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Not Your Grandma's Grammar

By Jane Straus

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Not Your Grandma's Grammar

As if it isn't enough that computers have influenced just about every area of our lives, you'd think that something as sacred as the English language would remain immune to technology's pressures. Not so. You may not need to learn new rules of grammar as often as you need to update your computer's RAM, but tweaking your grammar skills will make you look more professional, and you can impress your friends and colleagues with some cutting-edge reasoning.

SPACED OUT

One or two spaces between sentences after a period?

Unlike individual letters in typewriters, which all take up the space of one character, computerized lettering allows for spacing differences depending on the size of the letter or punctuation mark. Hence, an m or an H is wider than an I. A period takes up less space than any letter so one space after a period on the computer creates a large enough gap to the eye to indicate the end of a sentence.

Computer programmers changed this rule, not grammarians or English teachers. The battle is still being waged, but I think the programmers will win.

QUESTIONABLE MARKS

Quotation marks and punctuation.

In Grandma's day, a period used with quotation marks followed logic.

Examples: Myrtle said the word "darn". The period went outside the quote because only the last word was in quotation marks, not the entire sentence.

Myrtle said, "I would never say that." The period went inside the quotation mark because the entire sentence is a quote.

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Today (actually for the last 30 years or so), the period always goes inside the quotation mark.

Example: Myrtle said the word "darn."

This does not follow logic, but it makes life easier for professional editors and for the rest of us who have enough to think about besides punctuation. Warning: If you write a quotation in England, ignore this advice. Logic is still followed on that side of "the pond."

WE'VE COME A LONG WAY, MAYBE

Since Grandma's day, we have shortened some words and dropped the former plural form. Memo and memos used to be memorandum and memoranda. Yet other words still retain their original length, spelling, and plural form. Example: curriculum and curricula.

With the word data, we no longer see the singular datum used at all. Data is now normally used as both the singular and plural form. Examples: The data are being tabulated. The data is useful to the scientists.

JUST BECAUSE

In Grandma's day, you would be scolded if you started a sentence with but or because. But you wouldn't have deserved that scolding then or now. Just make sure that if you start a sentence with either of these two words, you are following them with complete thoughts. Good Examples: But she would never say such a thing. Because of this bee sting, my arm is swollen. Bad Examples: But I can't. Because I said so. These are incomplete thoughts and you will get your knuckles rapped with a ruler for writing them.

GET IT WRITE

It's not rocket science; it's the English language – and it's easy. Click here for a free preview of the book and for more information:

THE BLUE BOOK OF GRAMMAR AND PUNCTUATION by Jane Straus. www.grammarbook.com

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Be Thankful For Grammar

By Denton Krypps

I never thought I'd say this, but I'm thankful for grammar. You heard me right. I'm thankful for grammar. I guess maybe I should say that I'm thankful that I learned grammar. It's really true. As an author, I learned quickly to be grateful for those years of elementary school, junior high, and high school grammar class.

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Do you remember sitting through those dreadful grammar classes? I sure do. I remember being asked to memorize the function of a noun, pronoun, verb, adverb and adjective. And I remember learning the difference between the subject of the sentence and the predicate of that same sentence. I have no real memory of how the concepts of grammar made it off the pages and from the teachers' mouths into my head, but they did. I never intentionally paid attention during grammar class because at that time I was years away from deciding to be a writer. I guess the grammar I needed to learn somehow came to be through osmosis. Think about our what our society would be like without the existence of grammar.

Basically, grammar is the thing that allows us to communicate the same kind of English. Sure, you and I both know what a dog or a tomato are, but what if you thought that each sentence that ended with a period was really a question. Wouldn't that be confusing? Or what if I decided to write my next novel uses sentences like this: "Told Billy to Sarah loving a mother being a." Does that make sense to you? Of course not, because that sentence was not written with proper English grammar in mind. If we're lucky or just have a good imagination then we can determine that Sarah is telling Billy something about loving to be a mom. But without grammar, understanding even the most common English words just isn't easy.

Do you love to sit down and read a good book? Or perhaps relaxing in front of a movie is your cup of tea? Do you enjoy surfing the internet for the latest facts and news? If you enjoy any of these things, then you better appreciate grammar. It is proper grammar that allows you to read a book or to understand the script of a film or even to make sense of the internet.

If you still are not convinced about the importance of grammar to your life, trying having a conversation using mixed up sentences like the one I wrote for you earlier. It is pretty hard to make it through a day when no one understands each others thoughts or questions.

Fortunately, because we have grammar, we never have to worry about miscommunicating with people because of the way we arrange our words. So be thankful for grammar because I guarentee it has made your life a lot easier.

Writer Denton Krypps frequently gets on his soapbox about the importance of grammar to any society. Learn more about one of the most underappreciated things at

<http://www.grammarnews.info>

Ewen Chia's Website Conversion Secrets



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