

An Exercise in Imperatives

I'm taking a weeklong Iowa Writing Festival class later this month (iowasummerwritingfestival.org) and was assigned in advance to write 500 words using only imperatives (do this, do that). It comes in the form of some free advice; I hope you're feeling receptive.

Stop whining. You don't think you do, but you do. You think everyone else does, but actually you're worse.

No yelling. You are one of those people who often raises your voice for no good reason. There's never a good reason, unless someone's child is about to fall in the river.

No hitting. It's worse than yelling and it hurts.

Be kind. Kind people never yell, don't hit and hardly ever whine.

Keep track of your kids. Yes, they're running loose like wild Indians again. I chose not to have children because they're expensive, dirty, noisy, germmy and generally irritating, often all at the same time. Keep yours under control so I'm not tempted to yell at *them* and hit *you*.

Never generalize. Not all Indians are wild. They're not actually from India, either. They were here first, remember that. And stop calling them Indians.

Give people the benefit of the doubt. For example, not every Donald Trump supporter is an idiot. Admit it - we really don't have much to choose from in this presidential election. Donald occasionally makes sense and may not be an idiot himself, despite all indications to the contrary.

Which reminds me; *vote, dang it!* Some odd goings-on are going on right here in River City because a tiny minority of eligible voters are eating your political lunch. I honestly think I have enough Facebook friends to get me elected to any county office because you're too lazy to educate yourself on the candidates and fill in circles on a piece of paper.

Look it up. There's no point in arguing about what may or may not be true when you're walking around with a gadget in your purse or pocket that has instant

access to practically the sum total of human knowledge. An iPhone 6 has 120 million times more processing power than the computer on any Apollo spaceship, not that any of us know how to use it. And stay off those tinfoil-hat conspiracy-mongering sites.

Go outside. The siren calls of the TV, couch, computer and refrigerator are hard to ignore, but you can do it. Take in some live entertainment while you're out – it's everywhere.

Use some manners. Your elbows are on the table again. Were you born in a barn? Don't answer that while your mouth is full.

You're often wrong. Just admit it. No, it's not somebody else's fault. Even if you're sure you're right, there's no need to bludgeon people over the head with it. Use phrases like, "I could be wrong, but I'm pretty sure the earth is not flat."

Pay attention. You're a terrible driver. In a recent poll, 86 percent of respondents rated themselves above average. I could be wrong, but I'm pretty sure that's not mathematically possible. Fewer than 1% rated themselves below average, and - take it from me - you're one of them. Discover what those mysterious passing lanes and turn signals can be used for.

Stop smoking. Nobody said it would be easy.

Put down that snack. You know, you could stand to lose a few pounds. No, that's not easy either. Cher once said, "If it came in a bottle, everyone would have a great body." And yes, that outfit makes you look fat.

You're welcome.

Writers Group member and native Iowa Citian Dave Parsons co-owns a business on the Coralville strip.

