

MARION FIELD

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punctuation and spelling and write
with greater confidence**

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London Evening Standard

REVISED AND UPDATED FIFTH EDITION

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Written English

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Preface

to the Fifth Edition

Do you have trouble with punctuation? Are you always using commas instead of full stops? Is your spelling weak? Do you have difficulty filling in forms and writing letters? Then this book will help you improve the standard of your written English. It has been written in an easy-to-understand way designed for use by anyone. Whether you are a student, school-leaver, foreign student, an employed or self-employed worker or someone at home, it should prove a valuable reference book.

The format is easy to follow with plenty of examples. At the end of each section there are exercises. Suggested answers are at the back of the book.

Part 1 deals with the basic rules of grammar and punctuation identifying the various punctuation marks and showing how each is used. It also covers the parts of speech and demonstrates their uses. Part 2 shows you how to put Part 1 into practice. There are sections on essay writing, summarising, writing reports and even plotting a short story. There are also chapters on letter writing, filling in forms, writing a CV and applying for a job. The use of e-mail has also been incorporated.

Written in a simple style with frequent headings and easily identifiable revision points, this book should prove invaluable for anyone who needs help in improving his or her written English.

Marion Field

Part One: The Basics

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Discovering Grammar

IDENTIFYING NOUNS

Nouns are the names of things, places or people. There are four types of noun: concrete, proper, collective and abstract.

Looking at concrete or common nouns

A **concrete noun** is a physical thing – usually something you can see or touch:

apple	key	queen	umbrella
cat	lake	ranch	volunteer
diary	needle	soldier	watch
garage	orange	tin	zoo

Using proper nouns

A **proper noun** *always* begins with a capital letter. It is the name of a person, a place or an institution:

Alistair	Ben Nevis	Buckingham Palace
Bob	England	The British Museum
Christopher	Guildford	Hampton Court
Dale	River Thames	The Royal Navy

Discovering collective nouns

A **collective noun** refers to a group of objects, animals or people. It is a singular word but most collective nouns can be made plural. Here are a few examples:

<i>singular</i>	<i>plural</i>
choir	choirs
flock	flocks
herd	herds
orchestra	orchestras
team	teams

Introducing abstract nouns

An **abstract noun** cannot be seen or touched. It can be a feeling, a state of mind, a quality, an idea, an occasion or a particular time. Here are some examples:

anger	month	peace
beauty	night	pregnancy
darkness	health	summer
happiness	patience	war

Sometimes abstract nouns can be formed from adjectives by adding the suffix ‘-ness’. There will be more about adjectives in the next chapter.

<i>adjectives</i>	<i>abstract nouns</i>
bright	brightness
dark	darkness
kind	kindness
ill	illness
sad	sadness
ugly	ugliness

Other abstract nouns are formed differently. Look at the following examples:

<i>adjectives</i>	<i>abstract nouns</i>
high	height

patient	patience
pleasant	pleasure
wide	width
wonderful	wonder

USING CAPITAL LETTERS

Proper nouns and adjectives formed from proper nouns always start with a capital letter. So do the days of the week and the months of the year.

<i>proper nouns</i>	<i>adjectives</i>
America	American
Austria	Austrian
Belgium	Belgian
England	English
France	French
Portugal	Portuguese

Writing titles

Capital letters are also used for the titles of people, books, plays, films, magazines:

Mrs Brown	Princess Anne
The Secret Garden	A Tale of Two Cities
A Midsummer Night's Dream	The Cocktail Party
My Fair Lady	Hamlet

Identifying buildings and institutions

Buildings and institutions start with capital letters:

Bristol University	British Museum
Conservative Party	Guildford Cathedral
National Gallery	Surrey County Council

Looking at religious words

The names of religions and their members also start with capitals:

Christianity	Christian
Hinduism	Hindu
Islam	Moslem/Muslim
Judaism	Jew

Sacred books start with a capital:

Bible	Koran	Torah
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Religious festivals are also written with a capital:

Christmas	Easter	Eid
Hanukka	Ramadan	

Deciding on subject and object

The main noun or pronoun in the sentence is the **subject** of the sentence. It performs the action. All sentences must contain a subject:

Fiona was very tired. (The *subject* of the sentence is *Fiona*.)

If there is an object in the sentence, that is also a noun or pronoun. It is usually near the end of the sentence. It has something done to it. A sentence does not have to contain an object:

The footballer kicked the ball into the net. (The *object* of the sentence is *ball*.)

REPLACING NOUNS WITH PRONOUNS

To avoid the frequent use of the same noun, **pronouns** can be used instead.

Using personal pronouns

Personal pronouns take the place of a noun. They are identified as **1st**, **2nd** and **3rd** persons. They can be used as both subject and object. Look at the following table:

	<i>singular</i>		<i>plural</i>	
	<i>subject</i>	<i>object</i>	<i>subject</i>	<i>object</i>
1st person	I	me	we	us
2nd person	you	you	you	you
3rd person	he, she, it	him, her, it	they	them

It was sunny yesterday. (The *subject* of the sentence is *it*.)

His mother scolded *him*. (The *object* of the sentence is *him*.)

Notice that the 2nd person is the same in both the singular and plural. In the past ‘thou’ was used as the singular but today ‘you’ is in general use for both although ‘thou’ may be heard occasionally in some parts of the country.

Putting pronouns to work

I was born in Yorkshire but spent most of my teenage years in Sussex.

In the above sentence the *1st* ‘person’ is used because the writer is telling his or her own story. An author writes an ‘autobiography’ when writing about his or her own life.