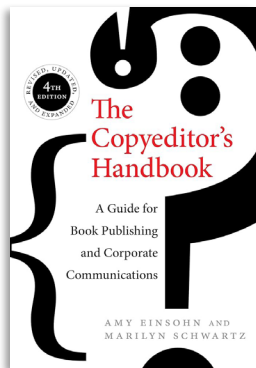




Tips and tools
FOR CONTENT & DESIGN

Must-Read Books for Copy Editors

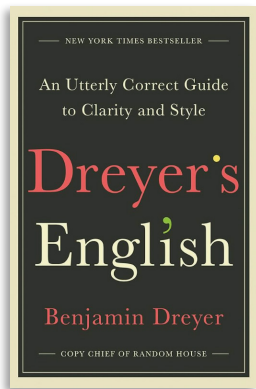
Editing is a craft that blends technical know-how with a keen eye toward clear communication. These essential guidebooks can help you hone your approach to both.



The Copyeditor's Handbook: A Guide for Book Publishing and Corporate Communications

by Amy Einsohn and Marilyn Schwartz, Fourth Edition (2019)

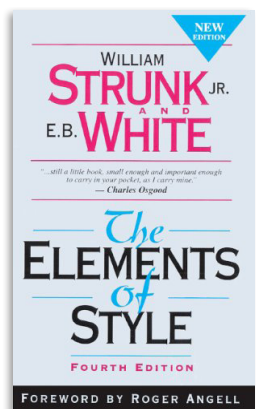
Applicable to both experienced and new editors, this guide's latest iteration offers tips on timely issues like preparing text for digital formats, promoting plain language, and ensuring text accessibility — alongside a trove of evergreen insights on the craft of copy editing itself. Editors can put their knowledge of split infinitives and dangling participles to the test with the companion text, *The Copyeditor's Workbook: Exercises and Tips for Honing Your Editorial Judgment*.



Dreyer's English: An Utterly Correct Guide to Clarity and Style

by Benjamin Dreyer (2019)

Random House copy chief Dreyer begins his text by urging writers to dispose of filler words and phrases like “very,” “rather,” “quite,” “actually,” and “of course” in their prose. He moves on to discuss elementary-school-taught language rules that, in fact, might not deserve to be hard-and-fast rules at all. His guidance on punctuation do's and don'ts, frequently misspelled words, and grammar pet peeves are direct and, at times, eye-opening unexpected, making for an amusing and enlightening read.

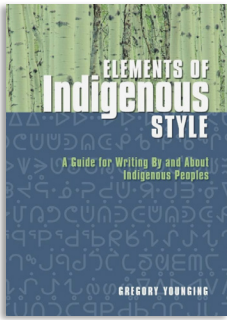


The Elements of Style

by William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White, Fourth Edition (1999)

In print since 1920, this slim but lauded text has maintained a spot on copy editors' shelves for generations — in no small part due to its succinct, approachable entries with insights on such things as word choice (think: “less” vs. “fewer” or “nauseous” vs. “nauseated”) and how to spot and omit needless words. Because of the book's age, many editors might find its usefulness limited in their day-to-day work and a fair amount of its advice to be strict and outdated. Nonetheless, its historical significance is undeniable.

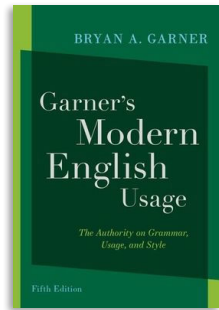




Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing By and About Indigenous Peoples

by Gregory Younging (2018)

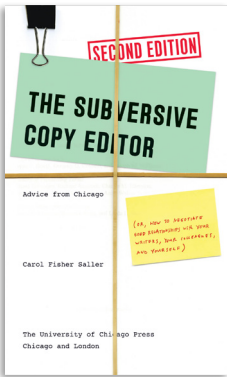
An essential resource for writers covering Indigenous cultures, Younging’s work offers tips on terms to use and to avoid, best practices for interviewing and collaborating with Indigenous peoples, and ways to respectfully discuss tribes’ oral and cultural traditions. In one Dragonfly editor’s words, the text is “more than just checklists and grammar. It frames editing as something dynamic, something that requires an anticolonial mindset.”



Garner's Modern English Usage

by Bryan A. Garner, Fifth Edition (2022)

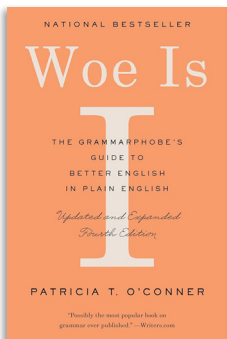
A go-to for questions on grammar, usage, and style, this trusted resource — now in its fifth edition — can help with everyday writing conundrums such as whether to use “one less” or “one fewer” and how to avoid confusing “continual” and “continuous.”



The Subversive Copy Editor

by Carol Fisher Saller, Second Edition (2016)

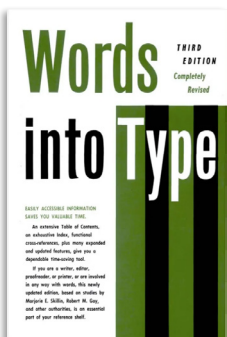
As a former chief copy editor for *The Chicago Manual of Style*, Fisher Saller understands editors’ devotion to their style guides. But in this text, she subverts those tendencies, writing that “a need to always cleave to the rules can be counterproductive.” With wit and insight, she examines the pitfalls of adhering to outdated grammar and style rules and shares tips on “working for the reader” by prioritizing transparency and flexibility.



Woe Is I: The Grammarphobe's Guide to Better English in Plain English

by Patricia T. O'Conner, Fourth Edition (2019)

In addition to helpful reminders about the difference between “who’s” and “whose” and “it’s” and “its,” this easy-to-browse text provides strategies to avoid commonly misspelled words, a guide to proper punctuation, and tips for selecting the proper pronoun — helpful if you find yourself wondering whether to use “more than I” or “more than me.” (Hint: [They both are correct](#), depending on the circumstances.)

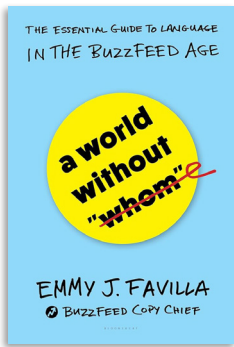


Words Into Type

by Marjorie E. Skillin and Robert M. Gay, Third Edition (1974)

Written with a particular focus on preparing manuscripts for print, this time-tested guide, first published in 1948, still holds up, thanks to its browsable formatting and use of extensive in-text examples to illustrate proper navigation of common linguistic hurdles like capitalization of titles or verb choice for collective nouns.



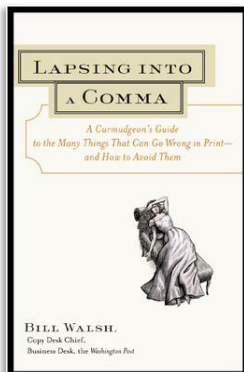


A World Without Whom: The Essential Guide to Language in the BuzzFeed Age

by Emmy J. Favilla (2017)

Former BuzzFeed copy chief Favilla presents a modern, fresh take on grammar best practices, as shaped by a decidedly digital perspective. Turn here if you need guidance on whether “Snapchatted” can be a verb (yes, she says) — or for tips on writing with sensitivity about issues such as race, LGBTQ+ topics, or disabilities in a chapter aptly titled “How To Not Be a Jerk.”

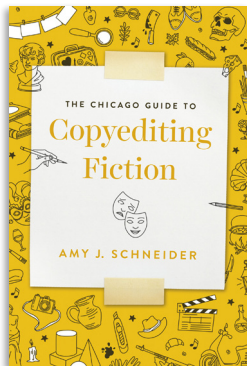
COLLECTIONS



BILL WALSH COLLECTION

Late *Washington Post* copy editor Bill Walsh consistently delivered a pragmatic, logical — and dare we say fun — take on grammar and usage rules in his three published works:

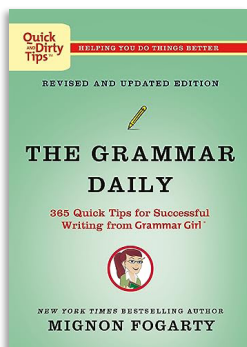
- *Lapsing Into a Comma: A Curmudgeon's Guide to the Many Things That Can Go Wrong in Print — and How to Avoid Them* (2000)
- *The Elephants of Style: A Trunkload of Tips on the Big Issues and Gray Areas of Contemporary American English* (2004)
- *Yes, I Could Care Less: How To Be a Language Snob Without Being a Jerk* (2013)



CHICAGO PRESS COLLECTION

The University of Chicago Press has published dozens of astute guides on writing and editing, including:

- *The Chicago Guide to Copyediting Fiction* by Amy J. Schneider (2023)
- *But Can I Start a Sentence With “But”?: Advice From the Chicago Style Q&A* by The University of Chicago Editorial Staff (Foreword by Carol Fisher Saller) (2016)
- *What Editors Do: The Art, Craft, and Business of Book Editing* by Peter Ginna (2017)

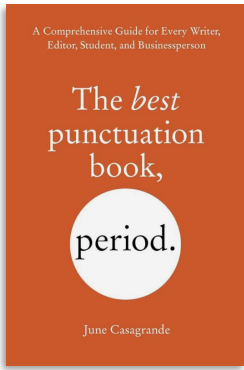


GRAMMAR GIRL COLLECTION

You may know Mignon Fogarty — aka Grammar Girl — best from her beloved podcast of the same name, but she’s also the author of several books on editing and writing, including:

- *Grammar Daily: 365 Quick Tips for Successful Writing From Grammar Girl* (2023)
- *Grammar Girl's Quick and Dirty Tips for Better Writing* (2008)
- *Grammar Girl's Punctuation 911: Your Guide To Writing It Right* (2011)
- *Grammar Girl's 101 Troublesome Words You'll Master in No Time* (2012)

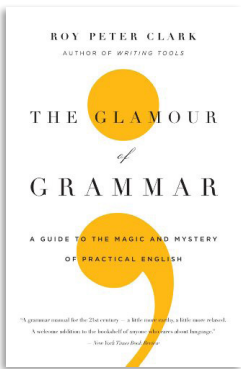




JUNE CASAGRANDE COLLECTION

Casagrande, a syndicated grammar columnist and host of the GrammarUnderground podcast, has parlayed her love of language into several well-received guides on clear usage and writing, including:

- *The Best Punctuation Book, Period: A Comprehensive Guide for Every Writer, Editor, Student, and Businessperson* (2014)
- *It Was the Best of Sentences, It Was the Worst of Sentences: A Writer's Guide To Crafting Killer Sentences* (2010)
- *The Joy of Syntax: A Simple Guide to All the Grammar You Know You Should Know* (2018)
- *Grammar Snobs Are Great Big Meanies: A Guide to Language for Fun and Spite* (2006)



ROY PETER CLARK COLLECTION

As a longtime Poynter Institute writing instructor, Clark has made a career of communicating what differentiates a strong sentence from a weaker one. He shares this expertise in works like:

- *The Glamour of Grammar: A Guide to the Magic and Mystery of Practical English* (2010)
- *How To Write Short: Word Craft for Fast Times* (2013)
- *Murder Your Darlings: And Other Gentle Writing Advice From Aristotle to Zinsser* (2020)
- *Writing Tools: 50 Essential Strategies for Every Writer (10th Anniversary Edition)* (2008)

STYLE GUIDES



No list of essential copy editing books would be complete without referencing the major style guides that define standard usage rules for most professional writing:

- *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th Edition (2017): chicagomanualofstyle.org
- *The Associated Press Stylebook*, 56th Edition (2022-2024): apstylebook.com
- *MLA Handbook*, Ninth Edition (2021): style.mla.org
- *AMA Manual of Style*, 11th Edition (2020): academic.oup.com/amamanualofstyle
- *APA*, Seventh Edition (2023): apastyle.apa.org

DRAGONFLY EDITORIAL RESOURCES

Finally, Dragonfly's extensive [field guide library](#) offers even more tips on copy editing best practices, including:

- [Dragonfly Guide to Style Guides](#)
- [AP Style and Chicago Style: 15 Major Differences](#)
- [Levels of Edit](#)
- [Copy Editing Checklist](#)

