

## Chaos is (not) our Friend (?) - Editing for Clarity

**Purpose** - This handout and exercise is designed get students to consider, and read for, clarity. Use it if careless errors in student drafts preclude comprehension.

**Description** - Copy and distribute the following handout. In groups or as individuals, students read an example of discombobulated writing and work on making the text coherent. A great exercise to pair with the *McGraw Hill Handbook*.

**Time Suggested** - 30 minutes to a full 50 minute class period.

**Procedure** - Copy and distribute the following paragraph:

"Whenever I'm getting reading to eat my cat is always at my feet at the stove I am always tripping over him and swearing at him nevertheless he is such a funny creature how many cats can eat artichokes correctly after all when my husband cooks the kitchen smells of strong erotic spices from what I have incorrectly called the middle east but now I refer to as south asian I didn't know the difference and was embarrssed to realize I was referring to an actual incontinent incorrectly no matter how hard I try I haven't been able to reproduce his best dishes but then he does have the benefit of spending most of his life in pakistan where do we get hour specialty spices I bet your wondering but to my surprise it hasn't been difficult to find a decent ethnic grocery store all you need to do is look in the yellow pages hey theirs a novel idea you wouldnt believe how fresh and inexpensive the foods at these stores are when we shop at our favorite store rhythmys of india the owners know now us they often encourage us to buy the most recent shipment of goat meat I wasnt really crazy about that curry but love makes you do crazy things like happily married people everywhere we compromise when it is about something important we talk and sometimes agree to disagree though youve got to be yourself right"

Assemble students into groups, or allow them to work as individuals, perhaps with the handbook for reference. As them to consider the example of discombobulated writing: without proper capitalization, spelling and punctuation, we might unintentionally create potentially embarrassing sentences. Tell them to see what they can do about fixing the mess below.

Follow-up by going over the paragraph with the entire class, asking students/groups to "solve" each sentence on the board - or have several students/groups offer their solutions together and evaluate them as a class.

**Additional Information** - If you notice your groups struggling with particular grammatical rules, revise the example to contain a number of these types of errors. Consider assigning readings from the *McGraw Hill Handbook* in preparation for this class exercise.