

# THE CURRENT INDEX

OF CURRENT  
ENGLISH  
5<sup>TH</sup>

W. W. C. C. C.

# **Handbook of Current English**

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**5th Edition**

**Jim W. Corder**

Texas Christian University

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# To the Instructor

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This edition of the *Handbook of Current English* perpetuates certain convictions that have marked it from its beginning: that selective and thoughtful use of language is important in every day life as well as in school; that some forms of expression are more effective and more appropriate in given situations than other forms are; and that a "good" language is a language decently suited to its speaker or writer, to the subject at hand, and to the audiences that receive the language. This edition, however, has been revised with the need of today's students for clear, straightforward advice in mind; although it contains all the coverage of former editions, in some instances what was here before has been compressed to be more concise and to make room for new material.

New material appears in various ways. The Glossary of Usage is entirely new. Some new textual material appears in almost every section, and some sections (19, *What Writing Will Let You Do*, and 29, *Practical and Vocational Writing*, for example) have been considerably revised. Much of the illustrative material is new, as are many of the exercises.

The material in this edition has been reorganized to better reflect the process of writing. I have made no notable shift in Part One except to move the section on spelling to the end; in its location in former editions it had come to seem an interruption in a series of sections on punctuation and usage. Somewhat more significant shifts occur in Part Two. The new section 19, on the modes of rhetoric, brings into a more noticeable and, I hope, more useful place material helpful to prewriting that had previously tended to be lost in the later sections of the book. The new section 20, on organization, separates out for fuller attention material that was formerly incorporated in section 18. Material on revising and correcting papers has been moved from an early to a later place in the book. Some slight internal reorganization of sections also occurs. Throughout the planning, my purpose was to make material accessible in the best way and to give sense to the sequence the book holds. I believe the present sequence is good and usable; at the same time, I believe that the sections can be rearranged according to the needs of particular teachers and classes, and that they can stand alone as reference sources.

The organization and features of *Handbook of Current English* are designed to make the text easy and effective to use, as the following discussion explains.

**Introduction: The Languages We Use.** The introduction is a discussion of the English language; it includes an account of distinctions between speaking and writing and of some varieties of

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English and the ways they can be used. The introduction suggests some ways of moving among varieties of English according to the principle of appropriateness. Some recommendations made throughout the text may be clearer if students read this material at the start of the course.

## **Part One: Resources for Composition**

**Sections 1 through 9: Grammar and Usage.** These sections review the grammar of English sentences and the functions of various kinds of words and word groups.

**Sections 11 through 17: Punctuation and Other Conventions.** These sections discuss and illustrate the principles governing the use of punctuation, mechanics, and other conventions, as well as various customs for using capital letters, apostrophes, abbreviations, and numbers. The final section, Spelling, suggests ways to overcome various spelling problems.

The sections in this first half of the *Handbook* treat single, definite topics. Grammatical definitions are included where they are relevant and necessary to the discussion. Many particular matters of usage are discussed at the point where they relate to general principles, but many more are included in the Glossary of Usage.

## **Part Two: Practices in Composition**

The second half of the *Handbook* serves as a brief rhetoric and as a practical guide to college writing.

**Sections 18 through 21: Composition.** These beginning sections focus on the processes of discovering what can or should be written and on the first steps in giving shape and character to the writing. Section 19, new in this edition, uses what other writers have done to suggest some of the things that are possible for student writers. These four sections constitute a discussion of what might be called prewriting.

**Sections 22 through 24: Diction.** These sections discuss the dictionary and deal with appropriate and effective uses of words.

**Sections 25 through 27: Sentences and Paragraphs.** These sections discuss means by which sentences and paragraphs can be

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managed and controlled to shape meaning; they show ways of using various sentence patterns and various patterns of paragraph construction to develop ideas.

**Sections 28 through 30: Practical Writing Tasks.** Problems of revising and practical matters in whole compositions are taken up here. Section 28, on revising, suggests ways of altering emphasis, mood, tone, and direction to suit the needs of the writing at hand. A sample student paper is included on pages 384–387, showing the first version, with the instructor's comments, and the revision.

Section 29 discusses and illustrates some particular kinds of writing, including answers to essay examinations, literary analyses, and business letters and resumés.

The final section is devoted to the special problems of research writing. A new sample research paper is included.

**Glossary of Usage.** The Glossary, new in this edition, gives succinct advice about the words and constructions that most often cause confusion in college writing.

**Exercises.** The exercises in this revision of the *Handbook* have been altered considerably, and they appear in new places. As much as possible, the exercises call for students to do some writing themselves, rather than to respond to another person's writing, although there are also exercises that call for sentence correction and for thought and discussion. The exercises characteristically appear not all collected at the end of the sections, but within the sections, immediately following the pertinent material. Thus, for example, when section 22.2 discusses "Learning to use your dictionary," appropriate exercises occur within the section, asking the students to apply what has just been discussed. Colored triangles mark exercises wherever they occur within the sections.

**Marginal tabs and correction charts.** The colored marginal tabs correspond to each of the six main divisions discussed above. In the margin of each right-hand page is also the pertinent correction symbol or abbreviation to indicate the material on those pages.

Themes can be marked by using either the correction symbols or the section numbers; the two are coordinated in the correction chart on the inside front cover as well as on the marginal tabs. In the text itself, the handwritten correction symbols appear with specific suggestions for revision, printed in color. Students should study the text that follows each suggestion whenever they are not sure why revision is necessary.



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Appearing on the back end cover of the book is a checklist for revision; it should be helpful for students to go over their papers with those questions in mind before they hand in their themes.

**Workbook and Diagnostic Test.** For the first time, the *Handbook of Current English* consists of a total program. Along with the *Handbook* itself is *Workbook of Current English*, by William E. Mahaney, and a Diagnostic Test, by Hugh H. Paschal. Keyed to the *Handbook*, the *Workbook* contains imaginative and varied exercises to give students further practice in identifying structures, correcting errors, and writing sentences and paragraphs using specific writing principles. The Diagnostic Test is intended to test students' mastery of grammatical and rhetorical skills; it is available to schools that adopt the *Handbook* or *Workbook*.

## Acknowledgments

Were I to list here a hundred teachers and scholars to whom I am indebted, I would miss fifty whose work I owe as much. Teachers will note that I have used plural pronouns in the text. I don't really think of myself as an editorial "we," but I'm unembarrassed by the plurals: it seemed to me as I was working that Porter Perrin was never far away, after all.

I want to thank many of the *Handbook's* users for valuable suggestions on the revision of the text. I am especially grateful to Wayne Dickson, Stetson University; Josephine Giorgio, Rhode Island Junior College; Richard L. Harp, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Sandra Kirkland, The Pennsylvania State University; Jonathan Lawson, St. Cloud State College; Judith S. VanAlstyne, Broward Community College; and Carlene Walker, University of Texas, El Paso. I am grateful to Richard Welna of Scott, Foresman and Company for his friendship and good counsel. Amanda Clark of Scott, Foresman has been a thoughtful friend and editor, patient with me and faithful to the book and the needs of its possible readers. \*

The work on this book is drawing to its end. They will understand, I think, if I mark this time and thank Patsy and David and Cathy and Mindy.

Jim W. Corder

*Handbook of Current English* is designed to be used both as a classroom text and as a reference book about particular points of grammar, usage, and rhetoric. If you take a little time to familiarize yourself with the organization and features of the book, you should be able to use the book easily and effectively.

**Introduction: The Languages We Use.** The introduction is a discussion of the English language. It includes a discussion of the distinctions between spoken and written language and the varieties of English such as formal, general, informal, and nonstandard. It also suggests some ways of deciding what level or variety is most appropriate to the situation. Some of the recommendations made throughout the text may be clearer if you read this material at the start of the course.

## Part One: Resources for Composition

**Sections 1 through 9: Grammar and Usage.** These sections review the grammar of English sentences and the functions of the parts of speech.

**Sections 11 through 17: Punctuation and Other Conventions.** These sections discuss and illustrate the principles governing the use of punctuation marks, mechanics, capital letters, apostrophes, abbreviations, and numbers. Section 17, *Spelling*, suggests ways to overcome various spelling problems.

## Part Two: Practices in Composition

The second half of the *Handbook* serves as a brief rhetoric and as a practical guide to college writing.

**Sections 18 through 21: Composition.** These beginning sections focus on what might be called prewriting: Section 18 offers advice on finding and shaping a subject; section 19 discusses the modes of rhetoric and the situations each is most appropriate to; section 20 concentrates on organization; and section 21 focuses on writing the first draft of the paper.

**Sections 22 through 27: Diction.** These sections discuss the dictionary and deal with appropriate and effective use of words.

**Sections 25 through 27: Sentences and Paragraphs.** These sections discuss means by which sentences and paragraphs can be managed and controlled to shape meaning; they show ways of using various sentence patterns and various patterns of paragraph construction to develop ideas.

These sections and the ones on diction constitute discussions on what is usually considered style.

**Sections 28 through 30: Practical Writing Tasks.** Problems of revising and practical matters in whole compositions are taken up here. Section 28 is concerned with revising a paper; section 29 discusses and illustrates some particular kinds of writing, including answers to essay examinations, writing about literature, and business letters and resumé's; section 30 is devoted to the special problems of writing a research paper.

**Glossary of Usage.** The glossary is a quick reference guide to the correct use of some of the most troublesome or confusing words and constructions.

**Marginal tabs.** The colored marginal tabs correspond to each of the six main divisions listed above. In the margin by the tab is also the pertinent correction symbol or abbreviation indicating the material covered on those pages. The tabs and symbols should help you quickly find the subject you are looking for.

**Correction charts.** Appearing on the inside covers are two guides to correction and revision. The correction symbols on the inside front cover correspond to rules for revision of specific and general points of discussion. These rules are printed in red within the text, and offer a quick preview of the discussion to follow. Your instructor will probably use either these symbols or the section numbers to mark your papers, and expect you to follow the advice of the *Handbook* in correcting your papers.

The chart on the inside back cover, A Checklist for Revision, is a list of questions to ask about your papers before you hand them in, to be sure you have paid attention to both the specific details and more general aspects of composition.

**Index.** A full index provides a quick means of referring to both general and particular points of discussion; used along with the marginal tabs, the *Handbook* should be easy and effective to use.

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## The Languages We Use

*In reading and writing, there are none of those helpful accompaniments we count on in the actual practice of conversing, such as vocal intonation, facial expression, gesture. One of the writer's principal problems is to compensate for these losses, for most people are more convincing in person than on paper. That is why writing has to be learned; that is why books like this one are offered as helps for writers. Somehow the writer has to evoke, out of mere ink marks on paper, a character whose language the reader will trust, enjoy, profit from. — Walker Gibson, PERSONA*

Everyone who will use this textbook speaks English. Assuming that we're native speakers of English, we know the language long before we study it. Well before school starts we can usually understand sentences that other people utter, even though we may have never heard words in precisely those combinations before. By the time older people will admit that we have learned to talk, we can say sentences that we have never said before and never heard before. We can say sentences long before we know that there are such things as sentences. But even if we know English before we study it, there is ample reason to study it in school and all our lives. It is an agency, a medium, by which we can conduct our affairs, whether trivial or important. We need to know what we can about the language and work toward using it wisely and well.

Paradoxically, English is both easy and difficult to study. Easy, because we already do know the language. Difficult, because English isn't one thing, but many things. It is varied; it changes. When we speak, we don't all sound alike, and when we write, we don't all write in the same way. Each of us knows English in various versions, and each of us uses one version when talking to a close friend, say, and another when speaking to a forty-year-old English teacher. In the talk that we hear every day we understand many different ways of speaking, and we can read and understand still other ways of speaking in print.

Yet using a language well depends on more than an awareness of our abilities to speak and understand different varieties. It is also more than writing "complete" sentences, using correct verb forms, making verbs agree with their subjects and pronouns with their antecedents. Beyond these forms and conventions, using a language well is a matter of choosing from the broad range of our language the words and constructions that will best convey