FORM B
Third Edition

The Least You Should Know About English

Basic Writing Skills

TERESA FERSTER GLAZIER

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This text is available in Form A, Form B, and Form C so that a different form may be used in various semesters. The three forms are essentially the same except that they have different exercises, writing assignments, and essays.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Glazier, Teresa Ferster.
The least you should know about English.

Includes index.
1. English language—Rhetoric—Problems, exercises, etc. 2. English language—Grammar—1950– —Problems, exercises, etc. I. Title.
PE1413.G57 1986 808'.042 85-5440

ISBN 0-03-002607-5

Address correspondence to:
383 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10017

Printed in the United States of America
Published simultaneously in Canada
6 7 8 9 090 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

CBS COLLEGE PUBLISHING
Holt, Rinehart and Winston
The Dryden Press
Saunders College Publishing

To the Instructor

This book is for students who need to review the rules of English composition and who may profit from a simplified approach. The main features of the book are these:

1. It's truly basic. Only the indisputable essentials of spelling, grammar, sentence structure, and punctuation are included because research has shown that putting too much emphasis on mechanics is not the way to help students learn to write.
2. It stresses writing. A writing section, EIGHT STEPS TO BETTER WRITING (pp. 200–38), provides writing assignments to be used along with the exercises. The section has been kept brief because students learn to write by *writing* rather than by reading pages and pages *about* writing. Even though the section is only 39 pages (compared to 198 for the first part of the text), students will undoubtedly spend more time on it than on all the rest of the book.
3. It uses little linguistic terminology. A conjunction is a connecting word; gerunds and present participles are *ing* words; a parenthetical constituent is an interrupter. Students work with words they know instead of learning a vocabulary they'll never use again.
4. It has abundant practice sentences and paragraphs—enough so that students learn to use the rules automatically and thus carry their new skills over into their writing.
5. It includes groups of thematically related, informative sentences on such topics as sled-dog racing, the College Football Hall of Fame, totem poles of the Northwest Coast Indians, the usefulness of spiders, Wisconsin's Rustic Roads Act, the litter on Mount Everest, controlling avalanches, Houdini's magic, the history of ice cream, underground cities, and the comeback of Mount Saint Helens . . . thus making the task of doing the exercises more interesting.
6. It provides perforated answer sheets at the back of the book so that the students can correct their own work, thus teaching themselves as they go.
7. It includes four essays to read and summarize. Students improve their reading by learning to spot main ideas and their writing by learning to write concise summaries.
8. It can be used as a self-tutoring text. Simple explanations, abundant exercises, and answers at the back of the book provide students with a writing lab in their own rooms.

9. It's an effective text for the "one-to-one conference" method of teaching because its simple, clear organization makes it easy for students to use on their own, thus keeping the conference hour free for discussing individual writing problems.

The instructor is provided with an enlarged packet of ditto master tests covering all parts of the text (four for each section). These tests are free upon adoption of the text and may be obtained through the local Holt representative or by writing to the English Editor, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 383 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10017.

Students who have previously been overwhelmed by the complexities of English should, through mastering simple rules and through writing and rewriting simple papers, gain enough competence to succeed in further composition courses.

TFG

Macomb, Illinois

Acknowledgments

To the reviewers of the previous editions of this text, as well as to the reviewers of this edition—Betty Pex of the College of San Mateo and Carol Croxton of the University of Southern Colorado—I am grateful for important suggestions. And once again I am indebted to Christopher Glazier, Kenneth Glazier, Jr., Gretchen Glazier Boyer, Teresa Edwards, and Liz Roth for writing some of the exercises and meticulously correcting my first drafts.

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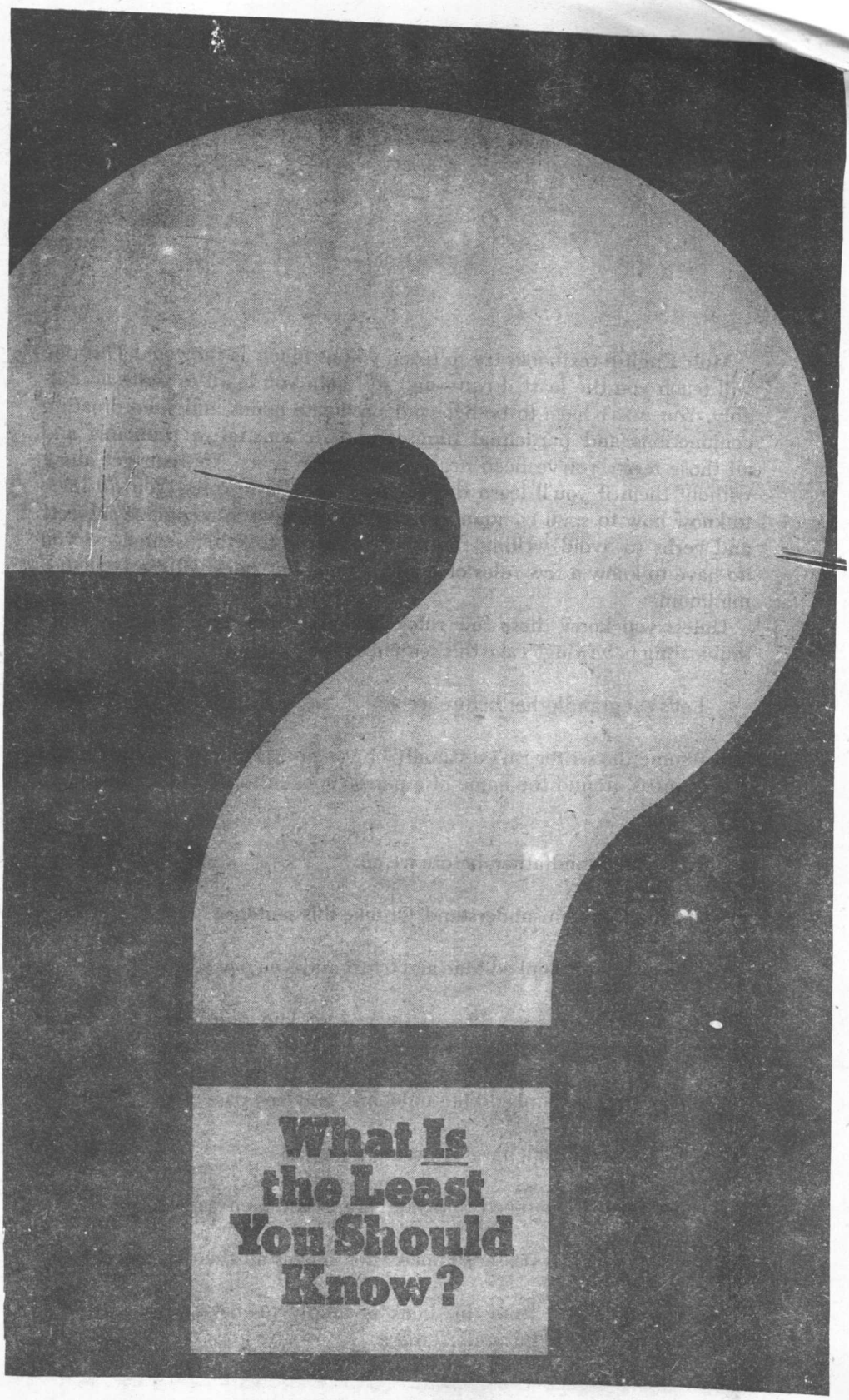
What Is
the Least
You Should
Know?

What Is the Least You Should Know?

Most English textbooks try to teach you as much as they can. This one will teach you the least it can—and still help you learn to write acceptably. You won't have to bother with predicate nouns and subordinating conjunctions and participial phrases and demonstrative pronouns and all those terms you've been hearing about for years. You can get along without them if you'll learn thoroughly a few basic rules. You *do* have to know how to spell common words; you *do* have to recognize subjects and verbs to avoid writing fragments and run-together sentences; you *do* have to know a few rules of punctuation—but rules will be kept to a minimum.

Unless you know these few rules, though, you'll have difficulty communicating in writing. Take this sentence for example:

Let's eat grandfather before we go.

We assume the writer isn't a cannibal but merely failed to capitalize and put commas around the name of a person spoken to. If the sentence had read

Let's eat, Grandfather, before we go.

then no one would misunderstand. Or take this sentence:

The instructor flunked Mac and Chris and Ken passed.

Did Chris flunk or pass? There's no way of knowing unless the writer puts a comma either after *Mac* or after *Chris*. If the sentence reads

The instructor flunked Mac and Chris, and Ken passed.

we know Chris flunked, but if the sentence reads

The instructor flunked Mac, and Chris and Ken passed.

then we know Chris passed. Punctuation makes all the difference.

What you'll learn from this book is simply to make your writing so clear that no one will misunderstand it.

The English you'll learn to write is called standard English, and it may differ slightly from the English spoken in your community. All over the country, various dialects of English are spoken. In northern New England, for example, people leave the *r* off certain words and put an *r* on others. President Kennedy said *dollah* for *dollar*, *idear* for *idea*, and *Cubar* for *Cuba*. In black communities many people leave the *s* off some verbs and put an *s* on others, saying *he walk* and *they walks* instead of *he walks* and *they walk*.

But no matter what English dialect people *speak*, they all must *write* the same dialect—standard English. You can say, "Whacha doin? Cmon," and everybody will understand, but you can't *write* that way. If you want your readers to understand what you write, you'll have to write the way English-speaking people all over the world write—in standard English. Being able to write standard English is essential in college, and it probably will be an asset in your career.

It's important to master every rule as you come to it because many rules depend on the ones before. For example, unless you learn to pick out subjects and verbs, you'll have trouble with run-together sentences, with fragments, with subject-verb agreement, and with punctuation. The rules are brief and clear, and it won't be difficult to master all of them . . . *if you want to*. But you do have to want to!

Here's the way to master the least you should know:

1. Study the explanation of each rule carefully.
2. Do the first exercise (ten sentences). Then tear out the perforated answer sheet at the back of the book and correct your answers. If you miss even one answer, study the explanation again to find out why.
3. Do the second exercise and correct it. If you miss a single answer, go back once more and study the explanation. You must have missed something. Be tough on yourself. Don't just think, "Maybe I'll hit it right next time." Go back and master the rules, and *then* try the next exercise. It's important to correct each group of ten sentences before going on so that you'll discover your mistakes while you still have sentences to practice on.
4. You may be tempted to quit when you get several exercises perfect. Don't! Make yourself finish every exercise. It's not enough to *understand* a rule. You have to practice it. Just as understanding the strokes in swimming won't help unless you actually get into the pool and swim, so understanding a rule about writing isn't going to help unless you practice using it.

   If you're positive, however, after doing five exercises, that you've mastered the rules, take Exercise 6 as a test. If you miss even one answer, you must do all the rest of the exercises. But if you get

Exercise 6 perfect, then spend your time helping one of your friends. Teaching is one of the best ways of learning.

5. But rules and exercises are not the most important part of this book. The most important part begins on page 200—when you begin to write. The writing assignments, grouped together for convenience, are to be used along with the exercises.

Mastering these essentials will take time. Generally, college students are expected to spend two hours outside of class for each hour in class. You may need more. Undoubtedly, the more time you spend, the more your writing will improve.

Spelling

1 Spelling

Anyone can learn to spell. You can get rid of most of your spelling errors by the time you finish this book if you want to. It's just a matter of deciding you're going to do it. If you really intend to learn to spell, master the first seven parts of this section. They are

YOUR OWN LIST OF MISSPELLED WORDS
WORDS OFTEN CONFUSED
CONTRACTIONS
POSSESSIVES
WORDS THAT CAN BE BROKEN INTO PARTS
RULE FOR DOUBLING A FINAL CONSONANT
A LIST OF FREQUENTLY MISSPELLED WORDS

Master these seven parts, and you'll be a good speller.

YOUR OWN LIST OF MISSPELLED WORDS

On the inside back cover of this book write correctly all the misspelled words in the papers handed back to you. Review them until you're sure of them. That will take care of most of your errors.

WORDS OFTEN CONFUSED

By mastering the spelling of these often-confused words, you will take care of many of your spelling problems. Study the words carefully, with their examples, before you try the exercises.

a, an

Use *an* before a word that begins with a vowel sound (*a, e, i,* and *o,* plus *u* when it sounds like *uh*).

an apple, an essay, an icicle
an heir, an honest man (silent *h*)
an uproar, an umpire (the *u*'s sound like *uh*)

Use *a* before a word that begins with a consonant sound (all the sounds except the vowels, plus *u* or *eu* when they sound like *you*).

a pencil, a hotel, a history book
a union, a uniform, a unit (the *u*'s sound like *you*)
a European trip (*Eu* sounds like *you*)

accept, except

Accept is a verb and means "to receive willingly." (See p. 55 for an explanation of verbs.)

I *accept* your gift. (receive it willingly)

Except means "excluding" or "but."

Everyone came *except* him. (but him)

advice, advise

Advise is a verb (pronounce the *s* like *z*).

I *advise* you to go.

Use *advice* when it's not a verb.

I don't need any *advice.*

affect, effect

Affect is a verb and means "to influence."

The lack of rain *affected* the crops.

Effect means "result." If *a, an,* or *the* is in front of the word, then you'll know it isn't a verb and will use *effect.*

The lack of rain had a harmful *effect* on the crops.

all ready, already

If you can leave out the *all* and the sentence still makes sense, then *all ready* is the form to use. (In that form, *all* is a separate word and could be left out.)

I'm *all ready* to go. (*I'm ready to go* makes sense.)

Dinner is *all ready*. (*Dinner is ready* makes sense.)

But if you can't leave out the *all* and still have the sentence make sense, then use *already* (the form in which the *al* has to stay in the word).

I'm *already* late. (*I'm ready late* doesn't make sense.)

are, or, our

Are is a verb.

We *are* studying English.

Or is used between two possibilities, as "tea *or* coffee."

Take it *or* leave it.

Our shows we possess something.

Our class meets at eight.

brake, break

Brake means "to slow or stop motion." It's also the name of the device that slows or stops motion.

You *brake* to avoid an accident.

You slam on your *brakes*.

Break means "to shattter" or "to split." It's also the name of an interruption, as "a coffee break."

You *break* a dish or an engagement or a record.

You enjoy your Thanksgiving *break*.

choose, chose

I will *choose* a partner right now.

I *chose* a partner yesterday.

clothes, cloths

Her *clothes* were attractive.

We used soft *cloths* to polish the car.

coarse, course

Coarse describes texture, as *coarse* cloth.

Her suit was made of *coarse* material.

Course is used for all other meanings.

Of *course* I enjoyed that *course*.

complement, compliment

The one spelled with an *e* completes something or brings it to perfection.

A 30° angle is the *complement* of a 60° angle.

His blue tie *complements* his gray suit.

The one spelled with an *i* has to do with praise. Remember "*I* like compliments," and you'll remember to use the *i* spelling when you mean praise.

She gave him a *compliment*.

He *complimented* her on her well-written paper.

conscience, conscious

Conscious means "aware."

I was not *conscious* that it was raining.

The extra *n* in *conscience* should remind you of NO, which is what your conscience often says to you.

My *conscience* told me not to cut class.

desert, dessert

Dessert is the sweet one, the one you like two helpings of. So give it two helpings of *s*.

We had apple pie for *dessert*.

The other one, *desert*, is used for all other meanings.

Don't *desert* me.

The camel moved slowly across the *desert*.

do, due

You *do* something.

I *do* the best I can.

But a payment or an assignment is *due*; it is scheduled for a certain time.

My paper is *due* tomorrow.

does, dose

Does is a verb.

He *does* his work well. She *doesn't* care about cars.

A *dose* is an amount of medicine.

That was a bitter *dose* of medicine.

feel, fill

Feel describes your feelings.

I *feel* ill.

I *feel* happy about that A.

Fill is what you do to a cup.

Will you *fill* my cup again?

forth, fourth

The number *fourth* has four in it. (But note that *forty* does not. Remember the word *forty-fourth*.)

This is our *fourth* game.

That was our *forty-fourth* point.

If you don't mean a number, use *forth*.

She walked back and *forth*.

have, of

Have is a verb. When you say *could have*, the *have* may sound like *of*, but it must not be written that way. Always write *could have, would have, should have, might have*.

I should *have* finished my work sooner.

Then I could *have* gone home.

Use *of* only in a prepositional phrase (see p. 61).

I often think *of* him.