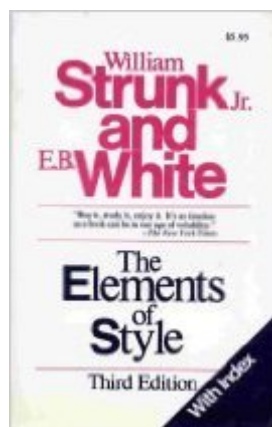


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The Elements Of Style, Third Edition



Synopsis

According to the St. Louis Dispatch, this "excellent book, which should go off to college with every freshman, is recognized as the best book of its kind we have". It should be the ". . . daily companion of anyone who writes for a living and, for that matter, anyone who writes at all" (Greensboro Daily New). "No book in shorter space, with fewer words, will help any writer more than this persistent little volume" (The Boston Globe).

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Customer Reviews

I bought my first copy of THE ELEMENTS OF STYLE nearly thirty years ago, when I was 13 years old. It cost me one dime, in a thrift shop. That is still the best dime I've ever spent. THE ELEMENTS OF STYLE is indispensable for anyone who wants to write. It distills the essence of writing clear, direct, logical prose. I read it four times a year; in addition, I read it again whenever I am about to begin a large writing project. This book has shaped every word I've ever written, and it has taught me more than I can say about life. That may sound weird or idiosyncratic, but it's not -- for the principles that guide the writing of clear, direct, logical English prose are the same principles that guide a life of integrity and commitment. Writing honestly and clearly is the surest path to living honestly and clearly. Buy it, read it, reread it, live by it. You won't be sorry.

Many books about writing are huge, but "The Elements of Style," the best of them, is extremely short: 92 pages, including index. Read them all. Briefly and vigorously, Strunk and White will tell you, for example, when to use (and not to use) commas, which words to avoid, how to divide

paragraphs, and generally how to pare your writing down to essentials. Many professional writers advise reading Strunk and White cover-to-cover once a year. If you do any regular writing, of letters or anything else, then follow that advice.

OK. So this is one of the definitive reference books on style in written English. Just don't confuse style with grammar--if you want to understand grammar per se, this isn't the book for you. (Steven Pinker's "The Language Instinct" is what you want--quite a bit wittier than Strunk & White, too.) "The Chicago Manual of Style" or "Wired Style: Principles of English Usage in the Digital Age" are both for sale at , too, and I think they're ultimately better references. But if you want to write well, well, buy Strunk & White, and abide by their oft-archaic but always lucid guidelines. Just, please, don't stop with them. The most-acclaimed writers in the English language conform not closely to Strunk & White's principles (cf. Shakespeare, Jefferson, Longfellow, Hemmingway, Pynchon, Morrison... whatever your taste may be), so be mindful that this book is not alone the key to becoming a great writer.

If every journalist, novelist, and speechwriter had this book and learned to "Omit needless words!" it would be a much better world. The other humorous and opinionated guide to good writing you should get is Henry W. Fowler's "Modern English Usage". (Not the new edition, though; it's been ruined.)

This is a classic. Books, music, plays, and movies become classics because they are foundations that inform, entertain, and break new ground (in my opinion). I cannot remember when this book was not recommended for those who needed or wanted to know the elements, the basics of English grammar, including sentence structure and frequently misspelled or misused words. One of the most incorrectly used punctuation marks is the comma. This small, 85 page book, is an excellent reference for novice or grammarian. Teachers can take the simple exercises and teach their students -- and students can look-up the rules. Without form and structure, language degenerates. Dictionaries, quickly become out of date, as the next generation adds their own words. That is a reason to keep your dictionary current, by the way. However the basic structure of English grammar doesn't change simply because it is misunderstood. Please note: there are more commas than necessary in the above paragraph... a reason to read the book is to correct all of the errors I put into that paragraph. This book is now on special order only. I have a copy somewhere in my garage, but gave up looking for it and bought a new copy. I do not regret one single penny. If you write, or read

(or talk) then this book is a must.

Strunk and White's volume advances the hope that people will become better writers and offers concrete rules that will help us avoid the blunders that most quickly expose our ignorance. But, its not enough. To become better writers, we must change the way we think about writing. Strunk & White don't go far enough. If you have already mastered many of the tips in this volume, I strongly recommend Joseph M. Williams' "Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity & Grace." It takes the discussion that Strunk & White initiated to the next level.

If I could, I'd give this book 10 stars. It's the one and only reference book you'll ever need on writing. Positively indispensable. Don't let the slim volume fool you, it's far & away better than a library full of pedantic, overblown manuals (that's what 99% of most "reference" works are anyway). On the other hand, this book's succinct clarity will amaze you, it's brilliance will surprise you...Get it, you'll never regret it and if you do then you must enjoy butchering the English language -- shame on you!

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