

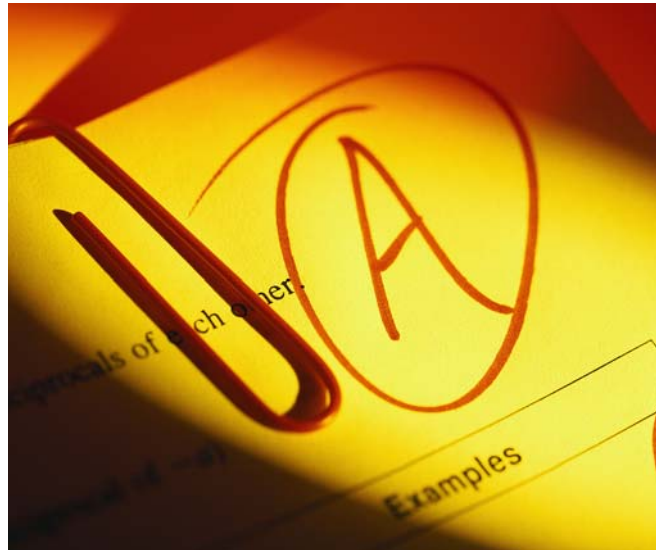
A GUIDE TO WRITING RESOURCES

This guide is intended to assist students in obtaining guidance in the writing of their research papers and for improving their writing skills.

INTRODUCTION:

Do you want to get A's in class or not?!

Good communication skills, both written and verbal, are **absolutely vital** to personal, academic, and occupational success. The problem is that by the time most of us finally recognize that fact, we have long since forgotten everything we were supposed to have learned in composition or speech class. Ironically, the primary reason we didn't learn how to write or speak as well as we should have may be that, at the time, we didn't fully understand how important these skills are. Learning to communicate well is an ongoing process—it's hard work. However, it can really pay off in terms of **better grades** on your school work, **advancement in the workplace**, and even in many aspects of one's personal life.



“If I went back to college again, I’d concentrate on two areas: learning to write and learning to speak before an audience. Nothing in life is more important than the ability to communicate effectively.”
—*Gerald R. Ford*

This publication is available online at the TROY Global Campus Library site <http://uclibrary.troy.edu> in the *Information and Help* section.

Written by Jay Brandes, Reference Librarian, Troy University. Updated 8/28/08.

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Take a moment or two to consider each of the general and individual topics. Then, if you want to know more, the information is there for the taking. If you are not sufficiently enticed by a given topic, simply move on to the next one.

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Don't be scared off by the fact that several sections of this guide contain references to purchasing books—the vast majority of them are inexpensive, if purchased new, and even cheaper, used. A relatively small investment in a few good books can reap great rewards.

Section 1: University Resources

Troy University has a Writing Center. Its online address (URL) is <http://troy.troy.edu/writingcenter>. The Writing Center has guides for *Research/Documentation*, *Special Kinds of Writing*, *Grammar/Mechanics*, and *The Writing Process*.



The services of the Troy University Writing Center (Troy campus) are provided for any student who is enrolled for at least one credit hour in residence at the Troy campus; however, other Troy University students will be assisted as time, personnel, and resources permit. Usually, you can e-mail your paper and any questions you may have to wcenter@troy.edu, and someone will respond, often within 48 hours, or you can call and talk to a tutor or the Writing Center coordinator at 334-670-3305. Tutoring sessions by e-mail or phone cannot be so specific or detailed as a face-to-face visit, but they can help you address any major questions.

Section 2: General Writing Skills



Part of what turns people off to topics such as *grammar* or *writing* is all the @#%\$* **TERMINOLOGY!** Crudely...

Grammar involves the various parts of speech, e.g., verbs and nouns, and how you arrange them to make sentences. **Mechanics** includes capitalization, italics, abbreviations, and numbers. **Punctuation** is . . . well . . . punctuation.

Technically, mechanics and punctuation are not, per se, grammar, but they are virtually always included in books, Web sites, and anything/everything labeled as a grammar resource.

Writing is the term used in this guide to mean the construction of sentences, paragraphs, and entire essays or research papers.

Usage is the term used in this guide to refer to the selection of the correct or most appropriate word or phrase, for example, *who/whom*, *which/that*, *effect/affect*, *accept/except*, *among/between*, e.g./i.e., *if/whether*, *libel/slander*, *imply/infer*, *meantime/meanwhile*, etc.

This section, **Section 2**, includes grammar, mechanics, punctuation, basic writing, and just a hint of usage.

Section 3 of this guide covers the writing of research papers, e.g., selecting a topic, developing a thesis, editing, etc. Section 8 covers vocabulary builders, usage guides, thesauri, and dictionaries . . . but forget about that for now.

From time to time, EVERYONE needs some help with his or her grammar—the real question is how much (and what type) of help do you need? The following are some suggestions on improving your writing.

- If needed, take a composition class from a local school, learning extension, or enrichment program.
- Make use of online sites. Traditional, print books are excellent tools both for studying and quick reference, but there are also a number of Web sites on the subject . . . here are some you may find useful:
 - The American Heritage® Book of English Usage (online book).
<http://www.bartleby.com/64>
 - Basic Elements of English: An Interactive Guide to Grammar (English Department at the University of Calgary).
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/UofC/eduweb/grammar>
 - The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation (by Jane Straus). Free information and quizzes. There is a book for sale, but the online tools are good

(and free).

<http://www.grammarbook.com>

- Common Errors in English (by Paul Brians). This is an **excellent** usage site. It is the type of resource you could visit from time-to-time in order to upgrade your language skills in an entertaining fashion.

<http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~brians/errors/errors.html>

- Grammar Slammer. Quick, to-the-point guide.

<http://englishplus.com/grammar>

- Guide to Grammar and Style (by Jack Lynch). Guide to grammar and usage.

<http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Writing>

- Guide to Grammar and Writing. Guide to grammar and usage with a very interesting menu system or use the INDEX button to see every topic at a glance).

<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar>

- Modern English Grammar (by Daniel Kies).

<http://papyr.com/hypertextbooks/grammar>

- Rhetoric and Composition. A comprehensive writing guide, this excellent resource also includes a guide to grammar (take the link labeled *Writer's Handbook*).

http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Rhetoric_and_Composition

- Review one or more books on the subject...

Okay . . . this is where, without proper guidance, you are most likely to get confused and/or frustrated if you go to a library or book store, either a physical or online, without knowing quite what to look for. Here's your "proper" guidance:



A good grammar book can be hard to find.
Here are a few to consider . . .

Suggestion: Tastes vary—since what I think is a great book might not work for you, go to the book store and browse. Although browsing the physical book is preferable, it is possible to preview the contents of some books online.

Popular grammar books: The types of books you find at mass-market book stores, e.g., Barnes and Noble, Books-A-Million, or Borders. These types of books cover grammar, mechanics, and punctuation. Some may include a brief writing section or a few extras, but mostly they are grammar books.

The Everything Grammar and Style Book. If you are looking for some light reading (low on jargon, high on user-friendly explanations) to brush up on your grammar, then this is the one. Includes a section on writing. It is not particularly useful as a reference book, i.e., its format does not lend itself to quickly looking up information resolving a grammar issue. The contents of this book can be previewed online at Amazon.com. List price \$15; new and used copies are available for \$11 or less.

English Grammar for Dummies. Similar to the book above, but noticeably denser (more jargon and colder text). The contents of this book can be previewed online at Amazon.com. List price \$19; new and used copies are available for \$14 or less.

The Grammar Bible: Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Grammar but Didn't Know Whom to Ask. If there is such a thing as a *sweet spot* in grammar books, then this book has hit it. It is a comprehensive yet easily digestible grammar book. You can read it (cover to cover) and also use it for ready reference. The text (type face and layout) is very easy on the eyes, something rare, yet important for this type of book. List price \$18; new and used copies are available for \$12 or less.

Barron's Grammar the Easy Way. If you desire a quick, do-it-yourself grammar course, then this is a good one. It teaches grammar in a no-nonsense (but still very approachable) manner. Grammar is the primary thrust of this resource, but along with grammar, you do get a few extras. There is a compact section on punctuation and capitalization, a very helpful section on usage, and a couple of very short sections on writing. The contents of this book can be previewed online at Amazon.com. List price \$15; new and used copies are available for \$11 or less.

Kaplan Grammar Power is an excellent alternative to the Barron's (above). The contents of this book can be previewed online at Amazon.com. List price \$12; new and used copies are available for \$11 or less (used copies can be found for virtually the price of shipping alone).

The *Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation* is a very likable book—it covers the basics of grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and numbers. It also includes lessons on troublesome usage issues, e.g., who vs. whom. Provides numerous quizzes (and an answer key). Not often found in brick and mortar book stores, you can get a feel for the book (and order it) from <http://www.grammarbook.com>. It is also available from major online booksellers. The contents of this book can be previewed online at Amazon.com. List price \$15; new and used copies are available for \$10 or less.

The Writer's Digest Desk Reference. At first blush, this book looks pretty scary—but it can actually be a very useful tool (once you've figured out what it is). Okay, so what is it? This book presents grammar in a reference-like fashion, a presentation typically found in composition textbooks (discussed next), but it does so in much greater detail. If you want a **complete** guide to grammar, then this is the one. The contents of this book can be previewed online at Amazon.com. List price \$25; new and used copies are available for \$17 or less (used, often much less).

NEXT TOPIC...

Composition textbooks: You won't find these in most mass-market book stores, but you might in a college book store. For lack of a better word, these are more serious than the popular type books previously mentioned. They are designed for college courses. They are all useful as reference books, i.e., for quickly looking up how to deal with a certain issue.

Hodges' Harbrace Handbook. Every college student (and professor) should probably own one of these. An excellent reference and learning tool for grammar, mechanics, punctuation, spelling and diction, effective sentences, and writing. The contents of this book can be previewed online at Amazon.com. Ninety-eight percent of the "good stuff," i.e., the grammar, punctuation, etc., in the 14th edition is identical to that in the most recent (16th) edition. **Used copies of the 14th can be found for virtually the price of shipping alone.** The 16th edition contains up-to-date citation style for MLA and APA (that is the primary difference in content between it and the 14th); so if you don't care about that aspect, just get the older book. List price on the 16th is \$66, new and used copies are \$58 or less.

The St. Martin's Guide to Writing. Similar to *Hodge's* (above)—the *writing* material is much more extensive, but *grammar* is not so well organized as in *Hodge's*. Ninety-eight percent of the "good stuff," i.e., the grammar, punctuation, etc., in the 6th edition is identical to that in the most recent (8th) edition. **Used copies of the 6th can be found for virtually the price of shipping alone.** The 8th edition contains up-to-date citation style for MLA and APA (that is the primary difference in content between it and the 6th); so if you don't care about that aspect, just get the older book. List price on the 8th is \$73.

The Borzoi Handbook for Writers. On the surface, this one looks as cold and matter-of-fact a read as the previous two books, but it isn't—**it has a very pleasant way of explaining inherently dense material.** This book is older (1992), so the citation style (MLA and APA) is useless, but the grammar and writing information is first-class (so don't be put off by the older publication date). List price \$58; new and used copies are available for \$51 or less (**used copies can be found for virtually the price of shipping alone**).

All other books:

- The next section of this guide, Section 3, covers resources that go beyond the basics. It recommends a few books that deal with the writing of research papers, e.g., selecting a topic, developing a thesis, editing, etc.
- The Book Recommendations section, Section 8, covers style books, vocabulary builders, usage guides, thesauri, and dictionaries.



And now, Section 3 . . .

Section 3: Writing a Research Paper

Beyond writing effective sentences and paragraphs, comes everything else one needs to know in order to write a high-quality research paper. "Everything else" includes:

- Choosing a topic
- Developing a thesis
- Researching
- Record keeping
- Documentation
- Analyzing data
- Constructing arguments
- Thinking critically
- Creating an outline
- Revising
- Time management
- Proofreading
- Working in groups
- Learning from mistakes

The only recommended Web site for this type of material is the aforementioned *Rhetoric and Composition* <http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Rhetoric_and_Composition>.

The following "how to write a term/research paper" books are recommended:

- *How to Write Research Papers* by Sharon Sorenson. List price \$13; new and used copies are available for \$11 or less.
- *How to Write Term Papers and Reports* by L. Sue Baugh. List price \$25; new and used copies are available for \$18 or less (used copies can be found for virtually the price of shipping alone).
- *Schaum's Quick Guide to Writing Great Research Papers* by Laurie Rozakis. List price \$12; new and used copies are available for \$11 or less.
- *Research Papers for Dummies* by Geraldine Woods. List price \$17; new and used copies are available for \$12 or less.
- *The Everything Guide to Writing Research Papers Book: Ace Your Next Project With Step-by-step Expert Advice!* List price \$15; new and used copies are available for \$12 or less (used, often much less).
- *Yale Daily News Guide to Writing College Papers*. List price \$14; new and used copies are available for \$12 or less.
- *Write for College* by Sebranek, Kemper, and Meyer. List price \$24 (used copies can be found for virtually the price of shipping alone).

Section 4: *Plagiarism, Quoting, Summarizing, and Paraphrasing.*

The issue of plagiarism and the proper use of the writing techniques of quoting, summarizing, and paraphrasing are vital, but often overlooked, topics when discussing writing; that's why they are being mentioned here. Many writers do not really know what plagiarism is (and is not). Nor do they know how to decide whether to quote, summarize, or paraphrase their source material, or indeed how to do so (an issue which often leads to inadvertent plagiarism).

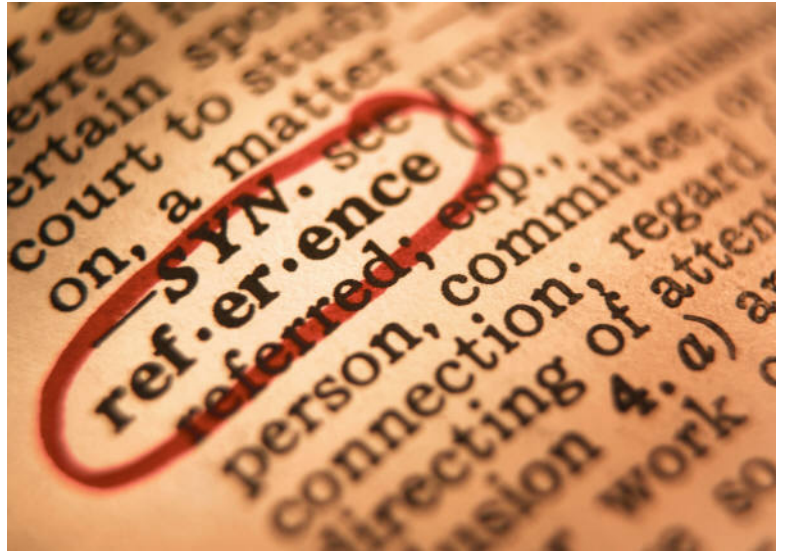
An excellent guide to plagiarism is *The Challenge of Plagiarism*. This publication is available online at the TROY Global Campus Library site <http://uclibrary.troy.edu> in the *Information and Help* section.

Paraphrasing, summarizing, and quoting are each **very different** from one another. Learn **when** and **how** to paraphrase, summarize, and quote. Within the guide *The Challenge of Plagiarism*, linked above, is a section devoted to this topic. Included are links to several first-rate resources that can quickly and easily teach you about paraphrasing, summarizing, and quoting.

Section 5: Documentation

Documentation tells the reader where you got your information . . . it documents it; it is made up of your citations, references, footnotes, works cited, bibliography, etc. Unless you are writing a paper that is 100% your personal opinion or a work of fiction, you will need to document your sources.

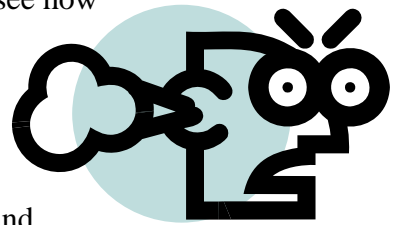
An important, but often overlooked, aspect of documentation is the issue of plagiarism and the proper use of the writing techniques of quoting, summarizing, and paraphrasing. These issues are covered in Section 4 of this guide.



Documentation is a critical part of scholarly writing. It provides a guide by which the reader can authenticate the information on which you base your arguments and allows the reader to assess how well you researched your topic and were able to synthesize your findings to support your viewpoint. The following points of information may assist you with the documentation process.

1. Know what your instructor expects in terms of reference and citation formats. These typically take the form of APA (American Psychological Association), MLA (Modern Language Association), or Turabian style.
2. Purchase the most recent edition of the appropriate style guide. Note: This information was checked in June, 2008, but you should not purchase/use one of these sources until you make sure that it is still the most recent edition.
 - o For APA: *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, Fifth Edition.
 - o For MLA: *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, Sixth Edition.
 - o For Turabian: *Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, Seventh Edition.
3. Citing electronic resources, e.g., online databases or Internet sites, is often a difficult process which is only briefly covered in the aforementioned publications. Therefore, to assist you in this process, the Library provides the guide *Citing the World Wide Web in Style*. This publication is available online at the TROY Global Campus Library site <http://uclibrary.troy.edu> in the *Information and Help* section. It covers APA, MLA, and Turabian.
4. Troy University has a Writing Center <<http://troy.troy.edu/writingcenter>>. Note that several of its handouts, although not a substitute for the books listed above, are designed to assist you with APA and MLA style.

5. Web sites that purport to present guides to citation style are frequently inaccurate, incomplete, and out of date; that is why it is recommended that you use the current, print resource (book) as your style guide. A select list of recommended online sources is linked within each section (APA, MLA, Turabian) of *Citing the World Wide Web in Style*. This publication is available online at the TROY Global Campus Library site <http://uclibrary.troy.edu> in the *Information and Help* section.
6. Within articles or Web sites may be information on how to cite that individual article or Web page itself; for the most part, that information should be ignored. It may help to clarify the author, title, or publication information, but the style itself (order of elements, capitalization, spacing, etc.) is usually never correct.
7. **Developing good documentation habits.**
 - Keep a complete and accurate written record of all of your sources (articles, books, Web sites, etc.). Not only should you record what they are (the author, title, date, etc.), but also where you found them and how, e.g., "I found the book by Colonel Mustard in the Library by using an author search in the PsycBooks database on April 20th, 2008."
 - Keep photocopies, printouts, or computer files of articles or Web sites that you use.
 - For print books, make a copy of the pages near the front of the book with all of the bibliographic information, e.g., the title, author, publisher, date, etc.
 - If you can't figure out how to cite a particular item or are not sure if you are correct (or if that's how your instructor wants it), check with your instructor.
 - Keep copies of your old papers handy, so that you can see how you referenced similar items in the past.
8. **Documentation can be frustrating...a real pain!** It's not your imagination. There is a naturally tendency to learn just enough about documentation to get by, and also of doing documentation only at the very end of the writing process. Both of these bad habits lead to poor scholarship and waste your time. Documentation will never be fun, but it can be a little less torturous if you invest some time into actually understanding it. Your style manual is a tool; learn how to use it! Make notes in the margins, use paperclips and adhesive notes to mark pages, highlight in the table of contents and index. You should not try to remember how to cite every different kind of source, but with practice (and some good notes), you will develop skills and confidence that enable you to successfully prepare your documentation without getting too frustrated.



Section 6: Proofreading

Reading your paper and proofreading it are two very different things! Proofreading involves specific knowledge, techniques, and skills that you learn and develop. The following is a summary of *Proofreading a College Paper: Guidelines and Checklist*. This publication is available online at the TROY Global Campus Library site <http://uclibrary.troy.edu> in the *Information and Help* section. Please refer to the complete document for details.

GUIDELINES

- Proofreading comes last—after writing, editing, and revising.
- If you can, get someone else to help you.
- Proofread one line or sentence at a time from the **end** of the paper.
- Use a blank sheet in order to ensure that you can read only sentence at a time.
- Read aloud. **Read aloud. READ ALOUD.**
- Don't proofread right after you have finished writing. Take breaks.
- Allow enough time to proofread several times (over a period of days, if possible).
- Keep a personal checklist of errors that you frequently make.
- Learn how to use the word processor to help you look for mistakes.
- Keep a dictionary, thesaurus, grammar book, and style manual nearby.
- THIS IS KEY: Don't look for all types of errors at the same time.
- **Relax.** Do what you can in a manner that works for you.

CHECKLIST

Formatting (correctness/consistency or inconsistency)

- Page margins, line spacing, heading style, indention
- Font face and size
- Underlined, *italicized*, and **bold face** text

Documentation Check that your citations and references match each other.

Grammar and usage

- Grammar, especially *Subject-predicate agreement* and *Pronoun-antecedent agreement*.
- Sentences (using complete sentences, but not run-ons).
- Plurals and possessives.
- Usage.

Spelling Use a spell-checking program, your eyes, ears, and a dictionary.

Mechanics

- Abbreviations and acronyms; Capitalization; Numbers; Parenthesis and brackets; Punctuation; Quotations and quotation marks; Repeated or omitted words; Spacing; Word division.

Section 7: *Additional Suggestions*

In an effort to avoid including everything and anything on the subject of writing, here are just a few miscellaneous points.

Ask your instructors if they will show you examples of what they consider to be a good paper—what they expect both structurally and intellectually.

Develop your computer and word-processing skills. A computer or word processor can be your enemy or your ally ... the choice is yours.

Learn from your mistakes. Pay attention to errors which are identified by spelling and grammar checking programs, or that are found during the proofreading process. Keep and read through your graded (corrected) papers.

Consider that writing well takes an investment of time and ... yes ... money, but it is an investment that yields dividends in both the short and long term. For less than the cost of one or two textbooks, you can develop a collection of writing resources that will benefit you for years to come.

Read. Reading scholarly/academic journals and books is an excellent way to improve your college writing. Bear in mind that writing for other media, e.g., popular books and magazines, mainstream journalism, etc., is done according to rules that, while perfectly acceptable to that format or genre, is not suitable for most types of college writing.

Section 8: Other Book Recommendations

Sections 2 and 3 of this guide address, respectively, grammar and writing resources.

In written as well as spoken communication, it is critical to select one's words wisely. The following tools can help you to do just that. This section covers:

- **Style**
- **Vocabulary**
- **Usage**
- **Thesauri**
- **Dictionaries**



What do the professionals use? Style books!

Firefighters don't get their axes from the local home improvement store; the cheese slicer at the deli counter didn't come from a holiday shopping catalog; and professional journalists don't use grammar books from the dollar store—they use, among other things, a *style book*.

Style books are very-well-organized compendiums of facts and references aimed at reporters; and define usage, spelling, and grammar for editors. They are very handy all-in-one reference tools.

Recommended style books:

- *The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law*. This is the guide that Troy University follows for its writing style; NOT research paper writing, but rather writing of their news releases, internal memos, etc. Used copies of the 2002 edition can be purchased from Amazon.com or Half.com for less than \$2, and for most writers it is ninety-eight percent as useful as the newest edition. The newest edition lists for \$18; new and used copies are available for \$13 or less.
- *The New York Times Manual of Style and Usage*. List price \$17, used copies of the 2002 edition (which is the newest) can be purchased from Amazon.com or Half.com for less than \$7.
- *The Canadian Press Stylebook*. \$34 from the Canadian Press
<http://www.cp.org/books.aspx?id=182>

Vocabulary

The benefits of improving your vocabulary should be self-evident, so let's go straight to the recommendations.

- *Fiske Word Power* by Edward Fiske, Jane Mallison, and Margery Mandell. List price \$12; new and used copies are available for \$10 or less.
- *Merriam-Webster's Vocabulary Builder*. List price \$6.
- *The Words You Should Know: 1200 Essential Words Every Educated Person Should Be Able to Use and Define* by David Olsen. List price \$10.

Usage

Usage is the term used in this guide to refer to the selection of the correct or most appropriate word or phrase, for example, who/whom, which/that, effect/affect, accept/except, among/between, e.g./i.e., if/whether, libel/slander, imply/infer, meantime/meanwhile, etc.

The Right Word! How to Say What You Really Mean. This volume is composed primarily of "Tricky Words from A to Z." All the major "problem words" are covered as well as a generous supply of good vocabulary words, i.e. words that are good for a well-educated person to know. A nice feature is the use of a star-shaped graphic to indicate entries of what the author terms "special importance." List price \$13, new and used copies are \$11 or less.

Woe Is I: The Grammarphobe's Guide to Better English in Plain English. Covers the vast majority of words one is likely to misuse, and does so in a reader-friendly fashion. Divided into several sections, this book has a conversational tone and uses longer-than-average examples. List price \$14; new and used copies are available for \$11 or less.

Bryson's Dictionary of Troublesome Words: A Writer's Guide to Getting It Right by Bill Bryson. Organized in a straight-forward alphabetical listing with clear and concise examples, this guide lists all of the troublesome words that you are likely to encounter. Also included are numerous other words, especially proper nouns (well known persons [both real and fictional], brands of products, and place names [both real and fictional]). This one has a more academic feel than the first two. On the plus side, this book contains more terms than the first two books on this list. On the minus side, it is more difficult for the user to simply find and review a core group of problem words. List price \$13 (soft cover), available for \$6 or less (used hardback)

A Dictionary of Modern English Usage, 2nd edition, by H.W. Fowler. This classic is a reference book, not a casual read. Its 700+ pages contain detailed explanations and examples for the usage of thousands of words. I recommend the second edition (which can be purchased used for only a dollar or two plus shipping), rather than the third edition (a very different work entirely).

The Careful Writer: A Modern Guide to English Usage by Theodore M. Bernstein. Although clearly a reference book, this guide is so well written and pleasantly laid out, that it would make a nice "read." \$18 is the list price of the newest reprint (1995), but for nominal fee one can purchase a used copy of either that edition or an equally useful (identical text) one from the '60s or '70s.

Thesauruses

The difference between the almost right word and the right word is the difference between the lightning-bug and the lightning. *Mark Twain*

FYI: Although the term *thesauri* is commonly used more often than the term *thesauruses*, both are proper plural forms of the word thesaurus.

The thesaurus built into Microsoft Word is extremely poor. Likewise, online thesauri are completely inadequate. The best thesauri are printed ones; fortunately, they are extremely low-cost books.

Thesauri come primarily in two types; those arranged by **category**, and those arranged **alphabetically** (available both in print format and as hand-held electronic device). The following are reviews of category and alphabetical thesauri, one mixed-type thesaurus, and several electronic ones.

Category thesauri:

The organization of category thesauri allows them to be more powerful than their alphabetical counterparts in terms of their ability to guide users to just the right word. The downside is that it takes longer to locate the word you are looking for—there is an alphabetical index of words at the back of the book which refers users to the appropriate category in the front.

Roget's is **the** name to associate with category thesaurus. Bear in mind that the word *Roget's* is not, in and of itself, copyrighted; so you will find numerous *Roget's* thesauruses out there, so don't buy just any one. There are really only two *Roget's* to consider.

Roget's International Thesaurus (published by HarperCollins). This is the "real" Roget's. Now in its 6th edition, it is the direct descendent of Dr. Peter Roget's first thesaurus, published in 1852. \$6 new, used paperback copies can be found for basically the price of shipping alone. Likewise, new and used hard covers are very inexpensive. This is an excellent resource, but the next item is probably the better choice.

Bartlett's Roget's Thesaurus (published by Little, Brown and Company). This is an updated *Roget's*. List price \$22; new and used copies are available for \$15 or less (used, often much less).

From the book's dust jacket: "Working from scratch, a team of expert lexicographers in Britain completely revamped Roget's original language-classification system, preserving his method but substituting new subject categories that more accurately represent contemporary thinking. Next, a team of American lexicographers spent more than two years revising, updating, and Americanizing the work . . ."

Alphabetical thesauri:

The Cambridge Thesaurus of American English. This book allows you to find synonyms very quickly. You can just turn to the word you are looking for and be presented with a concise and well-ordered list of alternative words without having to wade through definitions or examples. List price \$26; used copies often much less. Troy University students, faculty, and staff may access this book free of charge via the *NetLibrary* database.

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus. With the same look and feel as their world-class Collegiate Dictionary, this is an excellent thesaurus. Entries provide a brief definition of the word (only if it is needed for clarification) and then a list of synonyms (although typically fewer than *Random House*. List price \$19; new and used copies are available for \$13 or less.

Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of Synonyms. This work goes beyond the typical thesaurus in that for many of the entries it provides detailed discussions that explain the subtle differences among the synonyms, and provides usage examples showing the words in context. An excellent alternative to a more traditional thesaurus. List price \$23; new and used copies are available for \$16 or less.

Oxford American Writer's Thesaurus. Brief examples are followed by a longer-than-average list of synonyms. List price (hard cover) is \$40, new and used copies retail for \$27 or less. Used soft cover copies are \$5 or less.

Random House Webster's College Thesaurus. The text of this book is very easy on the eyes. Entries include a brief example sentence followed by numerous synonyms. Excellent for quickly finding synonyms. List price \$23; new and used copies are available for \$16 or less.

A mixed-type thesaurus:

Choose the Right Word by S.I. Hayakawa (Eugene Ehrlich, Revising Editor) is a ". . . unique blend of thesaurus, dictionary, and manual of English usage . . ." Arranged alphabetically, entries provide a concise and eye-pleasing list of synonyms. Following that are easy-to-read and informative usage notes for the main entry word and each of its synonyms. The main "trick" is that you may need to use the index at the back of the book to find the main entry under which the word you have in mind is listed, i.e., not every

word has a main entry. For example: There is a main entry for the term *lie*. Included in that entry are the synonyms falsehood, fib, prevarication, rationalization, and untruth (and usage notes for each one). If the word you wanted to look up was *lie*, then you could find it by just turning, alphabetically, to it. If, however, you were looking for the word *fib*, you would not find a main entry for it; you would therefore need to look in the index in the back of the book (which provides an alphabetical index of every term in the book) to determine under which entry *fib* is listed, i.e., it is listed under *lie*. This book provides a wealth of information with only nominally more effort than a straight alphabetical thesaurus. List price \$22; new and used copies are available for \$16 or less.

Electronic thesauri

CD-ROM:

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary & Thesaurus, Electronic Edition. The content is the same as the two, separate print sources. You can download the content to your hard drive, eliminating the need to keep the CD-ROM handy. List price \$15; new and used copies are available for \$11 or less.

One version of the print book *Webster's New World College Dictionary* includes a CD-ROM dictionary and thesaurus.

Handheld electronic device:

Don't bother looking for a stand-alone electronic thesaurus—the products of this type combine a dictionary and thesaurus. I have not personally tried these, but online reviews are mixed for the less expensive ones . . . *Spelling Ace & Thesaurus* (list \$25/retail \$18) and *Merriam-Webster Dictionary & Thesaurus* (list \$60/retail \$32); both manufactured by Franklin. Users rate the higher-end products much more favorably. The two to look for are the Sharp Electronics PW-E550 Electronic Dictionary (includes Oxford American Thesaurus of Current English) and the Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Electronic Speaking Dictionary and Thesaurus (by Franklin). The Sharp lists for \$120 and retails for \$86. The Franklin lists for \$130 and retails for slightly less.

USB drive:

Franklin MWD-170 USB Merriam-Webster Dictionary/Thesaurus. A unique device, this device looks like a USB flash drive because it is one. An intriguing alternative to CD-ROM or handheld. Lists for \$50 and retails for about \$30.

Dictionaries

"Dictionaries are like watches; the worst is better than none, and the best cannot be expected to go quite true." *Samuel Johnson*

Dictionaries are word tools that can be used to check a word's spelling, pronunciation, capitalization, usage, division, function, and history. As far as affordable, collegiate dictionaries go, there is a small handful of choices. In looking for a dictionary, bear in mind that the word *Webster's* is not, in and of itself, copyrighted; so you will find numerous *Webster's* dictionaries out there, so don't buy just any one. There is one "real" *Webster's*, and a few other good ones that bear the *Webster's* name.

A first-rate (and entertaining) review of collegiate dictionaries, "Word Up: Which dictionary is the best?", by YiLing Chen-Josephson, can be found online at <http://www.slate.com/id/2091949>

For recommendations on electronic dictionaries, refer to the information on *electronic thesauri*, presented on the previous page.

Of note: Unlike most other dictionaries, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* and *Webster's New World College Dictionary* both present definitions historically (old to new), instead of the by most common usage first.

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. If you don't want to spend time shopping around, it is hard to go wrong with this one. This is the "real" Webster's—the descendent of Noah Webster's original 1828 edition. See "Of note," above. Many entries include not only place of origin (when known or of importance) for many words, but also the date of origin. List price \$22; new and used copies are available for \$15 or less. Available for a few dollars more is an edition that includes a CD-ROM version of the dictionary.

Oxford American College Dictionary. Includes a greater number of biographical references than many other collegiate dictionaries. Includes references for numerous phrases, e.g., under the entry for the word *strut*, is a phrase entry for *strut your stuff*. Unlike *Merriam-Webster's*, most words do not include historical data, i.e., country and date of the origin of the word. New and used copies are \$20 or less. Suggestion: This dictionary is a pared-down version of the more extensive (and expensive) *New Oxford American Dictionary* (list price \$60 for the 2nd edition [2005]). A budget-conscious choice would be a used (\$20) copy of the 2nd edition or even of the 1st edition, 2001 (\$10 or less).

Webster's New World College Dictionary. A solid, straightforward dictionary. See "Of note," above. List price \$25; new and used copies are available for \$17 or less. Available for a few dollars more is an edition that includes a CD-ROM dictionary and thesaurus.

Random House Webster's College Dictionary. A solid, straightforward dictionary. Common meanings are presented first. Includes a CD-ROM version of the dictionary. List price \$27; new and used copies are available for \$18 or less.

American Heritage College Dictionary. A solid, straightforward dictionary. Common meanings are presented first. Includes numerous photographs and drawings. Includes a CD-ROM version of the dictionary. List price \$27; new and used copies are available for \$18 or less. Used copies of the current (4th) edition) without the CD-ROM are about \$7.