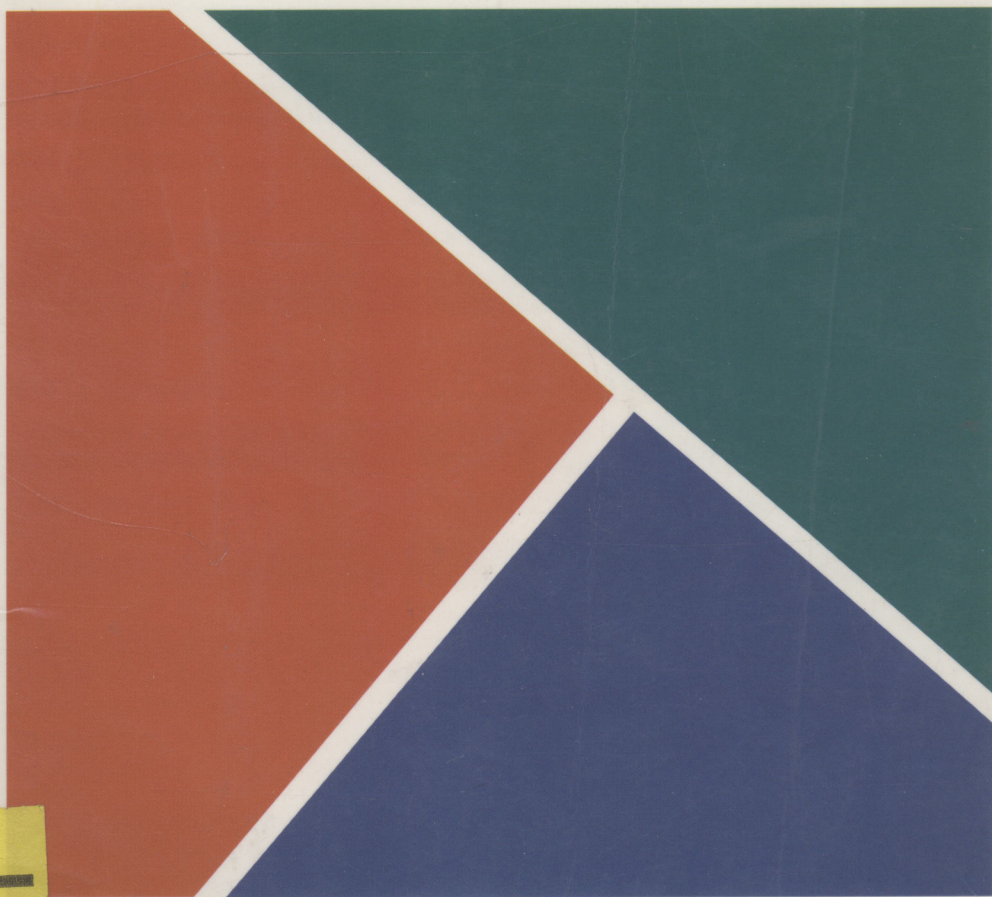


SECOND EDITION

**USED**

# A Commonsense Guide to Grammar and Usage



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Preface for Instructors

SECOND EDITION

# A Commonsense Guide to Grammar and Usage

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# Preface for Instructors

*A Commonsense Guide to Grammar and Usage*, Second Edition (formerly *Now I Get It*) helps students write clear, error-free sentences by combining the easy access of a reference handbook with the practicality of a skills workbook. This book is intended for a range of students who need a firmer foundation in the grammar and usage of formal writing. These students might be enrolled in a beginning writing course, an ESL course, a first-year composition course, or a course in a field such as business, history, or science.

At the core of our approach is the firm belief that errors can be signs of risk taking, experimentation, and growth. Once students understand that errors are part of the learning *process* and do not necessarily reflect a lack of effort or ability, they can develop the confidence they need to recognize and correct sentence-level problems in their own writing — something they can do without an overwhelming amount of grammar terminology. We wrote this book, and agreed to revise it, because we believe students and teachers need a textbook largely devoted to commonsense ways of avoiding common errors.

As we planned the second edition of this book, however, students and teachers told us to expand our focus and our audience. So, in improving the book, we set ourselves two additional challenges: apply our commonsensical approach to the earlier stages of the writing process and meet the demands of a broader, more diverse student population. In this edition, we have added a concise writing guide and expanded our coverage of ESL trouble-spots. Though this guide remains primarily a grammar and usage handbook, students — both native and non-native speakers of English — will now find it useful as they plan, draft, revise, and *edit* their writing.

## ***What Does This Book Offer — and Why?***

The following combination of features makes this textbook a uniquely practical resource for instructors and students.

**Commonsense help for the most common errors keeps students focused on essential skills.** Using a straightforward, practice-oriented approach, *A Commonsense Guide* helps students learn to identify and correct thirty-seven common problems in written English. On the basis

of research, experience, and feedback from students and teachers, we concentrate on the grammar and usage problems that occur most frequently or are most distracting in the writing of first-year college students.

**Unique “commonsense tips” provide intuitive reminders.**

Each grammar lesson includes at least one handy tip — a commonsense way of identifying and correcting an error. Our text uses some grammatical terms, but we keep these to a minimum and provide definitions. In addition, we include similar commonsense tips to help students understand the writing process. All tips rely not on complex rules but on intuitive, practical strategies that writers actually use.

**A minimum of grammatical terms means easy access to learning.**

The text’s explanations and tips are written in clear, everyday language, so students will be confident about (rather than intimidated by) what they are learning. We have placed special emphasis on learning how to identify and correct problems — not on learning terminology. We have even included hand-edited sample errors in the Table of Contents so students do not have to rely on grammatical terminology to locate a lesson or coverage of a specific problem.

**An emphasis on the positive helps students identify, understand, and correct errors.**

- First, we provide *corrected* versions of sample errors. Errors are marked with an **X**, and corrections are clearly marked to help students remember what they should *do* — not just what they should avoid.
- Second, we explain *why* each error might occur — why even the most intelligent writer might be confused about formal English.
- Third, we offer *correction strategies*. This book not only helps students identify an error, it also equips them with practical strategies for revising their writing to make it error free.

**A developmental sequence of activities helps students learn to fix problems.**

Hands-on grammar and usage activities allow students to focus on skills that are different yet developmentally related. Brief diagnostic exercises in each unit overview and lesson allow students and teachers to decide whether or not students need to complete a given unit or lesson.

- After reading each lesson, students apply the commonsense tips by completing three *Sentence Practice* exercises. Students get the opportunity to master a basic idea or strategy before moving on to more extended writing.

- Next, students complete three *Editing Practice* exercises by applying the skills they have developed in the *Sentence Practice* exercises. In this way, they progress from examining independent sentences to combining sentences to correcting a mini-essay.
- Finally, the *Writing Practice* section of each lesson asks students to compose their own writing and correctly use the punctuation or grammatical concept covered in the lesson. In this way, students learn about errors in the context of their own writing.

**A consistent framework means that students know what to expect in each lesson.** All grammar lessons follow a similar format, so information is easy to locate and understand. *How to Use This Book*, a model found on pages xv–xviii, guides students through a sample lesson.

**The flexible format allows instructors to customize their courses.** This text is intended to accommodate various needs and situations.

- Each grammar lesson can stand on its own. Although we have grouped lessons into units according to related errors, teachers may find that another arrangement better suits their needs and the needs of their students. The text can be used systematically or more selectively.

When beginning a lesson, the student should complete the diagnostic exercise. If the results show a need for further study, the student should then read the information provided and do the remaining exercises. It is also useful to complete the Overview for each unit for additional diagnostic work. The Review at the end of each unit synthesizes and summarizes the lessons.

- The instructor can assign exercises as homework or classwork. The text can also be a *self-paced reference* students use on their own, since answers are provided for all diagnostic exercises and for four out of seven exercises in each lesson.
- The writing guide section (page 384) can be integrated at any point in the grammar section. It is best that students read this entire section in the order presented in the book, but their reading can stretch out over whatever time frame works best.

**User-friendly design provides easy access.** The text is designed around the ways people have actually used it. The Table of Contents offers a sample error for each lesson so that students do not have to rely on technical terms to locate a particular topic. The Guide to Grammar Terminology presents a glossary of terms where readers need it — *before*, rather than after, the

lessons. The two-color format; unit and lesson tabs; and comprehensive indexes help students locate information quickly. In the writing guide, we use tip boxes and clear, consistent headings to draw attention to places where we turn abstract concepts into practical, specific advice. The spiral binding allows the book to lie flat while users write in it or consult it in the computer lab.


### *New to This Edition*

**New writing guide offers specific yet nonformulaic approaches to writing.** Responding to users' requests, we have provided a brief, nuts-and-bolts writing guide. In covering the writing process, we balance two issues that sometimes conflict. First, people often want "bottom line" advice about what to do—and what not to do—when they write. Second, many aspects of writing are too complex to be reduced to formulas and fixed rules. Beginners as well as advanced writers need to understand that writers must react to their own writing situation—not to a formula or a set of rules. Thus, in the new writing guide we encourage students to ask critical questions to which *they* must provide answers. However, we also provide specific, concrete strategies and guidelines that can assist them in making these decisions.

The new unit follows the stages of the writing process. The overview presents some basic standards for good writing, and the lessons within the unit guide students through planning, drafting, and revising a paper to meet those standards. The following features will help make the writing process manageable for beginning writers.

- The planning stage of the writing process, the stage at which most beginning writers need the most help, receives special emphasis.
- Commonsense tips throughout offer accessible, practical hints for completing each stage of the writing process.
- Goal-oriented checklists and critical thinking questions guide students as they write expressive, informative, and persuasive paragraphs and essays.
- Sample student-written thesis statements, outlines, and a personal narrative draft provide models.

**More commonsense support for non-native speakers of English.** We have added a new lesson (Lesson 13 in the verbs unit) and a new 100-word glossary (Appendix B) to provide crucial help with phrasal verbs—the most troublesome, idiomatic English verbs. In addition, the text now includes three ways for non-native speakers of English to find helpful

information: an ESL table of contents at the front of the book, an ESL index at the back of the book, and ESL icons () throughout the book.

**A new organization begins with the most common and serious errors.** To help students master the most troublesome areas first, we begin with sentence boundary errors, verb errors, agreement errors, and errors with compound and complex sentences. In addition, we have grouped related lessons together so that students progress through grammar, punctuation and mechanics, and style.

**Most lessons now include sentence-combining activities.** In the *Sentence Practice* section of most lessons, students can now practice new skills by composing their own sentences. By doing so, they will become better editors of their own writing.

## **Practical Resources for Instructors and Students**

***Instructor's Resource Manual for A Commonsense Guide to Grammar and Usage*** contains unit- and lesson-level teaching tips, answers to all exercises and activities in the text, supplemental exercises for additional practice, collaborative activities and writing assignments, and advice on teaching with the new writing guide. We have also included a special section for novice instructors on teaching grammar and usage to native and non-native speakers.

**A companion Web site at [www.bedfordstmartins.com](http://www.bedfordstmartins.com)** describes the book and its features, includes hotlinks to student and instructor resources, and offers guidance to pairing *A Commonsense Guide* with other Bedford/St. Martin's texts.

**Exercise Central at [www.bedfordstmartins.com/composition/exercises](http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/composition/exercises),** the largest such exercise collection available, is thorough, simple to use, and convenient for both students and instructors. Multiple exercise sets on every topic, at a variety of levels, ensure that students have as much practice as they need, and at the appropriate level. Diagnostic tools can help students assess areas needing improvement, or instructors can assign specific exercises or groups of exercises. Immediate, customized feedback for all answers turns skill practice into a learning experience, and the reporting feature allows both students and instructors to monitor and assess progress.

## ***Acknowledgments***

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Finally, we wish to thank our wives, Colleen Beason and Mary Ann Lester, for their unwavering support and patience.

Larry Beason

Mark Lester

# How to Use This Book

*A Commonsense Guide to Grammar and Usage* is designed to offer you nuts-and-bolts strategies for improving your writing — especially for improving your sentences. Units 1 through 10, which focus on grammar and usage, help you to identify, understand, and correct errors in your sentences with commonsense advice and plenty of opportunities for practice. Unit 11, the writing guide, helps you to plan, draft, and revise a paragraph or an essay.

The grammar and usage lessons follow a consistent organization:

## SAMPLE ERRORS


Look at these samples to see whether you are making a similar error in your writing. (Note that throughout the text, ungrammatical phrases and sentences are indicated by an **X**.) Corrected versions of the sample errors follow in the *Fixing This Problem* section of each lesson.

I entered my apartment and saw an unexpected guest.  
**X** A cat in the middle of my living room.

Philip is really upset. **X** Because someone broke a window in his car.

College gives you a whole new perspective. **X** Opening your eyes to a new world.

## WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

This section explains a rule or convention of English that causes difficulty for many writers. If English is not your first language, you may want to pay special attention to material marked by this symbol: 

A **fragment** is a group of words that cannot stand alone as a **complete sentence** but is punctuated as a complete sentence. In English, a subject and a verb and a complete thought are needed for a complete sentence. Many fragments lack a verb, as in Sample 1, or lack a subject, as in Sample 3. A fragment can also be a **dependent clause**, a clause that does not express a complete thought, as in Sample 2.



## WHAT CAUSES THE PROBLEM?

Understanding *why* an error occurs can help you avoid it.

Almost all fragments explain or expand upon an idea in the immediately preceding sentence. Fragments are not easy for writers to spot because they sound normal. In the quick give-and-take of conversation, fragments are a way of clarifying or elaborating on what we have just said without having to stop and reformulate the previous sentence. In formal written language, however, fragments are inappropriate. Readers expect formal writing to be carefully planned.

**DIAGNOSTIC EXERCISE**

To find out if you need help with the topic of the lesson, do this exercise. Then check your answers in the back of the book.

**Diagnostic Exercise**

CORRECTED SENTENCES APPEAR ON PAGE 422.

Correct all errors in the following paragraph using the first correction as a model. The number in parentheses at the end of the paragraph indicates how many errors you should find.

My roommate has an annoying habit. <sup>, not putting</sup> ~~Not putting~~ anything away. He never picks up his dirty clothes. Until he has to do his laundry. In the kitchen, there are always dirty dishes on the table. I've asked him to at least put them in the sink. Where they are out of the way. It is always such a mess. Cups half-full of coffee, cereal bowls with milk in them, and cruddy silverware. The refrigerator is just as bad. Opening the door is like taking a trip to the jungle. We really need to do something about it. Because it is really embarrassing when

**FIXING THIS PROBLEM IN YOUR WRITING**

This section offers practical strategies for identifying and correcting the error.

**Fixing This Problem in Your Writing**

A fragment is almost always a continuation of the preceding sentence. To fix a fragment, we need to separate it from the previous sentence. When a fragment is by itself, isolated from preceding sentences, we are much more likely to notice that it doesn't make sense on its own. Here are three tips that will help you to isolate fragments.

**COMMONSENSE TIP**

Use this concrete strategy to identify or correct the error.

**I REALIZE TIP:** You can put *I realize* in front of most complete sentences and make a new grammatical sentence. However, when you put *I realize* in front of a fragment, the result will not make sense.

**CORRECTION SEQUENCE**

This sequence shows you how to apply the commonsense tip to correct the sample errors. Use this same step-by-step strategy to help you identify, understand, and correct errors in your writing.

Once you identify a fragment, the easiest way to correct it is to attach it to the preceding sentence. If the fragment is a renamer or an *-ing* fragment, you will probably need to add a comma. Most adverb fragments will need no punctuation. Below, Sample 1, a renamer, is attached to its preceding sentence with a comma:

- SAMPLE 1: I entered my apartment and saw an unexpected guest. ~~X~~ A cat right in the middle of my living room.
- TIP APPLIED: *I realize* I entered my apartment and saw an unexpected guest. ~~X~~ *I realize* a cat right in the middle of my living room.
- CORRECTION: I entered my apartment and saw an unexpected guest. <sup>, a</sup> ~~A~~ cat right in the middle of my living room.

## SENTENCE PRACTICE

Do these exercises (there are three in each lesson) to practice applying the lesson's tips. You can check your answers to the first two sets against the answer key in the back of the book.

## Sentence Practice 1

CORRECTED SENTENCES APPEAR ON PAGE 422.

Find the fragments by using the *I Realize* Tip. Write *OK* above each complete sentence. Write *frag* above each fragment and identify which of the three types it is—*renamer*, *adverb*, or *-ing fragment*. Correct the fragment by combining it with the complete sentence next to it.

EXAMPLE: I started a poem but couldn't finish it. Because I ran out of ideas.

ANSWER: <sup>OK</sup> I realize I started a poem but couldn't finish it. <sup>frag, adverb</sup> I realize because I ran out of ideas.

CORRECTION: I started a poem but couldn't finish it. <sup>because</sup> Because I ran out of ideas.

## EDITING PRACTICE

Do these exercises (there are three in each lesson) to practice identifying and correcting the error in a paragraph or mini-essay similar to one you might write. You can check your answers to the first two editing practices against the answer key in the back of the book.

## Editing Practice 1

CORRECTED SENTENCES APPEAR ON PAGE 422.

Correct all fragment errors in the following paragraphs using the first correction as a model. The number in parentheses at the end of each paragraph indicates how many errors you should find.

Ten percent of Americans suffer from *allergic rhinitis*, <sup>which</sup> ~~which~~ is the medical term for hay fever. The most common allergy. Hay fever is triggered by exposure to pollen. Especially grass and weed pollens. Flower pollen rarely causes allergic reactions. Because it is too heavy to float very high or far. (3)

During the allergy season, many hay fever sufferers take a drug called an *antihistamine*. Hoping to combat sneezing, runny nose, and itchy eyes. However, there are other ways to control allergy symptoms. Such as limiting outside work when the pollen count is high, running the air conditioner in your house and car, and avoiding dust and smoke. (2)

## WRITING PRACTICE

Do this activity to demonstrate your ability to avoid the error in your own writing.

## Writing Practice

On your own paper, write a paragraph describing a local work of art. In a second paragraph, tell what you like or dislike about it. Use the Editing Checklist to make sure there are no fragments.

**EDITING CHECKLIST**

This checklist will help you identify and correct the error in your writing.

**Editing Checklist**

*Identify Fragments in Your Writing*

- Proofread your paper starting at the last sentence and moving to the first, reading one sentence at a time.
- Put *I realize* in front of each word group you think is a sentence. The *I realize* sentence will not make sense if the word group is a fragment.

*Correct Fragments in Your Writing*

- Attach each fragment to the sentence that comes before it or rewrite the fragment to make it a complete sentence.

**THE BOTTOM LINE**

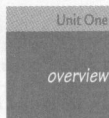
Here is a final reminder of the main point of the lesson. The sentence is written so that it both demonstrates and describes the concept of the lesson.

**The  
Bottom  
Line**

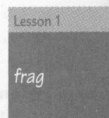
*I realize* you can place *I realize* in front of a complete sentence.

**Using the Tabs**

You may have noticed that there are tabs in the outside margins of this book. These tabs are designed to help you find your way around. If you open to a unit overview or unit review, the tab will indicate the unit number and whether you are in the **overview** or the **review**. If you flip through the book from front to back, you will notice eleven sets of tabs. These correspond to the eleven units in *A Commonsense Guide*.



If you open to an individual lesson, the tab will indicate the lesson number and a symbol for the topic of the lesson. For example, **frag** is the symbol used for Lesson 1, Fragments. You may notice that your instructor uses a similar system of symbols to indicate errors in your writing.



The inside back cover of *A Commonsense Guide to Grammar and Usage* lists other common correction symbols.

# Contents

Preface for Instructors vii

How to Use This Book xv

Guide to Grammar Terminology 1

## Unit One Understanding the Basic Sentence 14

OVERVIEW 14

Lesson 1 Fragments 17

I entered my apartment and saw an unexpected  
guest, <sup>a</sup> ~~A~~ cat in the middle of my living room.

Lesson 2 Run-ons: Fused Sentences and Comma  
Splices 26

I did pretty well on the last test; I got an 82.

REVIEW 34

## Unit Two Expanding the Basic Sentence 36

OVERVIEW 36

Lesson 3 Commas with *And*, *But*, *Or*, and Other  
Coordinating Conjunctions 39

Derek finally finished writing his book of poems,  
but his publisher was not satisfied.

Lesson 4 Punctuating Transitional Terms 47

In 1972, the Miami Dolphins won all their regular  
season games; furthermore, they won all their  
playoff games.

## Lesson 5 Punctuating Adverb Clauses 57

Whenever I need to go shopping, I take the car  
to work.

REVIEW 66

**Unit Three Making Subjects and Verbs Agree 70**

OVERVIEW 70

## Lesson 6 Agreement with Lost Subjects 73

Matt's beach house, one of the cottages on Ocean  
Street near the boardwalk, <sup>was</sup> ~~were~~ not damaged by  
the hurricane.

Lesson 7 Agreement with *There is* and *There was* 81

<sup>are</sup> ~~is~~ a million stories in every big city.

## Lesson 8 Agreement with Compound Subjects 88

The pencils and some paper <sup>are</sup> ~~is~~ on the desk.

REVIEW 96

**Unit Four Using Correct Verb Tenses and Forms 99**

OVERVIEW 99

## Lesson 9 Present, Past, and Tense Shifting 103

Whenever we went to a restaurant, my father always  
<sup>made</sup> ~~makes~~ a fuss about ordering exactly the right wine.

## Lesson 10 The Past and the Perfect Tenses 112

<sup>have</sup> ~~had~~ regretted our choice ever since we bought  
that car.



- Lesson 11**      **The Progressive Tenses**      120  
*am studying*  
 I can't talk to you right now. I ~~study~~<sup>am studying</sup> for my exams.
- Lesson 12**      **Using Participles as Adjectives**      129  
*frightening*  
 The movie was about a ~~frightened~~<sup>frightening</sup> old house.
- Lesson 13**      **Phrasal Verbs**      137  
*called her up*  
 Roland ~~called up her~~<sup>called her up</sup>.
- REVIEW**      147

## Unit Five      *Understanding Pronouns*

151

### OVERVIEW      151

- Lesson 14**      **Pronoun Agreement**      154  
*Teachers*  
 A ~~teacher~~<sup>Teachers</sup> should explain their assignments carefully.
- Lesson 15**      **Vague Pronouns: *This, That, and It***      162  
 Contrary to her campaign promises, the governor announced cutbacks in welfare and an increase in education spending. That is sure to anger voters.  
*inconsistency*
- Lesson 16**      ***I or Me? She or Her? He or Him?***      170  
*I*  
 Kathy Wong and ~~me~~<sup>I</sup> took the same math class.
- Lesson 17**      ***Who, Whom, and That***      178  
*who*  
 The woman ~~that~~<sup>who</sup> read my paper liked it.
- Lesson 18**      **Eliminating Sexist Pronouns**      186  
*People*      *their*  
 Each ~~person~~<sup>People</sup> should try to do ~~his~~<sup>their</sup> best.
- REVIEW**      194