

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen  
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo  
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm  
Garnett Engels Byron Schiller  
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka  
Cotton Dostoyevsky Hall  
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Willis  
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac  
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane  
Burroughs Verne  
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch  
Homer Tolstoy Whitman  
Darwin Thoreau Twain  
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott  
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte  
London Descartes Cervantes Wells Hesse  
Poe Aristotle Wells Voltaire Cooke  
Hale James Hastings Shakespeare Chambers Irving  
Bunner Richter Chekhov da Shaw Wodehouse  
Doré Dante Swift Pushkin Alcott  
Newton



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# **Practical Exercises in English**

Huber Gray Buehler

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**PRACTICAL  
EXERCISES IN ENGLISH**

**BY**

**HUBER GRAY BUEHLER**

**MASTER IN ENGLISH IN THE HOTCHKISS SCHOOL**

**ARRANGED FOR USE WITH  
ADAMS SHERMAN HILL'S  
"FOUNDATIONS OF RHETORIC"**

**NEW YORK CINCINNATI CHICAGO  
AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY**

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**W.P. 17**

## PREFACE

The art of using one's native tongue correctly and forcibly is acquired for the most part through imitation and practice, and is not so much a matter of knowledge as of habit. As regards English, then, the first duty of our schools is to set before pupils excellent models, and, in all departments of school-work, to keep a watchful eye on the innumerable acts of expression, oral and written, which go to form habit. Since, however, pupils come to school with many of their habits of expression already formed on bad models, our schools must give some attention to the special work of pointing out common errors of speech, and of leading pupils to convert knowledge of these errors into new and correct habits of expression. This is the branch of English teaching in which this little book hopes to be useful.

All the "Exercises in English" with which I am acquainted consist chiefly of "sentences to be corrected." To such exercises there are grave objections. If, on the one hand, the fault in the given sentence is not seen at a glance, the pupil is likely, as experience has shown, to pass it by and to change something that is not wrong. If, on the other hand, the fault is obvious, the exercise has no value in the formation of habit. Take, for example, two "sentences for correction" which I select at random from one of the most widely used books of its class: "I knew it was him," and "Sit the plates on the table." A pupil of any wit will at once see that the mistakes must be in "him" and "sit," and knowing that the alternatives are "he" and "set," he will at once correct the sentences without knowing, perhaps, why one form is wrong, the other right. He has not gained anything valuable; he has simply "slid" through his exercise. Moreover, such "sentences for correction" violate a fundamental principle of teaching English by setting before the impressionable minds of pupils bad models. Finally, such exercises are unnatural, because the habit which we hope to form in our pupils is not the habit of correcting mistakes, but the habit of avoiding them.

Correct English is largely a matter of correct choice between two or more forms of expression, and in this book an attempt has been made, as a glance at the pages will show, to throw the exercises, whenever possible, into a form consistent with this truth. Though a

pupil may *change* "who" to "whom" without knowing why, he cannot repeatedly *choose* correctly between these forms without strengthening his own habit of correct expression.

This book has been prepared primarily as a companion to Professor A.S. Hill's "Foundations of Rhetoric," in answer to the request of many teachers for exercises to use with that admirable work. [1] Without the friendly encouragement of Professor Hill the task would not have been undertaken, and to him above all others I am indebted for assistance in completing it. He has permitted me to draw freely on his published works; he has provided me with advance sheets of the revised edition of "Principles of Rhetoric;" he has put at my disposal much useful material gleaned from his own experience; he has read the manuscript and proofs, and, without assuming any responsibility for shortcomings, he has suggested many improvements. I am also indebted to Mr. E.G. Coy, Headmaster of the Hotchkiss School, for many valuable suggestions, and to my colleague, Mr. J.E. Barss, for assistance in the proof-reading.

The quotations from "The Century Dictionary" are made under an arrangement with the owners of the copyright of that work. I am also indebted to Professor Barrett Wendell, Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Co., and Messrs. Macmillan & Co. for permission to use brief quotations from their works.

H.G.B.

LAKEVILLE, CONN., *September*, 1895.

[1] See Appendix: Suggestions to Teachers.



# PRACTICAL EXERCISES IN ENGLISH

## CHAPTER I.

### OF GOOD USE

Why is it that for the purposes of English composition one word is not so good as another? To this question we shall get a general answer if we examine the effect of certain classes of expressions.

**Present Use.**—Let us examine first the effect produced by three passages in the authorized version of the English Bible—a version made by order of King James in 1611:—

"For these two years hath the famine been in the land, and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be *earing* nor harvest" (Gen. xlv. 6).

"O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? how long will ye love vanity, and seek after *leasing*?" (Psa. iv. 2).

"Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, but was *let* hitherto" (Rom. i. 18).

See also Gen. xxv. 29; Matt. iii 8; Acts viii. 3; 1 Thess. iv. 15.

An ordinary reader of our time cannot without assistance fully understand these passages, because the words "earing," "leasing," and "let" convey to his mind either no idea at all or a wrong idea. Two hundred and eighty years ago, when this translation of the Bible was made, these words were common words with plain meanings; but "earing" and "leasing" have since dropped out of common use, and "let" has acquired a different meaning; consequently an ordinary reader of the present time must consult a dictionary before he can be sure what the passages mean. Words and meanings which have gone out of use are called *obsolete*. There is not much temptation to use obsolete words; but the temptation sometimes comes. Therefore we note, as our first conclusion, that a person who wishes to be understood must avoid expressions and meanings which are not in *present use*.

**National Use.**—A boy from southern Pennsylvania was visiting in New York State. In the midst of some preparations for a fishing excursion he said to his host, "Shall I take my *gums* along?" His host burst out laughing and said, "Of course; did you think of taking them out of your mouth and leaving them at home?" [2] Unconsciously the boy had used a good English word in a sense peculiar to the district in which he lived; his host had understood the word in its proper sense.

On another occasion a gentleman who had just arrived at a hotel in Kennebunkport, Me., agreed to a proposal to "go down to the beach in the *barge*." Going to his room, he prepared for a little excursion on the river which flowed by the hotel. When he returned, he was greatly surprised to find his friends about to start for the beach in a *large omnibus*. Another gentleman once asked a young lady to go "*riding*" with him. At the appointed hour he drove to her house in a buggy, and she came down to meet him in her riding habit.

These incidents show that if we use expressions that are only local, or use words in local senses, we are liable either to be misunderstood or not to be understood at all. Obscurity also arises from the use of words in senses which are peculiar to a certain class or profession. For example, to a person who is not familiar with commercial slang, this sentence from the market columns of a newspaper is a puzzle:—

"Java coffees are *dull* and *easy*, though they are *statistically strong*."

The following directions for anchoring in a gale of wind are taken from a book called "How to Sail a Boat":—

"When everything is ready, bring the yacht *to the wind*, and let the sails shake *in the wind's eye*; and, so soon as she gets *stern-way*, let go the *best bower* anchor, taking care not to *snub her* too quickly, but to let considerable of the cable run out before checking her; then take a turn or two around the *knight-heads*," etc.

If a landsman's safety depended on his understanding these directions, there would not be much hope for him.

The following extract is from a newspaper report of a game of ball:—

"In the eighth inning Anson jumped from one box into the other and whacked a wide one into extreme right. It was a three-base jolt and was made when Gastright intended to force the old man to first. The Brooklyns howled and claimed that Anson was out, but McQuaid thought differently. Both teams were crippled. Lange will be laid up for a week or so. One pitcher was batted out of the box."

This narrative may seem commonplace to school-boys, but to their mothers and sisters it must seem alarming.

Our second conclusion, therefore, is that a person who wishes to be understood must avoid words and phrases that are not understood, and understood in the same sense, in every part of the country, and in every class or profession. [3]

**Reputable Use.**—Let us examine now the effect produced by a third kind of expression, namely, words and phrases "not used by writers and speakers of established reputation." [4] Let us take as our illustrations the familiar expressions, "He *done* it" and "Please *set* in this seat." Each of these expressions is common at the present time, and its meaning is instantly clear to any one who speaks English. But these expressions, not being used by well-informed and careful speakers, produce in the mind of a well-informed bearer an impression of vulgarity like that which we get from seeing a person eat with his knife. In language, as in manners and fashions, the law is found in the custom of the best people; and persons who wish to be classed as cultivated people must speak and write like cultivated people. There is no moral wrong in a person's saying "Please *set* in this seat," and if he does say it he will probably be understood; but persons who use this or any other expression which is not in reputable use run the risk of being classed as ignorant, affected, or vulgar.

**Good Use.**—It appears, therefore, that words and phrases, in order to be proper expressions for use in English prose, (1) must be in common use at the present time; (2) they must be used, and used in the same sense, in every part of the country, and in every class and profession; (3) they must be expressions used by writers and spea-

kers of established reputation. In other words, our expressions must be in *present*, *national*, and *reputable* use. Expressions which fulfil these three conditions are said to be in *good use*.

The next question that presents itself to one who wishes to use English correctly is, How am I to know what words and expressions are in good use?

**Conversation and Good Use.**—Good use cannot be determined solely by observing the conversation of our associates; for the chances are that they use many local expressions, some slang, and possibly some vulgarisms. "You often hear it" is not proof that an expression is in good use.

**Newspapers and Good Use.**—Nor can good use be learned from what we see in newspapers. Newspapers of high rank contain from time to time, especially in their editorial columns, some of the best modern prose, and much literature that has become standard was first printed in periodicals; but most of the prose in newspapers is written necessarily by contributors who do not belong to the class of "speakers or writers whom the world deems the best." As the newspaper in its news records the life of every day, so in its style it too frequently records the slang of daily life and the faults of ordinary conversation. A newspaper contains bits of English prose from hundreds of different pens, some skilled, some unskilled; and this jumble of styles does not determine good use.

**No one Book or Writer Decisive.**—Nor is good use to be learned from our favorite author, unsupported by other authority; not even, as we have seen, from the English Bible, when it stands alone. No writer, even the greatest, is free from occasional errors; but these accidental slips are not to be considered in determining good use. Good use is decided by the prevailing usage of the writers whose works make up permanent English literature, not by their inadvertencies. "The fact that Shakspeare uses a word, or Sir Walter Scott, or Burke, or Washington Irving, or whoever happens to be writing earnestly in Melbourne or Sidney, does not make it reputable. The fact that all five of these authorities use the word in the same sense would go very far to establish the usage. On the other hand, the fact that any number of newspaper reporters agree in usage does not make the usage reputable. The style of newspaper reporters is not

without merit; it is very rarely unreadable; but for all its virtue it is rarely a well of English undefiled." [5]

"Reputable use is fixed, not by the practice of those whom A or B deems the best speakers or writers, but by the practice of those whom the world deems the best, — those who are in the best repute, not indeed as to thought, but as to expression, the manner of communicating thought. The practice of no one writer, however high he may stand in the public estimation, is enough to settle a point; but the uniform or nearly uniform practice of reputable speakers or writers is decisive." [6]

**Good Reading the Foundation of Good Speaking and Writing.** — To the question how to become familiar with good use the first answer is, read the best literature. Language, like manners, is learned for the most part by imitation; and a person who is familiar with the language of reputable writers and speakers will use good English without conscious effort, just as a child brought up among refined people generally has good manners without knowing it. Good reading is indispensable to good speaking or writing. Without this, rules and dictionaries are of no avail. In reading the biographies of eminent writers, it is interesting to note how many of them were great readers when they were young; and teachers can testify that the best writers among their pupils are those who have read good literature or who have been accustomed to hear good English at home. The student of expression should begin at once to make the acquaintance of good literature.

**The Use of Dictionaries.** — To become acquainted with good literature, however, takes a long time; and to decide, by direct reference to the usage of the best writers, every question that arises in composition, is not possible for beginners. In certain cases beginners must go to dictionaries to learn what good use approves. Dictionaries do not make good use, but by recording the facts learned by professional investigators they answer many questions regarding it. To one who wishes to speak and write well a good dictionary is indispensable.

**"The Foundations of Rhetoric."** — Dictionaries, however, are not always a sufficient guide; for, being records, they aim to give *all* the senses in which a word is used, and do not always tell which sense

is approved by the best usage. Large dictionaries contain many words which have gone out of good use and other words which have not yet come into good use. Moreover, they treat of words only, not of constructions and long expressions. Additional help in determining good use is required by beginners, and this help is to be found in such books as Professor A.S. Hill's "Foundations of Rhetoric." The investigations of a specialist are there recorded in a convenient form, with particular reference to the needs of beginners and of those who have been under the influence of bad models. Common errors are explained and corrected, and the fundamental merits of good expression are set forth and illustrated.

**Purpose of these Exercises.**—In the following exercises, which are intended for drill on some of these elements of good expression, care has been taken to put the questions into the forms in which they arise in actual composition. The notes which precede the exercises are only hints; for full discussions of the principles involved the student must consult larger works.

**Some Con-  
venient  
Names**

Phrases that have gone out of use, said to be ARCHAIC or OBSOLETE.

Brand-new words which have not become established in good use: as, "burglarize," "enthuse," "electrocute."

BARBARISMS: Words and phrases not English; i.e., not authorized by good English use. The name comes from a Greek word meaning "foreign," "strange." { Phrases introduced from foreign countries (called FOREIGNISMS, ALIENISMS), or peculiar to some district or province (called PROVINCIALISMS). A phrase introduced from France is called a *Gallicism*; from England, an *Anglicism*. A phrase peculiar to America is called an *Americanism*. Similarly we have the terms *Latinism*, *Hellenism*, *Teutonymism*, etc. All these names may be applied also to certain kinds of Improperities and Solecisms.



	Most errors in the use of
IMPROPRIETIES:	English are
Good English	Improprieties,
words or phrases	which are far
used in wrong	} more com-
senses: as, "I	mon than
<i>guess</i> I'll go to	Barbarisms
bed;" "He is <i>stop-</i>	and Sole-
<i>ping</i> for a week at	cisms. No
the Berkshire	classification
Inn."	of them is
	here attempt-
	ed.

SOLECISMS: Constructions not English, commonly called cases of "bad grammar" or "false syntax": as, "She invited Mrs. Roe and I to go driving with her." "Solecism" is derived from *Soli*, the name of a Greek tribe who lived in Cilicia and spoke bad Greek.

SLANG is a general name for current, vulgar, unauthorized language. It may take the form of barbarism, impropriety, or solecism.

A COLLOQUIALISM is an expression peculiar to familiar conversation.

A VULGARISM is an expression peculiar to vulgar or ignorant people.

[2] This and the two following incidents are from the writer's own observation.

[3] A.S. Hill: Foundations of Rhetoric, p. 28.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

[5] Barrett Wendell: English Composition, p. 21.

[6] A.S. Hill: Principles of Rhetoric, revised edition, p. 16.

### EXERCISE I.

1. Make a list of the provincial expressions you can think of, and give their equivalents in national English.
2. Make a list of the slang or vulgar expressions you can think of,

and give their equivalents in reputable English.

3. Make a list of the words, forms, and phrases not in present use which you can find in the second chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, authorized version, and give their equivalents in modern English.

### EXERCISE II.

Which word in the following pairs should an American prefer? Consult Hill's "Foundations of Rhetoric," pp. 28-29: Coal, coals; jug, pitcher; street railway, tramway; post-card, postal-card; depôt, station.

### EXERCISE III.

1. Arrange the following words in two columns, putting in the first column words that are in good use, in the second, words that are not in good use. Consult Hill's "Foundations of Rhetoric," pp. 27-29: Omnibus, succotash, welkin, ere, née, depôt, veto, function (in the sense of social entertainment), to pan out, twain, on the docket, kine, gerrymander, carven, caucus, steed, to coast (on sled or bicycle), posted (informed), to watch out, right (very).

2. Give good English equivalents for the words which are not in good use.

## CHAPTER II.

### OF ARTICLES

**A** or **An**. [7]—The choice between these forms is determined by sound, not by spelling. Before a consonant sound "a" is used; before a vowel sound "an" is used.

[7] "Foundations," pp. 32-36.

### EXERCISE IV.

*Put the proper form, "a" or "an," before each of these expressions:—* Elephant, apple, egg, union of states, uniform, uninformed person, universal custom, umpire, Unitarian church, anthem, unfortunate man, united people, American, European, Englishman, one, high hill, horse, honorable career, hypocrite, humble spirit, honest boy,

hypothesis, history, historical sketch, heir, hundred, hereditary disease, household.

**The** or **A**. [8]— "The" is a broken-down form of the old English *thoet*, from which we also get "that," and is used to point out some particular person, thing, or class: as, "The headmaster of the school gave the boys permission." When "the" is used before the name of a particular class of persons or things it is called the "generic" article (from *genus*, "a class"): as, "None but the brave deserve the fair"; "The eagle is our national bird."

"An" ("a") is a broken-down form of the old English word *ane*, meaning "one." It is properly used when the object is thought of as one of a class: as, "There is an eagle in the zoological garden." It cannot properly be used before a word which is used as a class name, because a class name includes in its meaning more than "one."

**Superfluous and Omitted Articles.** [9]— The use of a superfluous "a" or "an" before a class name, especially after the words "sort" and "kind," is a common and obstinate error. We may say, "This is an eagle," meaning "one eagle." But we may not say, "An eagle is our national bird," "This is a rare kind of an eagle," or, "It is not worthy of the name of an eagle"; because in these sentences "eagle" is used as the name, not of a single bird, but of a class of birds, and includes in its meaning all the birds which belong to the class called "eagle." The sentences are equivalent to: "The kind of bird called 'eagle' is our national bird;" "This is a rare species of the class of birds called 'eagle;'" "It is not worthy of the name given to the birds which belong to the class called 'eagle.'"

[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

#### EXERCISE V.

*Tell the difference in meaning between:—*

1. The (a) house is on fire.
2. Yes, I heard (the) shouts in the street.
3. About eight o'clock (the) guests began to come.
4. Yes, I heard (the) noises in the next room.
5. The (an) elephant stood on a cask, and the (a) clown sat on the elephant's back.
6. The President has appointed a commission to investigate the

cause of (the) strikes.

7. Will he let us look at (the) stars through the (a) telescope?
8. (The) teacher and (the) pupil are interested in this question.
9. He told us about an (the) accident.
10. Fire is beautiful. The fire is beautiful.
11. He was a better scholar than (an) athlete.
12. A young and (a) delicate girl.
13. He liked the bread and (the) butter.
14. A pink and (a) lavender gown.
15. The wise and (the) good.
16. Wanted, a cook and (a) housemaid.
17. The black and (the) white cow.
18. The athlete, (the) soldier, (the) statesman, and (the) poet.
19. A secretary and (a) treasurer.
20. The corresponding and (the) recording secretary.
21. The honest, (the) wise, and (the) patriotic senators voted against the bill.
22. A cotton and (a) silk umbrella.
23. The tenth and (the) last chapter.

[9] "Foundations," pp. 34-39.

### EXERCISE VI.

*Insert the proper article ("a," "an," or "the") in each blank place in the following, if an article is needed; if no article is needed, leave the place blank: —*

1. I began to suffer from — — want of food.
2. There are two articles, the definite and — — indefinite.
3. He did not say what kind of — — horse he wanted to buy.
4. Did Macaulay die of — — heart disease?
5. Nouns have two numbers, — — singular and — — plural.
6. — — third and — — fourth page are to be learned.
7. — — third and — — fourth pages are to be learned.
8. Many names of — — states are derived from — — Indian tongues.
9. This is a curious species of — — rose.
10. Study carefully — — first and — — second chapters.
11. A black and — — white boy were walking together.
12. — — violet is my favorite flower; — — robin, my favorite bird.
13. There is an impenetrable veil between — — visible and — —