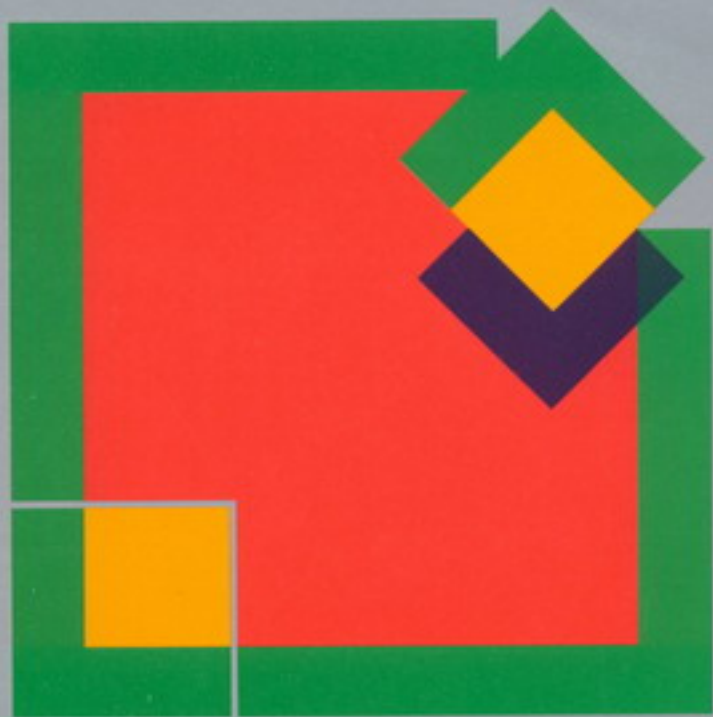


Basic English Usage

Michael Swan



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Contents

Introduction	3
List of entries	5
Words used in the explanations	10
Phonetic alphabet	12
Basic English Usage	13
Index	276

Introduction

The purpose of this book

This is a practical guide to common problems in English grammar and usage. It is written for foreign students who would like to know more about English, and who want to avoid mistakes.

Level

The book is written especially for intermediate students, but more advanced learners may also find it useful. The explanations are made as simple as possible. Students who want more detailed and complete information should read my more advanced book *Practical English Usage*, also published by Oxford University Press.

Language

Explanations are mostly in ordinary everyday English. It has been necessary to use some grammatical terminology (for example, *adverb*, *subject*, *clause*, *modify*). These words are explained on pages 10–12.

The kind of English described

The book describes standard modern British English, and gives realistic examples of spoken and written language (both formal and informal). Incorrect forms are shown like this: '(NOT ~~I have seen him yesterday.~~)' There is some information about American usage, but the book is not a systematic guide to American English.

Organization

This is a dictionary of problems, not a grammar. Points are explained in short separate entries, so that you can find just the information you need about a particular problem — no more and no less. Entries are arranged alphabetically and numbered. A complete index at the back of the book shows where each point can be found. (There is also a list of all the entries on pages 5–9).

How to use the book

If you want an explanation of a particular point, look in the index. Problems are indexed under several different names, so it is usually easy to find what you want. For example, if you need information about the use of *I* and *me*, you can find this in the index under '**I**', '**me**', 'subject and object forms', 'personal pronouns' or 'pronouns'.

Exercises

Basic English Usage: Exercises, by Jennifer Seidl and Michael Swan, gives practice in the various points that are explained in *Basic English Usage*.

Thanks

I should like to thank the many people whose suggestions and criticisms have helped me with this book, especially Norman Coe, Stewart Melluish, Jennifer Seidl and Catherine Walter. I am also most grateful to all those — too many to name — who have sent me comments on my book *Practical English Usage*. Their suggestions have helped me to improve many of the explanations in this book.

Comments

I should be very glad to hear from students or teachers using this book who find mistakes or omissions, or who have comments or suggestions of any kind. Please write to me c/o ELT Department, Oxford University Press, Walton Street, Oxford OX2 6DP.

List of entries

- 1 abbreviations
- 2 **about to**
- 3 **above and over**
- 4 **across and over**
- 5 **across and through**
- 6 active verb forms
- 7 **actual(ly)**
- 8 *adjectives ending in -ly*
- 9 adjectives: order
- 10 adjectives: position
- 11 adjectives without nouns
- 12 adverbs of manner
- 13 adverbs: position (general)
- 14 adverbs: position (details)
- 15 **after** (conjunction)
- 16 **after** (preposition);
afterwards (adverb)
- 17 **after all**
- 18 **afternoon, evening and night**
- 19 ages
- 20 **ago**
- 21 **all (of)** with nouns and pronouns
- 22 **all** with verbs
- 23 **all, everybody and everything**
- 24 **all and every**
- 25 **all and whole**
- 26 **all right**
- 27 **almost and nearly**
- 28 **also, as well and too**
- 29 **although and though**
- 30 **among and between**
- 31 **and**
- 32 **and** after **try, wait, go** etc
- 33 **another**
- 34 **any** (= 'it doesn't matter which')
- 35 **any and no**: adverbs
- 36 **appear**
- 37 **(a)round and about**
- 38 articles: introduction
- 39 articles: **a/an**
- 40 articles: **the**
- 41 articles: the difference between
a/an and **the**
- 42 articles: talking in general
- 43 articles: countable and
uncountable nouns
- 44 articles: **a** and **an**:
pronunciation of **the**
- 45 articles: special rules and
exceptions
- 46 **as . . . as . . .**
- 47 **as, because and since** (reason)
- 48 **as and like**
- 49 **as if and as though**
- 50 **as much/many . . . as . . .**
- 51 **as well as**
- 52 **as, when and while** (things
happening at the same time)
- 53 **ask**
- 54 **at, in and on** (place)
- 55 **at, in and on** (time)
- 56 **at all**
- 57 **be** with auxiliary **do**
- 58 **be + infinitive**
- 59 **be**: progressive tenses
- 60 **because and because of**
- 61 **before** (adverb)
- 62 **before** (conjunction)
- 63 **before** (preposition) and
in front of
- 64 **begin and start**
- 65 **big, large, great and tall**
- 66 **born**
- 67 **borrow and lend**
- 68 **both (of)** with nouns and
pronouns
- 69 **both** with verbs
- 70 **both . . . and . . .**
- 71 **bring and take**
- 72 **(Great) Britain, the United
Kingdom, the British Isles and
England**
- 73 British and American English
- 74 **broad and wide**
- 75 **but = except**
- 76 **by**: time
- 77 **can and could**: forms
- 78 **can and could**: ability
- 79 **can**: possibility and probability

- 80 **can**: permission, offers, requests and orders
- 81 **can** with **remember, understand, speak, play, see, hear, feel, taste** and **smell**
- 82 **close** and **shut**
- 83 **come** and **go**
- 84 comparison: comparative and superlative adjectives
- 85 comparison: using comparatives and superlatives
- 86 comparison: **much, far** etc with comparatives
- 87 comparison: comparative and superlative adverbs
- 88 conditional
- 89 conjunctions
- 90 contractions
- 91 'copula' verbs
- 92 countable and uncountable nouns
- 93 **country**
- 94 **dare**
- 95 dates
- 96 determiners
- 97 discourse markers
- 98 **do**: auxiliary verb
- 99 **do** + **-ing**
- 100 **do** and **make**
- 101 **during** and **for**
- 102 **during** and **in**
- 103 **each**: grammar
- 104 **each** and **every**
- 105 **each other** and **one another**
- 106 **either**: determiner
- 107 **either . . . or . . .**
- 108 ellipsis (leaving words out)
- 109 **else**
- 110 emphasis
- 111 emphatic structures with **it** and **what**
- 112 **enjoy**
- 113 **enough**
- 114 **even**
- 115 **eventual(ly)**
- 116 **ever**
- 117 **every** and **every one**
- 118 **except**
- 119 **except** and **except for**
- 120 exclamations
- 121 **excuse me, pardon** and **sorry**
- 122 **expect, hope, look forward, wait, want** and **wish**
- 123 **explain**
- 124 **fairly, quite, rather** and **pretty**
- 125 **far** and **a long way**
- 126 **farther** and **further**
- 127 **fast**
- 128 **feel**
- 129 **(a) few** and **(a) little**
- 130 **fewer** and **less**
- 131 **for**: purpose
- 132 **for** + object + infinitive
- 133 **for, since, from, ago** and **before**
- 134 future: introduction
- 135 future: present progressive and **going to**
- 136 future: **shall/will** (predictions)
- 137 future: **shall** and **will** (interpersonal uses)
- 138 future: simple present
- 139 future perfect
- 140 future progressive
- 141 gender (masculine and feminine language)
- 142 **get** + noun, adjective, adverb particle or preposition
- 143 **get** (+ object) + verb form
- 144 **get** and **go**: movement
- 145 **go: been** and **gone**
- 146 **go** meaning 'become'
- 147 **go . . . -ing**
- 148 **had better**
- 149 **half (of)**
- 150 **hard** and **hardly**
- 151 **have**: introduction
- 152 **have**: auxiliary verb
- 153 **have (got)**: possession, relationships etc
- 154 **have**: actions
- 155 **have** + object + verb form
- 156 **have (got) to**

- 157 **hear** and **listen (to)**
 158 **help**
 159 **here** and **there**
 160 **holiday** and **holidays**
 161 **home**
 162 **hope**
 163 **how** and **what . . . like?**
- 164 **if**: ordinary tenses
 165 **if**: special tenses
 166 **if**-sentences with **could** and **might**
 167 **if only**
 168 **if so** and **if not**
 169 **ill** and **sick**
 170 imperative
 171 **in** and **into** (prepositions)
 172 **in case**
 173 **in spite of**
 174 **indeed**
 175 infinitive: negative, progressive, perfect, passive
 176 infinitive: use
 177 infinitive after **who, what, how** etc
 178 infinitive of purpose
 179 infinitive without **to**
 180 **-ing** form ('gerund')
 181 **-ing** form after **to**
 182 **-ing** form or infinitive?
 183 **instead of . . . -ing**
 184 inversion: auxiliary verb before subject
 185 inversion: whole verb before subject
 186 irregular verbs
 187 **it**: preparatory subject
 188 **it**: preparatory object
 189 **it's time**
- 190 **last** and **the last**
 191 **let's**
 192 letters
 193 **likely**
 194 **long** and **for a long time**
 195 **look**
 196 **look (at), watch** and **see**
- 197 **marry** and **divorce**
 198 **may** and **might**: forms
 199 **may** and **might**: probability
 200 **may** and **might**: permission
 201 **mind**
 202 modal auxiliary verbs
 203 **more (of)**: determiner
 204 **most (of)**: determiner
 205 **much, many, a lot** etc
 206 **much (of), many (of)**: determiners
 207 **must**: forms
 208 **must**: obligation
 209 **must** and **have to; mustn't, haven't got to, don't have to, don't need to** and **needn't**
 210 **must**: deduction
- 211 names and titles
 212 nationality words
 213 **need**
 214 negative questions
 215 negative structures
 216 **neither (of)**: determiner
 217 **neither, nor** and **not . . . either**
 218 **neither . . . nor . . .**
 219 **next** and **nearest**
 220 **next** and **the next**
 221 **no** and **none**
 222 **no** and **not**
 223 **no** and **not a/not any**
 224 **no more, not any more, no longer, not any longer**
 225 non-progressive verbs
 226 noun + noun
 227 numbers
- 228 **once**
 229 **one** and **you**: indefinite personal pronouns
 230 **one**: substitute word
 231 **other** and **others**
 232 **ought**
 233 **own**
- 234 participles: 'present' and 'past' participles (**-ing** and **-ed**)
 235 participles used as adjectives

- 236 participle clauses
- 237 passive structures: introduction
- 238 passive verb forms
- 239 past tense with present or future meaning
- 240 past time: the past and perfect tenses (introduction)
- 241 past time: simple past
- 242 past time: past progressive
- 243 past time: present perfect simple
- 244 past time: present perfect progressive
- 245 past time: past perfect simple and progressive
- 246 perfect tenses with **this is the first time . . .** etc
- 247 personal pronouns (**I, me, it** etc)
- 248 **play** and **game**
- 249 **please** and **thank you**
- 250 possessive **'s**: forms
- 251 possessive **'s**: use
- 252 possessive with determiners (**a friend of mine**, etc)
- 253 possessives: **my** and **mine**, etc
- 254 prepositions after particular words and expressions
- 255 prepositions before particular words and expressions
- 256 prepositions: expressions without prepositions
- 257 prepositions at the end of clauses
- 258 prepositions and adverb particles
- 259 prepositional verbs and phrasal verbs
- 260 present tenses: introduction
- 261 present tenses: simple present
- 262 present tenses: present progressive
- 263 progressive tenses with **always**
- 264 punctuation: apostrophe
- 265 punctuation: colon
- 266 punctuation: comma
- 267 punctuation: dash
- 268 punctuation: quotation marks
- 269 punctuation: semi-colons and full stops
- 270 questions: basic rules
- 271 questions: word order in spoken questions
- 272 questions: reply questions
- 273 question tags
- 274 **quite**
- 275 **real(ly)**
- 276 reflexive pronouns
- 277 relative pronouns
- 278 relative pronouns: **what**
- 279 relative pronouns: **whose**
- 280 relatives: identifying and non-identifying clauses
- 281 **remind**
- 282 reported speech and direct speech
- 283 reported speech: pronouns; 'here and now' words; tenses
- 284 reported speech: questions
- 285 reported speech: orders, requests, advice etc
- 286 requests
- 287 **road** and **street**
- 288 **the same**
- 289 **say** and **tell**
- 290 **see**
- 291 **seem**
- 292 **shall**
- 293 short answers
- 294 **should**
- 295 **should, ought** and **must**
- 296 **should** and **would**
- 297 **should** after **why** and **how**
- 298 **should: (If I were you) I should . . .**
- 299 similar words
- 300 **since** (conjunction of time): tenses
- 301 singular and plural: spelling of plural nouns
- 302 singular and plural: pronunciation of plural nouns
- 303 singular and plural: irregular plurals
- 304 singular and plural: singular words ending in **-s**

- 305 singular and plural:
singular words with plural verbs
- 306 singular and plural:
plural expressions with
singular verbs
- 307 singular and plural: **anybody** etc
- 308 **slow(ly)**
- 309 **small** and **little**
- 310 **smell**
- 311 **so** and **not** with **hope, believe** etc
- 312 **so am I, so do I** etc
- 313 'social' language
- 314 **some** and **any**
- 315 **some**: special uses
- 316 **some/any** and no article
- 317 **somebody** and **anybody**,
something and **anything**, etc
- 318 **sound**
- 319 spelling: capital letters
- 320 spelling: **ch** and **tch, k** and **ck**
- 321 spelling: doubling final
consonants
- 322 spelling: final **-e**
- 323 spelling: full stops with
abbreviations
- 324 spelling: hyphens
- 325 spelling: **ie** and **ei**
- 326 spelling: **-ise** and **-ize**
- 327 spelling: **-ly**
- 328 spelling: **y** and **i**
- 329 spelling and pronunciation
- 330 **still, yet** and **already**
- 331 subject and object forms
- 332 subjunctive
- 333 **suggest**
- 334 **such** and **so**
- 335 **surely**
- 336 **sympathetic**
- 337 **take**
- 338 **take** (time)
- 339 **tall** and **high**
- 340 **taste**
- 341 telephoning
- 342 telling the time
- 343 tenses in subordinate clauses
- 344 **that**: omission
- 345 **there is**
- 346 **think**
- 347 **this** and **that**
- 348 **too**
- 349 **travel, journey** and **trip**
- 350 **unless** and **if not**
- 351 **until** and **by**
- 352 **until** and **to**
- 353 **used to** + infinitive
- 354 **(be) used to** + noun or . . . **-ing**
- 355 verbs with object complements
- 356 verbs with two objects
- 357 **way**
- 358 weak and strong forms
- 359 **well**
- 360 **when** and **if**
- 361 **whether** and **if**
- 362 **whether . . . or . . .**
- 363 **which, what** and **who**:
question words
- 364 **who ever, what ever, how ever**
etc
- 365 **whoever, whatever, whichever**,
however, whenever and **wherever**
- 366 **will**
- 367 **wish**
- 368 **worth . . . -ing**
- 369 **would**
- 370 **would rather**

Words used in the explanations

active In *I paid the bill*, the verb *paid* is **active**. In *The bill was paid*, the verb *was paid* is **passive**, not **active**.

adjective a word like *green*, *hungry*, *impossible*, used to describe.

adverb a word like *tomorrow*, *here*, *badly*, *also*, which is used to say, for example, when, where or how something happens.

adverb(ial) particle a word like *up*, *out*, *off*, used as part of a verb like *get up*, *look out*, *put off*.

adverb(ial) phrase a group of words used like an adverb. Examples: *in this place*, *on Tuesday*.

affirmative *I was* is **affirmative**; *I was not* is **negative**.

auxiliary (verb) a verb like *be*, *have*, *do*, which is used with another verb to make tenses, questions etc. See also **modal auxiliary verbs**.

clause a structure with a subject and verb, and perhaps an object and adverbs. Examples: *I know that man*. *I came home last night*.

A **sentence** is made of one or more **clauses**. See also **main clause**.

comparative a form like *older*, *faster*, *more intelligent*.

conditional *I should/would* + infinitive, etc. See 88.

conjunction a word that joins clauses. Examples: *and*, *so*, *if*, *when*.

consonant *b*, *c*, *d*, *f* and *g* are **consonants**; *a*, *e*, *i*, *o* and *u* are **vowels**.

contraction two words made into one. Examples: *don't*, *I'll*.

determiner a word like *the*, *my*, *this*, *every*, *more*, which can come at the beginning of a noun phrase. See 96.

direct object In *I gave my mother some money*, the **direct object** is *some money*; *my mother* is the **indirect object**.

direct speech reporting somebody's words without changing the grammar. In *She said 'I'm tired'*, the clause *I'm tired* is **direct speech**. In *She said that she was tired*, the structure is **indirect speech** or **reported speech**.

emphasize You **emphasize** something if you make it 'stronger'—for example, by saying it louder.

expression a group of words used together, like *in the morning*.

first person *I*, *me*, *we*, *us*, *our*, *am* are **first person** forms.

formal We use **formal** language when we wish to be polite or to show respect; we use more **informal** language when we talk to friends, for example. *Good morning* is more **formal** than *Hello*; *Hi* is very **informal**.

gerund an *-ing* form used like a noun. Example: **Smoking** is dangerous.

hyphen a line (-) that separates words. Example: *milk-bottle*.

imperative a form (like the infinitive) that is used to give orders, make suggestions, etc. Examples: **Come on**; **Wait a minute**. See 170.

indirect object see **direct object**.

indirect speech see **direct speech**.

infinitive In *I need to sleep* and *I must go*, the forms *to sleep* and *go* are **infinitives**. See 175.

informal see **formal**.

irregular see **regular**.