

Webster's English Usage Guide

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to be precise. There will be times when a reworking of your sentence will improve it, but there is no need to make a strict policy of avoiding *in terms of*.

interpretative, interpretive These words are synonyms. *Interpretative* is older by a century or so, but in recent use the shorter *interpretive* has become the more common of the two. Both forms are standard.

intervene *Intervene* is used with a variety of prepositions. It occurs most often with *in* <having authority to *intervene in* such disputes>. Less frequently, it is used with *between* or *with* <a lucidity that *intervenes between* episodes of derangement> <she *intervened with* the school principal to make an exception>. It has also been used with *after*, *against*, and *into*.

in the course of See COURSE.

in the event that See EVENT.

in the hope(s) of, in the hope(s) that See HOPE.

into 1. For a discussion of distinguishing between *in* and *into*, see IN, INTO.

2. *Into, in to*. In a sentence such as "Turn this form *in to* your department head," the adverb *in* followed by the preposition *to* is not to be confused with or carelessly replaced by the preposition *into*.

introduce When *introduce* is used with a preposition, it is usually used with *to* or *into* <will serve to

thinking of them as a unit, the verb is singular <the *couple* has two children> <the *couple* owns a house in Del Mar>. *They*, *their*, and *them* have been used to refer to nouns and pronouns that take singular verbs for centuries <the *couple* plans to relocate their business>, though many newspaper editors seem not to realize it. Use of the plural verb may work in some instances <the *couple* plan to relocate their business>, but in others you may have some complicated rewriting to do. British English generally prefers the plural verb.

2. *A couple of*. Some handbooks call *a couple of* colloquial or informal, but the phrase has been in use for 500 years <*a couple of* lost children>. Others have objected to the use of the phrase to mean “a small but indefinite number” <in just *a couple of* years>, but many notable writers have used it in that sense.

couple, adjective The adjective use of *a couple*, without *of*, has been called nonstandard, but it is not. In both British and American English it is standard before a word (such as *more*) indicating degree <*a couple* more tricks>. Its use before an ordinary plural noun is an Americanism, common in speech and in informal writing <they live *a couple* houses down the street> <their first *couple* recordings>. It is most frequently used with periods of time <*a couple* weeks> and numbers <*a couple* hundred> <*a couple* dozen>.

course *Course* as used in such phrases as *in the course of* or *during the course of*, is sometimes con-

sidered redundant for *during*, *while*, *at*, or other shorter alternatives. But phrases like these are often used for rhythm or space in a sentence—to keep other, important words from becoming too tightly packed to be immediately understood. In addition, these phrases can add emphasis to the notion of duration. Depending on their context, they can be either useful <when *in the course of* human events> or unnecessary (as in “were consolidated *during the course of* 1995”). You need not avoid them on principle, but you should weigh their use carefully.

craft Some usage commentators have turned thumbs down to *craft* used as a verb <her skill at *crafting* agreements>. But *craft* is well established in current American use both as a verb and as a participial adjective <finely *crafted* stories>. It is also sometimes used in British English.

credence, credibility The problem here involves the phrases *give credence to* and *lend credence to*. When the subject of the phrase is a person, the meaning of *credence* is the familiar one of “belief” <no one could *give any credence to* these ridiculous reports>; this sense is present even when the sentence is passive and the person understood <we question whether the stories should be *lent any credence*>. When the subject of these phrases is inanimate, we get a use closer in meaning to *credibility*, “trustworthiness” <a trend that *lends credence to* the view> <such findings *give credence to* earlier theories>. This use, which is some-