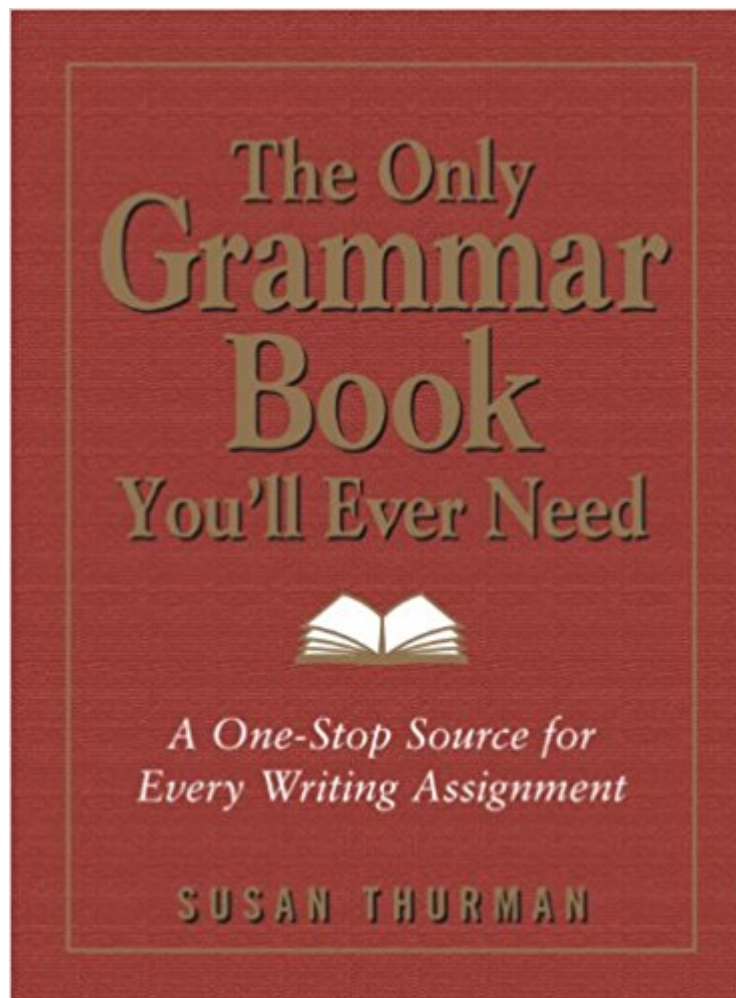




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The Only Grammar Book You'll Ever Need: A One-Stop Source For Every Writing Assignment



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- Understanding the parts of speech and elements of a sentence
- Avoiding the most common grammar and punctuation mistakes
- Using correct punctuation in every sentence
- Writing clearly and directly
- Approaching writing projects, whether big or small

Easy to follow and authoritative, The Only Grammar Book You'll Ever Need provides all the necessary tools to make you successful with every type of written expression.

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Customer Reviews

Susan Thurman has taught English grammar from the junior high school level to the college level. She edits and publishes Class Act, a national magazine that features grammar, writing, and ideas for English teachers, and has written more than fifty articles on English instruction, as well as a number of study guides. She lives in Henderson, Kentucky, where she teaches at Henderson Community College.

[CN]Chapter 7 [CT]Writing Better Sentences Certain elements can either make or break a sentence. If a sentence contains a misplaced or dangling modifier or is essentially illogical, it becomes

confusing at best and ludicrous at worst. Some brief sentences, called fragments, don't contain a complete thought and are not really proper sentences at all. At the other extreme, a writer may sometimes string several thoughts together to create an endless and grammatically incorrect run-on sentence. This chapter will give you some pointers for looking critically at your sentence construction as well as the tools to fix any problems you find. Knowing what makes a proper sentence will ensure that your writing (and your reputation!) remain solid.

Misplaced Modifiers

Simply put, misplaced modifiers are words or phrases that you've put in the wrong place. All of your words whether they're single words, phrases, or clauses should be as close as possible to whatever they modify (the words they describe or give more information about). Take a look at this sentence, written with a single word in the wrong place: After her wreck, Joanna could comprehend what the ambulance driver was barely saying. The way the sentence is written, the ambulance driver is barely speaking but surely that's not what the writer meant. Barely is out of its correct place because it modifies the wrong word. It should be moved so that it modifies the verb could comprehend. The sentence should be written this way: After her wreck, Joanna could barely comprehend what the ambulance driver was saying. Misplaced modifiers can also be phrases, as in this example: Witnesses reported that the woman was driving the getaway car with flowing black hair. A car with flowing black hair? Really? With flowing black hair is in the wrong place in the sentence and should be placed after woman. That way, the sentence would read: Witnesses reported that the woman with flowing black hair was driving the getaway car. Clauses, too, can be put in the wrong place, as in the following sentence: Mrs. Anderson could not stop thinking about her sick baby running in the six-mile road race. That's quite a baby who can run a six-mile road race (even while being sick). The clause running in the six-mile road race is out of place; it should be closer to the noun it modifies (Mrs. Anderson). The sentence should be reworded this way: Running in the six-mile road race, Mrs. Anderson could not stop thinking about her sick baby. One of the most common problems with misplaced modifiers comes with what are called limiting modifiers words like almost, even, hardly, just, merely, nearly, only (only is the one misplaced most often), scarcely, and simply. To convey the correct meaning, limiting modifiers must be placed in front of the words they modify. Take a look at these sentences: Already, Mr. Goulouze has almost eaten four slabs of ribs! How does a person almost eat something? Did he have great willpower four different times? More likely, the sentence should be reworded to say that Mr. Goulouze has eaten almost four slabs of ribs. Richard has nearly wrecked every car he's had. Has Richard nearly wrecked the cars in which case, he should be grateful for his luck or has he wrecked nearly every

car? Remember to always watch out for misplaced modifiers (as Richard should probably watch out for oncoming traffic). Otherwise, you may end up wrecking nearly every sentence you write.

My greatest complaint about this book is that it tries to do too much. It's supposedly a concise book that one can use to quickly find answers about grammar. I found the sequencing disorderly and confusing, and many of the descriptions used are flat-out wrong (in professional writing and editing, anyway), confusing, or simply irrelevant/unhelpful. The problem is that often the description is useful, but the example given is so incredibly bad that one wonders if they missed something. Nope— it's just a terrible example. For instance, in the section on plural possessives, the author correctly points out that plural possessives are usually formed with an apostrophe but not 's' on the end. Then she gives an example "trick" to help the reader find the plural in this sentence: "The girls jackets were left in the coatroom." The "trick" is then to turn the sentence around so that it reads "The jackets of the girls were left in the coatroom." NOW you know that "girls" is plural. Really? All that noise related only tangentially to the actual point— how to punctuate plural possessives, NOT how to find plural nouns (as if finding the word with the "s" on the end is like divining water or casting magic spells). My guess is that readers will be more rather than less confused after reading this section. Meanwhile, the author adds sections about predicates, gerunds, and similar concepts that most beginning students will find quite difficult to understand because they are more nuanced than simple subject— verb constructions. She's all over the map in terms of who this book is intended for. I understand the book was published some time ago, but several discussions about layout and style may not be completely wrong, but are definitely ill-advised. For instance, do we really want to teach writers that there is such a thing as a "compare-and-contrast" paper? Talk about redundant. Professional writers and editors do not use "compare and contrast," because they recognize that comparing includes contrasting by definition. And the whole "five-paragraph" essays smacks of the worst of what we teach students and businesspeople. Such an approach to writing is redundant, overwrought, and wordy as hell. Good writing does not need to repeat itself twice to make a point. And finally, from a personal standpoint, having someone else read and provide feedback to your writing is not always "peer editing." Often it is simply editing. To assume the person reviewing the work is a peer is a stretch; and besides, if you're a beginning writer, do you really want one of your peers to be your reviewer/editor? Get Bryan Garner's MODERN ENGLISH USAGE or his book on grammar published by University of Chicago Press (not CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE but rather the smaller yellow book on grammar). Though longer books, they are way more accessible, are better organized, and provide better and more concise examples that normal

people can actually understand.

This book is too short to cover all of the topics and does not go into enough detail. It is condensed. I would suggest purchasing *The McGraw-Hill Book of English Grammar and Usage*, along with this book and workbook, should you need more explanations on some of the topics. The McGraw-Hill Book even provides tests you can use if you are uncertain of the different types of speech. However, I will say that the commonly misspelled words in this book is more comprehensive than any other grammar books I've taken a look at recently. The workbook also provides a lengthy test of commonly misspelled words, which I found very helpful. If you want to get even deeper into the subject and are interested in word usage and style and editing, don't forget to take a look at Strunk & White's *"The Element of Style"* and then move onto June Casagrande (I would suggest *"The Best Punctuation Book Period."*). Every author has something to add. This is by no means the only grammar book you will ever need, but it will help guide you and provide a helpful start. Oh, and then there's a few more on proofreading and editing books if you want to brush up your skills. I did like this one; however, as I noted earlier, it provides a long list of the most commonly misspelled words, and believe me, they are up-to-date. I just thought that the textbook with explanations is too short if you are planning on reading some of the copyeditors' books at length.

A little book that is the easiest grammar guide I have ever used. It stays on my desk and gets used a lot. I have ordered it for author friends, as well, and they also use it. Nobody knows every rule of writing and speaking in English, because English is, well, just weird. This little book is a jewel! C.A. Henry, author of the Kiamichi Survival Series

I have been in college for what seems like forever. This book is a life savor! It gives great tips/advice and has definitely improved my writing. My professor actually joked that I had someone else write my first essay (after this purchase) for me. I use it as a guide for my papers still to this day.

I'm really enjoying this book because of its layout. I can use it for my private students who are somewhat younger than those that I am accustomed to teaching. I can skim through the descriptions and functions of the particular verb or noun, and with ease, rephrase the language in a manner that aptly describes their purpose, as well as describing the function of the various tenses in English. This allows me to use my own knowledge of structure, and break it down into language that is easily understood by youngsters 6-11th grade as well as some college students who have been

deprived of grammar throughout the primary years of schooling. Bonita Evans, Ph.D.

I wouldn't claim that it is the only grammar that you'll ever need, but it's definitely a good one to have. The author clearly explains the rules and gives easy-to-follow examples of good and bad grammar. I absolutely recommend this book even to native English speakers.

Great book! I learned so many new things from this book. My punctuation has improved a lot, and so has the quality of my academic papers. I still go back to this book for reference. I recommend it to most of my friends and anyone who is interested in self-improvement.

great little book but full of complete English grammar, It is nice that we don't have to read a long exhausted information, straight forward. This author is great. good job. I remember I had English grammar book and class in college which was very long but not complete information.

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