

THE BEST-SELLING GRAMMAR GUIDE

UPDATED AND EXPANDED

TWELFTH EDITION

THE  
BLUE  
BOOK  
OF GRAMMAR AND  
PUNCTUATION

**AN EASY-TO-USE GUIDE** with Clear Rules,  
Real-World Examples, and Reproducible Quizzes

LESTER KAUFMAN

JANE STRAUS

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THE

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BLUE BOOK

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PUNCTUATION



Twelfth Edition

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Lester Kaufman  
Jane Straus

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111 River St, Hoboken, NJ 07030

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***Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is Available:***

ISBN 9781119653028 (paperback)

ISBN 9781119653035 (epdf)

ISBN 9781119652847 (ebook)

Cover design: Wiley

TWELFTH EDITION

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

This book is dedicated to my late wife, Jane Straus. She was a brilliant, multitalented woman with boundless energy and a natural gift for clarifying all matters complex. She put her heart and soul into everything she undertook. She was taken from us far too soon.

I am deeply grateful for the love and support of my wife, Ellen Kahn, and my daughter, Zoe, for putting up with the seemingly endless hours in my office improving and refining this new edition.

—LESTER KAUFMAN





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## P R E F A C E   A N D A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

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Jane Straus created her English language instructional materials because she “found no books that conveyed the rules of English in—well—plain English.” Over the years of teaching basic English language skills to state and federal government employees as well as to individuals in the private sector and in nonprofit organizations, she refined her materials, eventually creating *The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation* and its related website, GrammarBook.com.

In the introduction to the tenth edition, the author spoke of her 2003 brain tumor diagnosis, how it led to her next bold steps in life, and her successful surgery to remove the tumor. Unfortunately, in 2009, she learned she had a new, unrelated brain tumor—this time malignant. Jane Ruth Straus passed away on February 25, 2011.

Due to the outpouring of appreciation for her work, her husband, Lester Kaufman, continued to oversee the GrammarBook.com website so that anyone around the world could still benefit from her life’s work. He also collected ideas and suggestions for changes, new material, and improvements to *The Blue Book*. After making the acquaintance of Tom Stern, a Marin County, California, writer and editor, Kaufman recognized that Stern possessed the knowledge, skills, experience, and passion needed to thoroughly re-examine *The Blue Book* and revise it to make it a first-rate grammar resource for everyone.

First and foremost, thanks must go to the late Jane Straus for her vision and persistence in creating a reference guide and workbook that is popular and easy to understand.

We deeply appreciate the late writer and editor Tom Stern for his keen insights and creative additions to both the eleventh and twelfth editions. We also thank talented writer Jonathan

Davis and retired English teacher Patti Clements for their invaluable contributions to this edition's rules and guidance as well as their conscientious work on the quizzes.

We could not have succeeded in updating this book without the assistance of the staff and editors at Jossey-Bass and literary agent Cathy Fowler, who steadfastly believed in the book's value. We also thank the thousands of loyal readers of the GrammarBook.com website who, by offering valuable input daily, have helped shape the rules, examples, and quizzes.

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## A B O U T T H E A U T H O R S

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**Lester Kaufman** is the publisher of GrammarBook.com. A lifelong public servant, he first served as a teacher in the Peace Corps, and eventually he completed the final years of his federal career with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. He married Jane Straus in 1987.

After his retirement from the Environmental Protection Agency, Kaufman began assisting with the operation of Straus's fledgling website and helped edit previous editions of *The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation*.

Following Jane Straus's untimely passing in February 2011, Kaufman assumed management of GrammarBook.com, which features an informative and entertaining weekly newsletter that encourages readers to ask grammar questions and offer their views on the state of twenty-first-century English.

**Jane Straus** (1954–2011) was an educator, life coach, and best-selling author. To prepare for a job teaching English to employees of the state of California in 1975, Straus scoured the library for materials that conveyed the rules of grammar and punctuation in plain English. Finding no such resources, she wrote the rules her own way, made up exercises, ran off some copies, and hoped for the best.

The class was a hit. More and more state employees demanded that they get an equal opportunity to benefit from Straus's no-nonsense instruction in English grammar and usage. She continued to refine her materials, eventually turning them into *The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation*.

When the Internet was born, she launched a website, GrammarBook.com, which has helped millions of people all over the world improve their English grammar. Straus became a sought-after speaker in the fields of grammar, public speaking, and life coaching. Her other book is *Enough Is Enough! Stop Enduring and Start Living Your Extraordinary Life* (Jossey-Bass, 2005).





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# I N T R O D U C T I O N

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Now in its twelfth edition, *The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation* will help you write and speak with confidence. You don't have to be an English major to understand grammar and punctuation. You just need rules and guidelines that are easy to understand, with real-world examples.

Whether you are an instructor who is teaching students the rules of English, or a student, executive, professional writer, or avid blogger honing your grammar and punctuation skills, this book will help you zip through tests (including the SAT), reports, essays, letters, e-mails, and résumés. It will help you (and your writing) impress your teachers, your bosses, your clients, and other readers.

Every generation of English scholars despairs because the language always seems to be at a crisis point. But it is undeniable that everywhere one looks nowadays, the principles in this book are casually and cavalierly violated.

*The Blue Book* will prove to be a valuable tool for teachers and students in achieving the goals of the Common Core State Standards Initiative. Studying the chapters and working through the quizzes will provide students of all ages with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed beyond high school—in college and in the workplace. Students will learn how to use formal English in their writing and speaking and how to better express themselves through language. We also recommend reading the works of great writers to experience firsthand the art and beauty of effective communication.

This book is logical, self-paced, and fun to use, with scores of interesting and challenging quizzes that you may photocopy to your heart's content. Best of all, you can look forward to instant gratification, because the answers to the quizzes are included.

Throughout the text, certain terms have been set in boldface type (for instance, at the beginning of Chapter One, **noun, common nouns, proper nouns**). Due to space and other considerations, we could not always explore these linguistic terms as thoroughly as we might have wished. Readers are strongly urged to look further into these terms on their own. We also recommend that those who are serious about improving their English grammar always keep a dictionary close by and use it assiduously.

If you don't have time to research several leading reference books to figure out where the next comma should go or whether to write *who* or *whom*, you will find *The Blue Book* to be a pleasure to use. Dedicated to eliminating unnecessary jargon, it highlights the most important grammar, punctuation, and capitalization rules and guidelines and clarifies some of the language's most confusing and confounding words.

Throughout the book, we use the word *rule* in a liberal sense. The boundary between *rule* and *guideline* can be blurry. The *rule* stated by one writing style guide may differ from the *rule* in another. In many of these cases, we will state the predominant or sensible practice but then illustrate other acceptable methods. The most important *guideline* in such cases is simply to be consistent in your own writing.

In Chapter One, "Grammar," you will learn how to find nouns, verbs, and subjects and make sure they agree with one another. We will talk about the unpredictable behavior of irregular verbs. Next, you will learn about clauses and phrases, the keys to understanding sentence structure. Then, on to pronoun usage, so that you will know whether to write *I* or *me*, *he* or *him*, *who* or *whom*, etc. In this twelfth edition, we include pronoun guidance recognizing the value of gender-neutral language, which aims to treat people equally and is inclusive of people whose gender identity is not strictly male or female.

From there, in the "Adjectives and Adverbs" section, you will discover why some words have *-ly* added to them, and why you must say, "I did well on the test," rather than "I did good on the test." After that, you will breeze through prepositions, learning some surprising rules, and we will debunk at least one myth. (*Hint*: Is it safe to ask, "What are you talking about?" or must we ask, "About what are you talking?")

The "Effective Writing" section of Chapter One will give you helpful tips for constructing sentences and paragraphs that flow gracefully, making it easier to write quickly and well.

Chapter Two, "Punctuation," takes on all the usual suspects: proper spacing with punctuation and the proper use of periods, commas, semicolons, colons, quotation marks, question marks, parentheses and brackets, apostrophes, hyphens, dashes, ellipses, exclamation points, and slashes. The best part about this and other chapters is that you will find an abundance of examples that you run across every day.

Then comes Chapter Three, "Capitalization," in which you will get your most vexing questions answered, learning which words to capitalize in a title and when to capitalize job titles, such as *president* or *director*.

In Chapter Four, “Writing Numbers,” you will learn the importance of consistency when using numerals or writing out numbers. You will also learn how to write fractions and large numbers.

After that, you will enjoy spending time reading all about *affect* vs. *effect*, *lay* vs. *lie*, *their* vs. *there* vs. *they’re*, and *its* vs. *it’s* in Chapter Five, “Confusing Words and Homonyms.” We have provided hundreds of words and phrases for you in this chapter, so you will never again have to be confused by the differences between *farther* and *further*, *continual* and *continuous*, *flaunt* and *flout*, *tortuous* and *torturous*, and all the rest of the trickiest and most commonly misused words and phrases in the English language.

Promise not to skip the quizzes, pretests, or mastery tests in Chapter Six, “Quizzes.” The more you practice, the more confident you will become. Once you get over any fears about test taking, we think you will find the quizzes both enjoyable and challenging. You will find the answers in Chapter Seven, “Answers to Quizzes.”

Please visit [www.GrammarBook.com](http://www.GrammarBook.com), where you will find the quizzes in the book in a multiple-choice, interactive format. If you are a teacher or are really jazzed about improving your English skills, on the website you will also find

- Hundreds of additional downloadable, interactive quizzes in the “Subscription” area
- All the rules and examples you see in the book
- A sign-up box on the home page for our free, weekly e-newsletter with tips and articles
- Our blog containing over 500 articles, including reader questions and our responses, extensively exploring English grammar and punctuation more broadly than possible in the book.
- Dozens of free one-minute videos by Jane Straus on English language usage
- Recommendations for further reading and study

*The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation* and the website represent American English rules and guidelines. Explore the Grammar Blog tab on the website, which includes some exploration of the differences between US and UK English.

The point of grammar proficiency is to be clear and direct and to avoid misunderstanding. We hope you will come away from this book with this mantra: “Think before you write.” Be sure every sentence conveys what you mean, with no possibility of ambiguity or inadvertent meaninglessness.

That being said, as George Orwell wrote in 1946, “Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.”

We hope you find *The Blue Book* to be both enjoyable and invaluable.

**NOTE**

The authors researched the leading reference books on American English grammar and punctuation, including *The Chicago Manual of Style*, *The Associated Press Stylebook*, Fowler's *Modern English Usage*, Bernstein's *The Careful Writer*, and many others. The authors provide rules, guidance, and examples based on areas of general agreement among the authorities. Where the authorities differ, this book provides options to follow based on the reader's purpose in writing, with this general advice: be consistent.