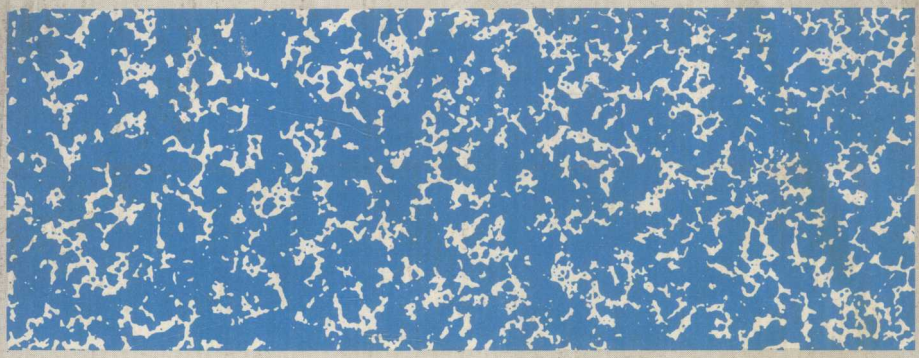

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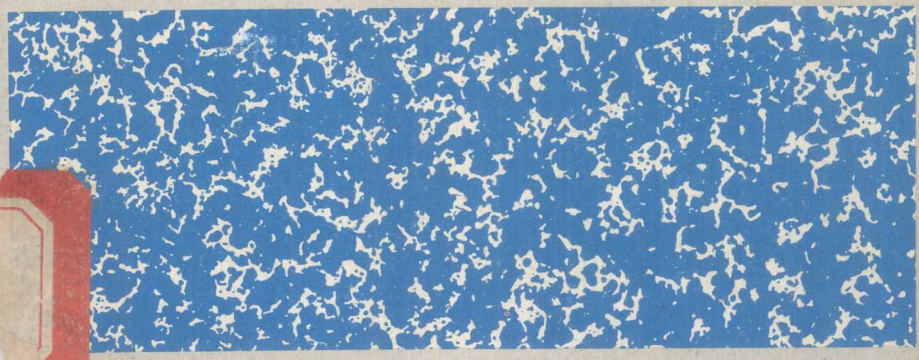

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PREFACE

Handbook of English Fundamentals springs from an old and illustrious line, *English Fundamentals,* first published in 1933 and now popular in its sixth edition. *English Fundamentals* is designed for students of writing who wish to work through a review of standard English usage and the first principles of writing short papers; *Handbook* is intended for those who wish to have a convenient, brief reference book to guide them in the application of those principles to their own writing. *English Fundamentals* has been refined and sharpened in the process of going through five revisions; it has been modified and improved in response to comments from teachers, out of respect for the language, and from a wish to serve the needs of student writers more effectively. *Handbook* has benefited from the same accumulated efforts at improvement, for much of its instruction and explanation has been adapted from *English Fundamentals.*

Handbook organizations vary. At one end of the range stands the strict progression from simple principle to complex; at the other is the alphabetical reference catalogue. The first extreme seems too pedagogical for a book that may prove most useful when it is not read cover to cover in the order of its content. The last variation, although predictable and convenient, confounds the inquirer who knows everything about the inquiry but its name. In determining our table of contents, we have tried to learn from all the systems practiced and to arrange material in ascending order from mechanical detail to theoretical principle and taste. *Handbook* is arranged so that the user will come first to the guidance most commonly sought in the process of writing revision: punctuation, mechanics, capitalization, and spelling. Each element is presented in an easily remembered statement or direction, and that statement is then amplified and explained through clear examples so that users can not only refresh their memory of the rule itself but reinforce past instruction and experience by reflecting on the discussion of the principle and the examples.

Next in the order of presentation are discussions of sentence

structure and usage. The principles are set out in concise statements designed for easy, rapid reference and application; they are discussed and illustrated so that users can acquire a working knowledge and a clear understanding.

Part IV offers a treatment of the grammar and structure of the sentence. This section provides a quick review of any part of sentence construction and analysis that may have slipped the user's mind. A review of basic sentence patterns and variations on those basic patterns encourages development of varied sentence structures and leads directly and logically to a review of the principles of coordination and subordination so necessary for the production of writing that is logically consistent and stylistically pleasing.

The final section of the book consists of an overview of the basic steps in the process of composing and writing various assignments that may face a student. A guide to taking essay tests provides directions and guidelines for organizing thinking and writing for essay examinations. Steps for reviewing notes as well as directions for the actual composition process take the student from study sessions to the final written version of the examination. A clear, cogent, brief discussion of the principles of the paragraph and the essay builds on the instructions for essay writing and guides the student in the development of brief essays and papers. Finally, a thorough discussion of a practical process for research and term paper writing leads the writer from the development of a working bibliography to the final, properly documented draft. Numerous models for footnote and bibliography forms demonstrate correct documentation.

The final section comprises two appendixes. The first is a basic discussion of style offering examples of what passes as good style and directions for avoiding the traps of what is condemned as poor or weak. The second appendix, a glossary of grammatical terms, permits a quick reference to principles and elements by name and reinforces the student's knowledge of terms without clouding the issues with obscure or overtechnical definitions.

In every part of *Handbook of English Fundamentals* we have tried to explain each item briefly and clearly. Our attitude is essentially prescriptive and conservative, not because we deny language the right to change but because we believe a writer should first choose expression according to what *is* considered correct rather than what *will* be. What is standard is the handbook's domain; what will be is in the hands of tomorrow's authors.

Among the many debts of gratitude we owe to persons who have helped in the creation of *Handbook of English Fundamentals,* that to the memory of John M. Kierzek and to his part in former editions of *English Fundamentals* is paramount. His daughter, Marian Leyrer, who allowed us to use his name and his work, deserves no small thanks. We also express our appreciation to Anthony English of Macmillan, who contributed much to the preparation of the appendix "Reminders About Style," and whose editorial guidance through the entire production of the book has been invaluable. Finally, to all the students who used and instructors who taught *English Fundamentals* a most sincere thanks. Their loyalty to that book has done much to shape this one.

D. W. E.
P. L.

CONTENTS

PART I

Principles of Form

PUNCTUATION

I. COMMAS

Commas are used to separate certain parts of the sentence so that written communication will be clear and direct. Commas are also used to set off words, phrases, or clauses that break into the normal word order of a sentence. Notice that these interrupters are *set off* by commas. This means that, although interrupters that begin or end a sentence will have only one comma, any such unit that comes in the interior of the sentence will have *two* commas, one before it and one after it.

P 1. Use a comma before the coordinating conjunctions *and, but, for, or, nor, yet* when they join the clauses of a compound sentence.

A compound sentence contains two or more independent clauses. (See also P 15–1 and P 16 for other punctuation problems with compound units.)

> I placed the typed sheet on his desk, and he picked it up and read it slowly. His face turned red, but he did not say a word. I knew he was angry, for he rose and stamped out of the room.

P 2. Use commas to separate the items of a series.

A series is composed of three or more words, phrases, or clauses of equal grammatical rank. A series usually takes the form of *a, b, and c;* sometimes it may be *a, b, or c.* In journalistic writing the comma is omitted before *and* or *or;* in more formal writing it is generally not omitted. The beginning writer will do well to follow formal practice.

The old house was empty, cold, dark, and uninviting. [Four adjectives.]

The jury was made up of two preachers, six housewives, three laborers, and a farmer. [Four nouns.]

She rushed into the house, up the stairs, and into her room. [Phrases.]

I told him which way to go, what to carry, and how to dress. [Phrases.]

P 3. Use commas to separate coordinate adjectives preceding a noun.

A comma separating two adjectives signifies that the two adjectives are equal in their modifying force. A comma is not used when the modifier closer to the noun has more importance as an identifier of the noun. Thus we use a comma with "a difficult, unfair examination" but not with "a difficult final examination." Another explanation is that in the first example "difficult" and "unfair" modify "examination" with equal force, whereas in the second example "difficult" really modifies the unit "final examination."

The problem here is to determine when adjectives are coordinate, that is, equal in modifying value. Two tests may prove helpful, although each of them rests upon a kind of intuitive ability to recognize normal and natural English:

1. If the insertion of *and* between the modifiers results in an acceptable reading, the adjectives are equal and a comma should be used. "A difficult *and* unfair examination" would sound correct to most native speakers of English, but "a difficult *and* final examination" would not.

2. If the adjectives sound natural in reversed position, they are equal and should be separated by a comma. Thus we could say "an unfair, difficult examination" but normally not "a final difficult examination" without meaning something quite different from a difficult final examination.

When you use a noun preceded by more than two adjectives, you should test the adjectives by pairs, the first with the second, the second with the third, and so on. It may help you to know that we usually do not use commas before adjectives denoting size or age. And you must remember that we never use a comma between the last adjective and the noun.

Observe how the use of the above-mentioned tests results in punctuation like the following:

a tall, dark, and handsome gentleman
the dark, cold, drafty classroom
a heavy, soiled leather ball
a mean old local gossip

a tall, dark, handsome gentleman
a neat, courteous little boy
her funny little upturned nose

P 4. Use commas after most introductory modifiers, especially if the modifier is long and not closely restrictive.

Modern usage varies considerably; you must depend on your own good sense and judgment. The following explanations will provide a general guide:

1. Put commas after introductory adverbial clauses except those that are short or in no need of special emphasis. No hard-and-fast rule governs this situation. The inexperienced writer would probably do well to use commas after all introductory adverbial clauses except very short time clauses.

Although none of us really enjoyed the performance, we applauded politely.
If what you say is true, quick action is required.
Before an undergraduate can participate in these sports, he must take a physical examination.
Whenever I see him I remember his youthful awkwardness.
When George sleeps the rest of us must be quiet.

2. Put commas after introductory verbal phrase modifiers.

Having climbed the steep trail up Cougar Mountain, Bob decided to take some pictures. To get the best view of the valley, he walked to the edge of the cliff. After opening his rucksack, he searched for his new telephoto lens.

3. Put commas after introductory absolute elements, such as phrases, sentence adverbs, mild exclamations, and after *yes* and *no*.

In fact, there was no way to keep the front door closed. Well, what are we to do now? No, we are not in danger. Certainly, I'll put a chair against it.

4. Ordinarily, do not put commas after introductory prepositional phrases unless they need special emphasis or happen to be very long. But long introductory prepositional phrases are not common in modern writing.

After a heavy dinner we usually went for a walk in the meadow. Beyond the meadow was a grove of birches. In early summer many birds nested there.

P 5. Use a comma between any two words that might be mistakenly read together.

Before, he had been industrious and sober.
Once inside, the dog scampered all over the furniture.
While we were eating, the table collapsed.
After we had washed, Mother prepared breakfast.
Ever since, he has been afraid of deep water.
Shortly after ten, thirty new recruits appeared.
Whatever is, is right.

P 6. Use commas to set off nonrestrictive clauses and phrases.

Adjective clauses and phrases are either restrictive or nonrestrictive.

> The restrictive modifier, the kind that is not set off by commas, *is essential to the identification of the word being modified.*

The grade *that I received on my report* pleased me.
The girl *sitting next to me* chewed gum noisily.

Commas would not be used in these sentences. You can see that without the modifiers ("The grade pleased me"; "The girl chewed gum noisily"), the subjects are not identified. What grade, what girl are we talking about? But when we add the modifiers we identify the *particular* grade and the *particular* girl. In other words, this kind of modifier restricts the meaning of a general noun to one specific member of its class.

The other type, the nonrestrictive modifier, requires commas to set it off.

> The nonrestrictive modifier supplies additional or incidental information about the word being modified, *but the information is not needed for identifying purposes.*

(However, don't get into the habit of thinking that a nonrestrictive modifier is necessarily unimportant; if it has no importance to the meaning of the sentence, it has no right to be in the sentence.) If the noun being modified does not require identification, the

modifier following it will be nonrestrictive and will require commas. It follows, then, that nonrestrictive modifiers will be found following proper nouns (*Mount Everest, Philadelphia, Mrs. Frank Lockwood*); nouns already identified (the oldest *boy* in his class, his only *grandchild*); and one-of-a-kind nouns (Alice's *mother,* the *provost* of the college, the *writer* of the editorial).

Examine these additional examples contrasting restrictive and nonrestrictive modifiers. Notice in the last pair of sentences how the writer, by using or not using commas, can sometimes give important information to the reader.

The man *whose car had been wrecked* asked us for a ride. [Restrictive.]
Mr. Ash, *whose car had been wrecked,* asked us for a ride. [Nonrestrictive.]
Anyone *wishing more detailed information* should write to the secretary.
My father, *wishing more detailed information,* wrote to the secretary.
I visited an old and close friend *who plans to become a minister.*
I visited my oldest and closest friend, *who plans to become a minister.*
A woman *at the far end of the head table* summoned a waiter.
Professor Angela Cheney, *at the far end of the head table,* summoned a waiter.
My brother-in-law *who lives in Akron* is a chemist. [The writer has more than one brother-in-law. The restrictive clause is needed to distinguish this brother-in-law from other brothers-in-law.]
My brother-in-law, *who lives in Akron,* is a chemist. [Since identification is not required, the writer is telling us that he has only one brother-in-law.]

P 7. Use commas to set off most appositives. (See also P 15-5.)

An appositive is a noun unit that immediately follows a noun or pronoun and stands for the same thing.

The new boy, *the one with red hair,* likes me.
The colonel, *a friend of many years,* advised me to stay.
Mr. McClure, *our science teacher,* told me about it.

P 8. Use commas to set off absolute phrases.

An absolute phrase, which consists of a noun or a pronoun plus a verbal, usually modifies the sentence as a whole, not any special part of it. (See pages 128–129.)

The cat being away, the mice will play.

My work having been finished, I went to see Alice.
He sat there in silence, *his left cheek twitching as usual.*
He stood in the doorway, *his wet cloak dripping water on the rug,* and waited for some sign of recognition.

P 9. Use commas to set off parenthetical expressions.

Parenthetical expressions are words, phrases, or clauses that break into the sentence to explain, to emphasize, to qualify, or to point the direction of the thought.

The text, *moreover,* had not been carefully proofread.
You will find, *for example,* that the format is not attractive.
His appearance, *I must say,* was not prepossessing.

P 10. Use commas to set off words used in direct address.

And now, *ladies and gentlemen,* let us adjourn.
I tell you, *Carol,* that we were all proud of you.
"You were justified, *Miss Faire,*" she said, "in refusing the gift."
"*Henry,* your theme must be rewritten," said his teacher.

P 11. Use commas to set off expressions designating the speaker in direct quotations.

"With your permission," *he replied,* "there's nothing I'd rather do."
"That must do," *he said,* "until we think of something better."

Other marks may be used instead of the comma if the sentence justifies their use.

"How shall I tell him?" asked Mary timidly. [Question mark after question.]
"Silence!" he shouted. "Get to work at once!" [Exclamation point.]
"Two of the buildings are firetraps," replied the comptroller; "moreover, the library needs a new roof." [See P 16 for the use of the semicolon.]

P 12. Use commas to set off degrees, titles, and the like when they follow names.

Henry Lyle, *Ph.D.,* gave the opening address.
The new ambassador is Peter Jones, *Esq.*
Harold Titus, *Jr., chairman of the board,* has resigned.

P 13. Use commas to set off negative insertions used for emphasis, units out of their position, and short interrogative clauses combined with statements.

Our plane was a DC-3, *not the jet we had expected.*
Tired and footsore, the hikers finally reached camp.
The hikers finally reached camp, *tired and footsore.*
[*But*] The tired and footsore hikers finally reached camp.
You had a good time, *didn't you?*
You recall, *don't you,* our first meeting?

P 14. Use commas to set off items in dates and addresses.

On July 14, *1904,* in a little cottage at 316 High Street, *Mayville, Illinois,* the wedding took place.

(Journalistic practice usually omits the comma *after* the year and the state.)

P 15. Do not use unnecessary commas.

Normally, commas are *not* used in the following positions (the superfluous commas are circled):

1. Before a coordinating conjunction joining two verbs, complements, phrases, or subordinate clauses.

I had studied hard (,) but failed the test.
If I can finish studying (,) and you can find four dollars, we'll go out for a pizza.

2. Between a subject and its verb or between a verb and its complement.

The man at the far end of the head table (,) is my uncle.
None of us will ever understand (,) how you got such a good grade.

3. Between adjectives that are not coordinate (see P 3) or between the final adjective and the noun being modified. (Usually commas are not used before adjectives denoting age or size.)

a serviceable (,) iron frying pan
a likable, outgoing (,) sort of person
this delightful (,) little (,) old man

4. To set off restrictive clauses and phrases. (See P 6.)

My first-round opponent was a fellow (,) who had captained his college golf team.
You may use the raincoat (,) hanging on the hook next to mine.

5. To set off restrictive appositives. Appositives like those shown in P 7 are called loose or nonrestrictive appositives and are set off by commas. But an appositive may sometimes function the same way that a restrictive adjective clause functions, that is, it may identify a preceding noun that, without the appositive, could refer to any one member of a class. An appositive of this sort is not set off.

my brother ⊘ Jack; the poet ⊘ Keats; the apostle ⊘ Paul; the preposition ⊘ *to*

6. To set off the year following the month rather than the day of the month or before the zip-code number.

After July ⊘ 1978 ⊘ his mail should be sent to 1675 East Union Street, Seattle, Washington ⊘ 98122.

II. Semicolons

The semicolon, a separator with more weight than the comma, is used only between sentence units that are grammatically equal. Side-by-side independent clauses without coordinating conjunctions often present the writer with a choice between a semicolon, making one sentence with two related ideas, or a period, making two sentences with the ideas more conspicuously separated.

P 16. Use a semicolon between independent clauses not joined by a coordinating conjunction.

In compound sentences that do not use a coordinating conjunction there may be no connective between the clauses, the second clause may begin with an adverbial modifier, or the second clause may begin with a **conjunctive adverb** such as *however, therefore, moreover, consequently,* and the like.

These are only a few of the urgent problems concerning our ecology; many more exist. [No connective.]

You must first fill out the application form; later you will be interviewed. [Adverb with second clause.]

The public must live with these decisions; therefore the public should have a voice in the debates. [Conjunctive adverb with second clause.]

The misuse of a comma between independent clauses in compound sentences without coordinating conjunctions results in an error called the **comma fault** or the **comma splice.** At this point