



## A Useful Tool—6+1 Trait® Writing: Topic 1

### *Help! I Can't Afford an Editor—A Series to Help You Self-Edit*

#### **Conventions**

Conventions are the rules of language. They are the common patterns of grammar, spelling, punctuation, paragraphing, and capitalization that readers come to expect. When conventions are well-done, a reader likely won't notice them; but when poorly used, conventions can distract or confuse a reader from the writing and message.

To evaluate your **conventions**, ask yourself:

- Have I closely examined every sentence for capitalization and punctuation?
- Are all conventions correctly and necessarily used (e.g., semicolons, ellipses, dashes, italics)?
- Have I used spell-check?
- Have I used spelling consistently?
  - What style of English am I using (e.g., Canadian, American, British)?
- Do I omit any conventions?
  - Do I have any run-on sentences?
- Have I used the serial comma?
  - **NOTE:** There is great debate about the need and use of the serial comma. I fall firmly into the “Use It!” camp. If you choose not to, be sure its omission does not add confusion to your writing.
- Could another person read and understand my writing?
- If my piece has sources, have I cited them all correctly and included all pertinent information?
  - Could my reader track the sources easily?
  - Have I consistently used a style (e.g., APA, CMOS)
- Am I ready for a professional editor to examine my work?