

A WRITER'S REFERENCE

THIRD EDITION

Diana Hacker

Updated
online coverage
with 1998 MLA
guidelines

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Third Edition

Diana Hacker

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Acknowledgments and copyrights are continued at the back of the book on page 354, which constitutes an extension of the copyright page.

How to use this book

A Writer's Reference has been carefully designed to save you time. As you can see, the book lies flat, making it easy to consult while you are revising and editing a draft. And the book's twelve section dividers will lead you — in most cases very quickly — to the information you need.

Here are brief descriptions of the book's major reference aids, followed by several tutorials that give you hands-on experience using the book.

The menu system

The Main Menu inside the front cover displays the book's contents as briefly and simply as possible. Each of the twelve sections in the Main Menu leads you to a tabbed divider, on the back of which you will find a more detailed menu.

Let's say you have a question about the proper use of commas between items in a series. Your first step is to scan the Main Menu, where you will find the comma listed as the first item under section P (Punctuation). Next flip the book open to the tabbed divider marked P. Now consult the detailed menu for the precise subsection (P1-c) and the exact page number.

The index

If you aren't sure what topic to choose from the Main Menu, consult the index at the back of the book. For example, you may not realize that the issue of whether to use *is* or *are* is a matter of subject-verb agreement (G1 on the Main Menu). In that case, simply look up "*is* versus *are*" in the index and you will be directed to the exact page you need.

The glossary of usage

When in doubt about the correct use of a particular word (such as *affect* and *effect*, *among* and *between*, or *hopefully*), flip to section W1 and consult the alphabetically arranged glossary for the word in question. If the word's correct use is more fully explained elsewhere in the book—as with *good* versus *well*, for example—you will find a cross-reference to the fuller explanation.

If the word you are looking for isn't in the Glossary of Usage, try the index instead. For example, you won't find an entry for “*I* versus *me*” in the glossary because the issue is too complicated for a short glossary entry. The index, however, will take you straight to the pages you need.

The directories to documentation models

When you are writing a research paper, there is no need to memorize all of the technical details about handling citations or constructing a list of the works you have cited. Instead, you can rely on one of the book's two directories to documentation models. If you are using the Modern Language Association (MLA) system of documentation, flip the book open to the tabbed section marked M to find the appropriate directory. If you are using the American Psychological Association (APA) system, flip to the tabbed section marked A.

List of ESL boxes

If you are a nonnative speaker of English, you will find most of the ESL (English as a second language) advice in the tabbed section marked T (for ESL Trouble Spots). Other ESL advice appears in boxed ESL notes throughout *A Writer's Reference*. For quick reference, a list of these ESL notes is given near the end of the book, after the index and before the correction symbols.

Correction symbols

Some instructors mark student papers with the codes given on the Main Menu or detailed menus, such as E1 or G3-c. If your instructor uses standard correction symbols instead, consult the list on the very last page of the book, right before the endpapers.

Brief table of contents (inside the back cover)

Readers who want a quick overview of the book will find a brief table of contents inside the back cover.

Tutorials

The following tutorials will give you practice using the book's menu system, the index, the Glossary of Usage, and the directory to the MLA documentation models. Answers to all tutorials appear on pages x–xii.

TUTORIAL 1 Using the menu system

Each of the following “rules” violates the principle it expresses. Using the menu system, find the section in *A Writer's Reference* that explains the principle. Then fix the problem. Examples:

^{has}
A verb **have** to agree with its subject. G1

^{Tutors in}
In the writing center, **they** say that vague pronoun reference is unacceptable. G3-b

1. Each pronoun must agree with their antecedent.
2. About sentence fragments. You should avoid them.
3. Its important to use apostrophe's correctly.
4. Watch out for -ed endings that have been drop from verbs.
5. Discriminate careful between adjectives and adverbs.
6. Be alert for irregular verbs that have came to you in the wrong form.
7. If your sentence begins with a long introductory word group use a comma to separate the word group from the rest of the sentence.
8. Don't write a comma splice, you must connect independent clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction or with a semicolon.
9. A writer must be careful not to shift your point of view.
10. When dangling, watch your modifiers.

TUTORIAL 2 Using the index

Assume that you have written the following sentences and want to know the answers to the questions in brackets. Use the index at the back of the book to locate the information you need, and edit the sentences if necessary.

1. Anyone taking the school bus to the volleyball game must bring in a permission slip signed by their parents. [Is it okay to use *their* to refer to *Anyone*? If not, what is the best way to fix the problem?]
2. We had intended to go surfing but spent most of our vacation lying on the beach. [Should I use *lying* or *laying*?]
3. We only looked at two houses before buying the house of our dreams. [Is *only* in the right place?]
4. In Saudi Arabia it is considered ill mannered for you to accept a gift. [Is it okay to use *you* to mean “anyone in general”?]
5. In Canada, Joanne picked up several bottles of maple syrup for her sister and me. [Should I write *for her sister and I*?]

TUTORIAL 3 Using the menu system or the index

Imagine that you are in the following situations. Using either the menu system or the index, find the information you need.

1. You are Ray Farley, a community college student who has been out of high school for ten years. You recall learning to punctuate items in a series by putting a comma between all items except the last two. In your college readings, however, you have noticed that most writers use a comma between all items. You're curious about the current rule. What does *A Writer's Reference* tell you?
2. You are Maria Sanchez, an honors student working in your university's writing center. Mike Lee, who speaks English as a second language, has come to you for help. He is working on a rough draft that contains a number of problems involving the use of articles (*a*, *an*, and *the*). You know how to use articles, but you aren't able to explain the rather complicated rules on their correct use. Which section of *A Writer's Reference* will you and Mike Lee consult?
3. You are John Pell, engaged to marry Jane Dalton. In a note to Jane's parents, you have written “Thank you for giving Jane and myself such a generous contribution toward our honeymoon trip to Hawaii.” You wonder if you should write “Jane and I” or “Jane and me” instead. What does *A Writer's Reference* tell you?
4. You are Selena Young, an African American woman who supervises interns at a housing agency. Two of your interns, Jake Gilliam and Susan Green, have writing problems involving -s endings on verbs. Gilliam, an African American, tends to drop -s endings; Green, who is white, tends to add them where they don't

belong. You suspect that both problems stem from nonstandard dialects spoken at home.

Susan and Jake are in danger of losing their jobs because your boss thinks that anyone who writes “the tenant refuse” or “the landlords agrees” is beyond hope. You disagree. Susan and Jake are more intelligent than your boss supposes, and they have asked for your help. Where in *A Writer’s Reference* can they find the rules they need?

5. You are Joe Thompson, a first-year college student. Your girlfriend, Samantha, who has completed two years of college, seems to enjoy correcting your English. Just yesterday she corrected your sentence “I felt badly about her death” to “I felt bad about her death.” You’re sure you’ve heard many educated persons, including professors, say “I felt badly.” Upon consulting *A Writer’s Reference*, what do you discover?

TUTORIAL 4 Using the Glossary of Usage

Consult the Glossary of Usage (section W1) to see if the italicized words are used correctly. Then edit any sentences containing incorrect usage. Example:

The pediatrician gave my daughter ^{an} ~~a~~ injection for her allergy.

1. Changing attitudes *toward* alcohol have *effected* the beer industry.
2. It is *mankind’s* nature to think wisely and act foolishly.
3. This afternoon I plan to *lie* out in the sun and begin working on a tan.
4. Everyone in our office is *enthused* about this project.
5. Most sleds are pulled by no *less* than two dogs and no more than ten.

TUTORIAL 5 Using the directory to MLA documentation models

Assume that you have written a short research paper on the debate over the use of marijuana for medical purposes. You have cited the following sources in your paper, using MLA documentation, and you are ready to type your list of works cited. Flip the book open to the tabbed section marked M and use the MLA directory to locate the appropriate models. Then write a correct entry for each source and arrange the entries in a properly formatted list of works cited. *Note:* Do not number the entries in a list of works cited.

A journal article by Gregg A. Bilz entitled “The Medical Use of Marijuana: The Politics of Medicine.” The article appears on pages 117 to 135 of the *Hamline Journal of Public Law and Policy*,

which is paginated by issue. The volume number is 13, the issue number is 1, and the year is 1992.

An unsigned magazine article entitled “Cross-Eyed and Painless.” The article appears on page 89 of the July 6, 1991, issue of *The Economist*.

A book by Jack E. Henningfield and Nancy Almand Ator entitled *Barbiturates: Sleeping Potion or Intoxicant?* The book was published in Philadelphia in 1986 by Chelsea House Publishers.

A newspaper article by Michael Isikoff entitled “U.S. Provided Marijuana for Some AIDS Patients.” The article appears on page A3 of the March 24, 1991, issue of the *Washington Post*.

A journal article by Gabriel Nahas and Colette Latour entitled “The Human Toxicity of Marijuana.” The article appears on pages 495 to 497 of the *Medical Journal of Australia*, which is paginated by volume. The volume number is 156, and the year is 1992.

Answers to Tutorial 1

1. Each pronoun must agree with its antecedent. (G3-a)
2. You should avoid sentence fragments. (G5)
3. It's important to use apostrophes correctly. (P5-c and P5-e)
4. Watch out for -ed endings that have been dropped from verbs. (G2-d)
5. Discriminate carefully between adjectives and adverbs. (G4)
6. Be alert for irregular verbs that have come to you in the wrong form. (G2-a)
7. If your sentence begins with a long introductory word group, use a comma to separate the word group from the rest of the sentence. (P1-b)
8. Don't write a comma splice; you must connect independent clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction or with a semicolon. (G6)
9. A writer must be careful not to shift his or her [not their] point of view. Or Writers must be careful not to shift their point of view. (E4-a)
10. Look out for dangling modifiers. (E3-e)

Answers to Tutorial 2

1. The index entry “anyone” mentions that the word is singular, so you might not need to look further to realize that the plural *their* is incorrect. The second page reference leads you to section

G3-a, which suggests nonsexist strategies for revision, such as *Students taking the school bus to the volleyball game must bring in a permission slip signed by their parents* or *Anyone taking the school bus to the volleyball game must bring in a permission slip signed by his or her parents*.

2. The index entry “*lay, lie*” takes you to the Glossary of Usage and to section G2-b, where you will learn that *lying* (meaning “reclining or resting on a surface”) is correct.
3. Look up “*only*” and you will be directed to section E3-a, which explains that limiting modifiers such as *only* should be placed before the words they modify. The sentence should read *We looked at only two houses before buying the house of our dreams*.
4. Looking up “*you*, indefinite use of” leads you to section E4-a, the Glossary of Usage, and section G3-b, all of which explain that *you* should not be used to mean “anyone in general.” You can revise the sentence by using *a person* or *one* instead of *you*, or you can restructure the sentence completely: *In Saudi Arabia, accepting a gift is considered ill mannered*.
5. The index entries “*I* versus *me*” and “*me* versus *I*” take you to section G3-c, which explains why *me* is correct.

Answers to Tutorial 3

1. Section P1-c tells you that although usage varies, most experts advise using a comma between all items in a series — to prevent possible misreadings or ambiguities. To find this section, Ray Farley would probably use the menu system.
2. Maria Sanchez and Mike Lee would consult section T1, on articles. This section is easy to locate on the main menu.
3. Section G3-c explains why “Jane and me” is correct. To find section G3-c, John Pell could use the menu system if he knew to look under “Problems with pronouns.” Otherwise, he could look up “*I* versus *me*” in the index. Pell could also look up “*myself*” in the index or he could consult the Glossary of Usage, where a cross-reference would direct him to section G3-c.
4. Selena Young’s employees could turn to sections G1 and G2-c for help. Young could use the menu system to find these sections if she knew to look under “Subject-verb agreement” or “Other problems with verbs.” If she wasn’t sure about the grammatical terminology, she could look up “-s, as verb ending” or “Verb(s), -s form of” in the index.
5. Section G4-b explains why “I felt bad about her death” is correct. To find section G4-b, Joe Thompson could use the menu system if he knew that *bad* versus *badly* is a choice between an adjective and an adverb. Otherwise he could look up “*bad, badly*” in the index or the Glossary of Usage.

Answers to Tutorial 4

1. Changing attitudes toward alcohol have *affected* the beer industry.
2. It is *human* nature to think wisely and act foolishly.
3. Correct.
4. Everyone in our office is *enthusiastic* about this project.
5. Most sleds are pulled by no *fewer* than two dogs and no more than ten.

Answers to Tutorial 5

Bilz, Gregg A. "The Medical Use of Marijuana: The Politics of Medicine." Hamline Journal of Public Law and Policy 13.1 (1992): 117-35.

"Cross-Eyed and Painless." Economist 6 July 1991: 89.

Henningfield, Jack E., and Nancy Almand Ator. Barbiturates: Sleeping Potion or Intoxicant? Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 1986.

Isikoff, Michael. "U.S. Provided Marijuana for Some AIDS Patients." Washington Post 24 Mar. 1991: A3.

Nahas, Gabriel, and Colette Latour. "The Human Toxicity of Marijuana." Medical Journal of Australia 156 (1992): 495-97.

Preface for instructors

Response to the second edition of *A Writer's Reference* has been gratifying: Instructors across the country tell me that their students can and do use the book on their own. Because so many instructors assign the book primarily as a reference, I have worked to improve its reference features in this third edition. Here, briefly, is what's new.

More help for researchers

The research material now appears in three (instead of two) tabbed sections: Research Writing (R), MLA Documentation (M), and Alternative Styles of Documentation (A). With the MLA and APA advice in separate tabbed sections, there is no danger that students will consult the wrong models. So that students will be able to find the models they're looking for as quickly as possible, *A Writer's Reference* includes new, easy-to-find directories to both MLA and APA styles (see pages 270–71 and 306–07).

The APA section reflects changes in the fourth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (1994) and includes a new student essay that illustrates APA style.

The tabbed section Research Writing contains new material on using the library's major reference tools, including computer catalogs and databases. Also, an expanded discussion of plagiarism emphasizes even more strongly that in addition to being documented, borrowed language must be enclosed in quotation marks.

More help for ESL students

The tabbed section ESL Trouble Spots includes more on verbs and gives new advice on using the prepositions *at*, *in*, and *on*. In sections where nonnative speakers need extra help, ESL notes throughout the text alert students to special problems. These notes

are boxed so that they can be easily skipped by students who don't need the advice and easily found by those who do. A list of these ESL boxes appears near the end of the book, right before the correction symbols.

A new section on document design

Both in the business world and in the academic world, writers are becoming increasingly interested in document design — the use of visual cues to help readers. Therefore, a new tabbed section, Document Design (D), discusses format options on word processors and the use of headings, displayed lists, and visuals (when appropriate) to make documents more accessible. Section D also contains guidelines for the preparation of academic manuscripts and business documents (formerly in the section on mechanics). A new student essay without documentation illustrates MLA manuscript guidelines. Students can consult this example instead of the sample MLA research paper when they are preparing a manuscript that is not based on written sources.

New tutorials in “How to use this book”

Even though *A Writer's Reference* is easy to use, students who are unfamiliar with its reference features may need some help learning to use the book on their own. For such students, the book now includes several tutorials at the end of the section “How to Use This Book.” These tutorials give students practice using the menu system, the index, the Glossary of Usage, and the MLA directory. Instructors can have students do the tutorials in class or, because answers are given at the end of the tutorials, students can work through them on their own.

A user-friendly index

Even if they don't know grammatical terminology, students can nearly always find what they're looking for in the index. When faced with a choice between *I* and *me*, for example, students may not know to look up “Pronoun case.” They are more likely to look up “*I* versus *me*.” This and similar user-friendly entries appear throughout the index of the third edition.

More exercise options

If you are interested in learning about exercise options available with *A Writer's Reference*, please consult "A Note to Instructors" inside the front cover.

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No author can possibly anticipate the many ways in which a variety of students might respond to a text: Where might students be confused? How much explanation is enough? What is too intimidating? Do the examples appeal to a range of students? Are they free of stereotypes? To help me answer such questions, nearly two hundred and fifty professors from more than one hundred and fifty colleges and universities contributed useful insights based on their varied experiences in the classroom.

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