### Refer to Your Peers
Sometimes all it takes is a friend or co-worker to get you going. If you are having problems, have a co-worker, friend, or relative read what you have already created to get a feel for the subject. Then, start a good brainstorming session. Sometimes it isn't a lack of material, just a lack of ways to present it. The idea of referring to a colleague may help in more ways than one. Sometimes we simply can't work because we get lonely. Having a peer discuss your material for just five minutes can end a subconscious feeling of solitude and allows you to connect with another person.

### Move to a Different Environment
After you've stared at your computer for 15 minutes without a thought or idea, you need a break! Head outside with your copy and try working on it there. If the outdoors isn't your cup of tea, try an empty office or conference room, the top of a file room cabinet, or a noisy breakroom or lunch area. If the project allows telecommuting, your home kitchen table could be your haven. Stephen King says he writes with old movies playing and who doesn't envy his productivity?

Major projects with critical deadlines can cause subconscious anxiety and tension. Working in environments not set aside for writing can defuse creative anxiety by convincing our subconscious into thinking that our current project isn't as life threatening as we thought. Once we get past the part where we stalled, momentum usually takes over, and we can work happily at our computers again.

### Put Up a Focus Picture
Sometimes we need something on which to focus our concentration and allow ourselves a place to go to consider the direction of our writing. Some people have found pictures or images in a magazine, art book, or a vacation picture you took last year. Consider any image you intuitively feel speaks about your writing and enables you to concentrate

again. Post a copy of this image somewhere in your office or cubicle where you may easily call upon it for inspiration.

## Take a Break

After reviewing the same document for ideas and direction four times in several hours without a clear destination, it's time to take a break. Get up and stretch or completely get away from your desk. Go grab a soda or walk around the building allowing yourself to focus on something other than your looming deadline. This break shouldn't be a full-fledged leave of absence, but a five or ten minute reprieve from the words on paper or screen.

## Pretend for a While

Pretend you are editing someone else's work. Imagine you are a teacher of communication or the editor of a famous magazine and you are reviewing the document for publication. Look at the document with the attitude that you have never seen it before and decide what you would cut, change or move. Keep in mind that our emotional involvement with our material prevents us from editing it as easily as we would someone else's work.

A few of these suggestions may not be for you, but one or more may just do the trick. If nothing else, you should relax and enjoy what you're doing to stay productive.

If you have any others that you have found to work, send the ideas to elizabeth_l_bailey@email.mobil.com to be included for publication in future articles.

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## What Do Those Mean?
*Beth Bailey*

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Those funny little endings to sentences that you see in e-mail messages are called "emoticons" or "smilies." Since you can't see the facial expressions of the person sending you a message, these little guys were created to give you a hand. By tilting your head to the left, you can see the expressions the author wishes you to see. For example, the : ) shows you a smiley face. The colon represents the eyes and the closed parentheses is the mouth. Here are some more examples.

| | |
|---|---|
| ;-) | wink, light sarcasm |
| :-I | indifference |
| :-> | devilish grin, heavy sarcasm |
| 8-) | eye glasses |

| | |
|---|---|
| :-D | shock or surprise |
| :-/ | perplexed |
| :-( | frown, anger or displeasure |
| :-P | wry smile |
| :-@ | scream |
| :-O | yell |
| :-) | smile with a nose |

You may be familiar with FYI meaning "for your information," but you also see a number of abbreviations which could confuse even Mr. Webster. Here are some examples.

| | |
|---|---|
| BCNU | be seeing you |
| BTW | by the way |
| FWIW | for what it's worth |
| IMHO | in my humble opinion |
| OBO | or best offer |
| ROTFL | rolling on the floor laughing |
| RTFM | read the "funny" manual |
| TTYL | talk to you later |

Abbreviations and emoticons are placed in e-mail messages and list serve postings to save space and to depict tongue in cheek humor. Always remember to use these only when appropriate.

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*Speak Easy*