



Garner's Modern American Usage

By Bryan A. Garner

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Since first appearing in 1998, *Garner's Modern American Usage* has established itself as the preeminent guide to the effective use of the English language. Brimming with witty, erudite essays on troublesome words and phrases, this book authoritatively shows how to avoid the countless pitfalls that await unwary writers and speakers whether the issues relate to grammar, punctuation, word choice, or pronunciation.

Now in the third edition, readers will find the "Garner's Language-Change Index," which registers where each disputed usage in modern English falls on a five-stage continuum from nonacceptability (to the language community as a whole) to acceptability, giving the book a consistent standard throughout. *Garner's Modern American Usage, 3e* is the first usage guide ever to incorporate such a language-change index, and the judgments are based both on Garner's own original research in linguistic corpora and on his analysis of hundreds of earlier studies. Another first in this edition is the panel of critical readers: 120-plus commentators who have helped Garner reassess and update the text, so that every page has been improved.

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Garner's Modern American Usage By Bryan A. Garner **Bibliography**

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 9 Up—Garner makes grammar fun, and readers will not only find elucidation but also moments of pure delight while browsing these pages. This edition includes more than 10,500 entries (an increase of approximately 1500 over the 2003 volume). There are preface statements from all three editions as well as new, worthwhile introductory essays: "Making Peace in the Language Wars" and "Ongoing Struggles of Garlic-Hangers" (a consideration of the descriptive vs. prescriptive debate). As always, the entries are not only filled with clear lessons about language usage, trends, and problems inherent in misuse, but they are also peppered with cleverly chosen examples of both usage and misusage. Entries run anywhere from a line or two about spelling ("espresso" not "expresso") to a full column (see "effete") or more (see "irregular verbs" and the table following). Added to this edition is a language-change index that rates where a disputed usage falls on a scale of 1-5 (with 1 being "widely rejected" and 5 being "universally accepted") so that readers can gauge the correctness of a phrase such as "Hopefully, it won't rain tomorrow." Garner isn't a snob, though. His book is the best of its kind in that it simply reports the facts in an engaging way; language evolves and usage changes. The book ends with a 46-page glossary of grammatical, rhetorical, and other language-related terms, and a 10-page time line of books on usage. An invaluable ready-reference tool.—*Herman Sutter, Saint Agnes Academy, Houston, TX*

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review The "prescriptive/descriptive" debate in usage is alive and well with this newest edition of Garner's readable work. Featuring more than 10,500 entries (up from 9,000), this edition features several enhancements. They include identifying poor usage with an asterisk before the terms and ranking certain entries with a "Language Change Index," which measures "how widely accepted various linguistic innovations have become." The scale is from 1 to 5, with 1 being rejected and 5 being fully accepted. For example, coupon being mispronounced "kyoo" instead of "koo" is given stage 4 ("the form is virtually universal but is opposed on cogent grounds by a few linguistic stalwarts"). More than 2,000 usages are ranked. Extras in the volume include a new essay from Garner ("The Ongoing Struggles of Garlic-Hangers") as well as the essay that appeared in the previous edition ("Making Peace in the Language Wars," in which Garner describes himself as being "a kind of descriptive prescriber") and a concluding 47-page glossary of grammatical terms and a time line of books on usage. The main focus remains Garner's entries and usage notes. They range from word entries that simply verify the spelling (mayonnaise), to those clarifying two terms (sight, site), to those where he offers his never dull opinions (such as holocaust, which he calls "one of our most hyperbolic words, beloved of jargonmongers and second-rate journalists"). But the longer essay entries on usage, ranging from the half-page Officialese to the 9-page Punctuation, are Garner's bread and butter. One would be tempted to say that this is clearly one of the best works on the topic, but doing so would be using one of Garner's weasel words (intensives such as clearly that "actually have the effect of weakening a statement"). Suffice it to say that it is highly recommended for most libraries. --Ken Black

Review

"Clearly one of the best works on the topic" --Booklist starred review "Whether taking those first steps on the road to good writing--namely, the avoidance of bad writing--or tending to further details of clarity, style, and organization, the writer-editor, like any artisan, needs guidance from a master. Such guidance is just what Garner's Modern American Usage provides, and lots of it." --Five Towns Jewish Times "Garner makes grammar fun, and readers will not only find elucidation but also moments of pure delight while browsing

these pages. As always, the entries are not only filled with clear lessons about language usage, trends, and problems inherent in misuse, but they are also peppered with cleverly chosen examples of both usage and misusage. [Garner's] book is the best of its kind in that it simply reports the facts in an engaging way; language evolves and usage changes. An invaluable ready-reference tool." School Library Journal"Garner's book is by far the best on contemporary usage. For language lovers or for those attempting to find out how words are being used today, Garner's Modern American Usage is an indispensable tool." --Technical Communication

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