

**HANDBOOK OF COMPOSITION: A
COMPENDIUM OF RULES REGARDING GOOD
ENGLISH, GRAMMAR, SENTENCE
STRUCTURE, PARAGRAPHING, MANUSCRIPT
ARRANGEMENT, PUNCTUATION, SPELLING,
ESSAY WRITING, AND LETTER WRITING**

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Handbook of Composition: A Compendium of Rules regarding Good English, Grammar, Sentence Structure, Paragraphing, Manuscript Arrangement, Punctuation, Spelling, Essay Writing, and Letter Writing by Edwin C. Woolley

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HANDBOOK OF COMPOSITION

A Compendium of Rules regarding Good English, Grammar, Sentence Structure, Paragraphing, Manuscript Arrangement, Punctuation, Spelling, Essay Writing, and Letter writing. xxi+239 pages.

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MANUSCRIPT ARRANGEMENT,
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ESSAY WRITING, AND
LETTER WRITING

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I WILL not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them. Yea, I think it meet to stir you up by putting you in remembrance.

—II PETER 1, 12, 13.

92X587

PREFACE

This manual is designed for two uses. It may be used, first, by students of composition for reference, at the direction of the instructor, in case of errors in themes. Second, it may be used for independent reference by persons who have writing of any kind to do and who want occasional information on matters of good usage, grammar, spelling, punctuation, paragraphing, manuscript-arrangement, or letter-writing.

The aim of the book is not scientific, but practical. The purpose is to make clear the rules in regard to which many people make mistakes. No material has been put into the book for the sake of formal completeness. Many statements that would be essential to a treatise designed to exhaust the subjects here discussed (a treatise, for instance, on grammar, or composition-structure, or punctuation) have been omitted because they concern matters about which the persons who may use the book do not need to be told. In the knowledge and the observance of the rules fixed by good usage and suggested by common sense for the expression of thoughts in English and the representation of them on paper, there are many widely prevalent deficiencies, some natural enough, some very odd, but all shared by many people. The purpose of this manual is simply to help correct some of these deficiencies.

Some of the rules in this book, making no mention of exceptions, modifications, or allowable alternatives, may perhaps be charged with being dogmatic. They are dogmatic — purposely so. Suppose a youth, astray and confused in a maze of city streets, asks the way to a certain place. If one enumerates to him the several possible routes, with comments and admonitions and cautions about each, he will probably continue astray and confused. If one sends him peremptorily on one route, not mentioning permissible deviations or equally good alternative ways, the

chance is much greater that he will reach his destination. Likewise, the erring composer of anarchic discourse can best be set right by concise and simple directions. This is one reason for the stringency of some of the rules. There is another reason; let me use another parable in explaining it. A student of piano-playing is held rigidly, during the early period of his study, to certain rules of finger movement. Those rules are sometimes varied or ignored by musicians. But the student, in order to progress in the art, must for a certain time treat the rules as stringent and invariable; the variations and exceptions are studied only at a later stage of his progress. So, in acquiring skill in the art of composition, it is necessary for most students to observe rigidly and invariably rules to which masters of the art make exceptions. I believe that Rules 63, 69, 78, 98, 99, 112, and 115, for example, should be so treated by most apprentices in composition.

A word about the literary obligations I have incurred. So far as concerns my indebtedness to that great common fund of grammatical and rhetorical doctrine on which he who will may draw, it may truly be said of me, as it has been said of Homer,

"What he thought he might require
He went and took."

To individual authors I may owe debts of which I am not aware; for when a man has accumulated a store of thoughts, some from individual writers, some from many writers in common, and some, perhaps, from his own psychic processes, he inevitably forgets the source of many elements of the mass. I know, however, that my thanks are due to Professors Adams Sherman Hill, William Dwight Whitney, Alphonso G. Newcomer, John Duncan Quackenbos, Fred Newton Scott, and Joseph Villiers Denney, for a number of ideas suggested by my acquaintance with their works.

I gratefully acknowledge here my obligation to Professor Frank Gaylord Hubbard, of the University of Wisconsin, and to Miss Rose M. Kavana, of the Medill High School in Chicago, who gave me much acute and valuable criticism

during the preparation of the manuscript; and to several gentlemen (unknown to me) who, at the instance of the publishers, suggested some much-needed emendations before the book went to press, and also during its passage through the press. Though the book is probably not what Captain Costigan would call a "meritorious performance," it is in many respects nearer that character than it would be but for the generous aid of these known and unknown counselors.

E. C. W.

MADISON, WISCONSIN,
October 18, 1901.

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¹ For detailed synopses of the numbered rules and of the exercises, see pages x-xx.