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PROPER USE OF “RESPECTIVELY”

Respectively is often confused with *respectfully*, but they have different meanings. *Respectfully* is referring to showing or expressing respect. *Respectively* means in the order given.

It can be confusing to understand where to place punctuation around the word *respectively*. Is *respectively* placed in the middle of the sentence? Then surround it by commas. If it is at the end of a sentence, then place a comma before it.

The colors of the rainbow are violet, green, red, blue, orange, indigo, and yellow, respectively.

As the colors of the rainbow are not listed in their natural order, the word *respectively* should not be used. Ask yourself if the list is in the correct order. If so, you can use *respectively*.

The banana, notebook, and car cost \$20,000.00, \$0.20, and \$2.50, respectively.

Again, *respectively* means that items should be in the order given. Certainly, the banana did not cost \$20,000.00 and the car did not cost only \$2.50. If a parallel list is present, meaning there is a relationship between two given lists in the sentence, then all item placements should correspond within the list. A, B, and C cost \$A, \$B, and \$C, respectively.

**Does your sentence consist of a parallel list?
Are all of the corresponding items correctly placed?
If so, you can use the word *respectively*.**

Remember to ask yourself a few questions regarding where the word *respectively* is used in the sentence and if you have your items correctly ordered.

Is the word *respectively* placed in the middle of the sentence?

We ate breakfast, lunch, and dinner respectively for our meals today. (incorrect)

We ate breakfast, lunch, and dinner, respectively, for our meals today. (correct)

Is the word *respectively* placed at the end of a sentence?

We ate breakfast, lunch, and dinner respectively. (incorrect)

We ate breakfast, lunch, and dinner, respectively. (correct)

Is the list in the correct order?

The colors of the rainbow are violet, green, red, blue, orange, indigo, and yellow, respectively. (incorrect)

The colors of the rainbow are red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet, respectively. (correct)

Does your sentence include a parallel list?

Are all of the corresponding items placed correctly?

The banana, notebook, and car cost \$20,000.00, \$0.20, and \$2.50, respectively. (incorrect)

The banana, notebook, and car cost \$0.20, \$2.50, and \$20,000.00, respectively. (correct)

Knowing that the word *respectively* is only used when talking about the order given will go a long way to ensure you are using it correctly. Remembering to keep the items you are listing in the correct order will make you look like a grammar pro!