

Reviews of the Desktop Grammarian Series
By Dr. Robert T. Rhode and Eleanor Y. Stewart

Desktop Grammarian for Editors has been named a finalist in the USA Book Awards in the category of business reference. ... Stewart and Rhode are nationally recognized experts on grammar. More than a dozen leading grammar authorities have endorsed their work. – *Mpulse*

You and Eleanor Y. Stewart have done superb work. The book offers some of the most lucid exposition of rules and conventions that I have seen in any textbook. A notable addition to the book is the inclusion of style tips in each chapter, which should help students apply the concepts in their own writing.
– Dr. Jonathan S. Cullick

It really is an outstanding resource. – Jean Reynolds

It is one of the best grammar books I have used. – Jeff Fox

I am still frequently referring to your grammar book, and it has really come in handy! – Rebekka Meeks

I have your grammar book, the editing one, at work and referred to it today. I do some proofreading at work for some of our brochures, letters, and miscellaneous items and have been very thankful for concise examples and explanations ... – Sandra Seidman

I'm particularly interested in the lack of prescriptive use of grammar, the discussion of complexities and ambiguities inherent in grammar, and the differences between effective communication and proper usage. ... I love that the book begins with grammar. So many books on the market begin with the actual writing process when so many students today don't know the parts of speech. A text needs to focus on the basics first as this one does. I love the simplicity of the definitions and the tables provided in chapter one. Style tips are great—they are exactly the kinds of things that grab students' attention. Topics chosen for them offer practical advice and examples that students need. I also think the "strong" and "weak" distinction is excellent. Students too often don't understand the differences in quality of their writing—especially when a professor uses terms like "strong" and "weak." A text that uses the same language will reinforce the way writing works. [The greatest strengths of this project are] its commitment to conciseness and filling a role other handbooks don't; [its ability] to speak to students in language they can understand when explaining concepts that could be confusing; [its] introductory information on MLA—I've never seen this material presented so

clearly before; [and its] difference between “stronger” and “weaker” usage. ... [I]t’s definitely needed. – anonymous expert reviewer

My impressions of the authors’ approach are very positive. I like the fact that the authors use a wide variety of scholarly examples and also strive to give succinct advice to students. Their focus for the handbook is clear, and they have given a good rationale in support of their project. ... I find the text to be clear, concise, and straightforward. ... I like the examples used; the writers have worked to use quite a variety of texts and media to draw examples from. ... The sections you’ve sent of [*Desktop Grammarian*] show that it would stand up well to *A Writer’s Reference*. ... The greatest strength of this project is its focus on offering a practical, contemporary grammar. ... This text provides a scholarly coverage of grammar and usage. This handbook gives good, in-depth examples and should answer many questions and clarify grammar debates and issues for students. If I were teaching introductory freshman composition, I would definitely consider adopting this text. – anonymous expert reviewer

I believe that the approach and goals of the project ... are refreshingly fundamental. I also admire the writers’ attempt to resist being prescriptive. ... I also agree with the writers’ efforts to avoid the severe tone and pomposity of many traditional, prescriptive grammar handbooks. ... [*Desktop Grammarian*] is aimed [at an audience] that needs reassurance about the basics of grammar and sentence construction. It is properly succinct and straightforward rather than verbose and ruminative. I think that [*Desktop Grammarian*] is a meaningful contribution to the handbook market because it combines the component of modernized grammar with an attempt to be more descriptive than evaluative, more advising in tone than prescribing. ... The greatest strength of this project is its focus on offering a practical, contemporary grammar. This text is a scholarly (more thorough) version of “English for Dummies,” if such a thing exists. My colleagues who teach basic English skills will no longer have a reason for avoiding grammar. This handbook demystifies grammar. – anonymous expert reviewer

I really like the approach and think the goals are not only admirable but also realistic. ... I also liked the idea of pre- and post-tests in the book. ... The material is very accessible and fairly “easy” as the title indicates. ... [Concise], streamlined, easy to follow, accessible, good theory behind it ... – anonymous expert reviewer

I find the stated goals for the project appealing. ... I am looking for a text that “seldom prescribes, resorting to prescription only when current dictionaries differentiate between standard and substandard terms” and that “explores the norms of self-expression in American English without

discounting the ways that alternate grammars enable their users to communicate.” In my upper-division class, Functional Grammar, I take this kind of approach, and I have found Martha Kolln’s book, *Rhetorical Grammar*, a good fit with my approach, although the text is sometimes perplexing for undergraduates. I would very much appreciate a textbook—such as what these writers seem to be proposing—that takes a similarly rhetorical approach to grammar but that uses clear, direct language. ... The biggest strength is the stated goal of creating a handbook that is not overly prescriptive and that breaks from the prescriptive tradition of previous handbooks: I would certainly embrace a handbook that “explores the norms of self-expression in American English without discounting the ways that alternate grammars enable their users to communicate.” ... The most compelling thing is the level of language the writers use—I think it would be comprehensible to students. – anonymous expert reviewer

The proposal clearly states that the goal for the publication is a distinctive approach towards composition through instruction in grammar. This strategy will be a welcome one to many faculty who have found the majority of their students lacking a strong foundation in grammar and, therefore, [are] helpless to correct most of their writing problems. The Table of Contents of [*Desktop Grammarian*] is very clear and descriptive, indicating a logical progression from the parts of speech of individual words, on to the discussion of word groups, sentence structures, writing strategies, research approaches, and documentation formats. The sample chapters are clearly written, logically organized, and concise. Each part is developed through precise examples appropriate for mature students. ... The authors have also effectively highlighted style tips containing useful information for students trying to find ways to correct their errors and improve their writing. In addition, there is up-to-date information on using internet research tools and citations. Both Aaron’s *Little, Brown Compact Handbook* and Hacker’s *A Writer’s Reference* are too bulky for students to use easily, even though I have used both for lack of better texts. Both begin with writing in general before moving on to look at sentences and punctuation, then examine research techniques and documentation formats, a somewhat haphazard plan of organization. ... [*Desktop Grammarian*], on the other hand, goes from the smallest component parts and structures of individual sentences to essays as a whole. In this way, students learn to master such writing strategies as coordination, parallelism, or subordination in miniature first before going on to apply these same techniques to paragraphs, essays, and research papers. This is a logical, clear progression for giving students the necessary tools to improve their writing. ... The approach of [*Desktop Grammarian*] offers a new strategy for teaching writing, something quite *different* from other available handbooks with which I am familiar. It offers faculty who wish to approach composition through grammar instruction a

text that will enable them to do this effectively. To my knowledge, there is no other handbook like it on the market today. – anonymous expert reviewer

I found it very comprehensive. It will serve me, and others, very well. I like the tips and the great examples. – Jim Pierce, technical writer and editor, U.S. Navy