The Elements of Style: A Prescriptive American English Writing Style Guide (Writing Style Guides)

William Strunk Jr., E. B. White

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William Strunk, Jr.

And

E. B. White

This book aims to give in brief space the principal requirements of plain English style. It aims to lighten the task of instructor and student by concentrating attention (in Chapters II and III) on a few essentials, the rules of usage and principles of composition most commonly violated. In accordance with this plan it lays down three rules for the use of the comma, instead of a score or more, and one for the use of the semicolon, in the belief that these four rules provide for all the internal punctuation that is required by nineteen sentences out of twenty. Similarly, it gives in Chapter III only those principles of the paragraph and the sentence which are of the widest application. The book thus covers only a small portion of the field of English style. The experience of its writer has been that once past the essentials, students profit most by individual instruction based on the problems of their own work, and that each instructor has his own body of theory, which he may prefer to that offered by any textbook.

The numbers of the sections may be used as references in correcting manuscript.

The writer's colleagues in the Department of English in Cornell University have greatly helped him in the preparation of his manuscript. Mr. George McLane Wood has kindly consented to the inclusion under Rule 10 of some material from his Suggestions to Authors.

The Elements of Style is a prescriptive American English writing style guide in numerous editions. The original was composed by William Strunk Jr., in 1918, and published by Harcourt, in 1920, comprising eight "elementary rules of usage", ten "elementary principles of composition", "a few matters of form", a list of 49 "words and expressions commonly misused", and a list of 57 "words often misspelled". E. B. White much enlarged and revised the book for publication by Macmillan, in 1959. That was the first edition of the so-called "Strunk & White", which Time named in 2011 one of the 100 best and most influential books written in English since 1923.

Cornell University English professor William Strunk, Jr. wrote The Elements of Style in 1918 and privately published it in 1919, for in-house use at the university. (Harcourt republished it in 52-page format in 1920.) Later, for publication, he and editor Edward A. Tenney revised it as The Elements and Practice of Composition (1935). In 1957, at The New Yorker, the style guide reached the attention of E.B. White, who had studied writing under Strunk in 1919 but had since forgotten "the little book" that he described as a "forty-three-page summation of the case for cleanliness, accuracy, and brevity in the use of English". Weeks

later, White wrote a feature story about Strunk's devotion to lucid English prose.

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