



The New Fowler's Modern English Usage

By R. W. Burchfield, Henry Watson Fowler

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First published in 1926, *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* is one of the most celebrated reference books of the twentieth century. Commonly known as "Fowler," after its inimitable author, H.W. Fowler, it has sold more than a million copies and maintained a devoted following over seven decades, in large part because of its charming blend of information and good humor, delivered in the voice of a genial if somewhat idiosyncratic schoolmaster. "Reading Fowler," William F. Buckley once noted, "provides instruction and knowledge and direction, but the whole of it is a sensual delight." And Jessica Mitford wrote that Fowler's style "has afforded me endless amusement and instruction through my very long life." The first place to turn for sensible advice on the thorny issues of grammar, meaning, and pronunciation, "Fowler" is one of those rare reference books that can also be read simply for pleasure.

Now this classic is available in a new edition--the first major revision since Fowler's original. Rewritten, updated, and expanded to take into account the vast linguistic changes of the past three-quarters of a century, here are thousands of alphabetically arranged entries, offering advice and background information on all aspects of the English language, from grammar to spelling to literary style. This masterful revision has been carried out by Robert Burchfield, hailed by *The Chicago Tribune* as "the greatest living lexicographer." In his hands, the *MEU* has retained its beloved traits--accessibility, authority, and (not least) personality--while acquiring new ones, most notably, up-to-the-minute currency. As in "Fowler," the new edition is a cornucopia of information on such troublesome areas as the plural form of foreign words (adagio, curriculum, memorandum, virus); related or like-sounding words (affect/effect, continual/continuous); rarely encountered literary terms (alcaics, alexandrine, arsis); and unusual inflected forms (for instance, taxi, taxis, taxiing). But there are also many innovations. Burchfield, who spent decades working on the *Oxford English Dictionary*, has introduced the *OED*'s historical approach to the *MEU*, providing fascinating details on how and when new usages entered the language. In addition, he has combed novels, newspapers, and magazines to replenish the book's many illustrative sentences with new examples from the 1980s and 1990s, taken from such sources as *The New Yorker* and *The New York Review of Books*, and from such writers as Saul Bellow, John Updike, Kingsley and Martin Amis, Anita Brookner, and Penelope Lively. The new *MEU* also covers much more of the English-speaking world than did "Fowler"--including not only the United

Kingdom and the United States, but also Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and elsewhere--and pronunciation is now given in the International Phonetic Alphabet, with an easy-to-consult guide given across each double-page spread.

For seventy years, *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* has supplied readers with information, guidance, and amusement. This major revision provides an *MEU* for the next century: a completely up-to-date work based on the immense databases of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, providing the same insightful, authoritative, and lively coverage that has long made "Fowler" a synonym for correct English.

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The New Fowler's Modern English Usage By R. W. Burchfield, Henry Watson Fowler Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #885230 in Books
- Published on: 1996-12-19
- Ingredients: Example Ingredients
- Original language: English

- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.60" h x 1.90" w x 5.60" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 896 pages

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

For generations, lovers of the English language have turned to trusty copies of **Fowler's** to settle nagging grammatical questions, or, for true hard-core language junkies, for the sheer fun of reading H. W. Fowler's classic outrage contained in entries on "Hackneyed Phrases" or "Pedantic-Humour Words."

The New Fowler's Modern English Usage, the first revision in more than 30 years, has not arrived without controversy. Some language (and Fowler) purists complain that the book is too liberal at times, noting that usage is common as opposed to correct. Those points are debatable, and, indeed, they're what makes the book's nearly 900 pages so interesting to peruse. The currency of the new *Fowler's* extends to, in the entry on "Vogue Words," such novelties as "couch potato," "flavour of the month," "on a roll," and the notorious "parameter."

From Library Journal

An icon to those who write and think about words, Fowler's has not been updated since 1965. (It was originally published in 1926.) Burchfield, the chief editor of *The Oxford English Dictionary* and its four-volume supplement, is perhaps the best equipped to tackle this monument. His revision pulls a much-loved and slightly eccentric work out of the charm of the past and into the whirlwind of today's language. In a simple, alphabetical arrangement, the third edition covers grammar, syntax, style, word choice, and advice on usage. Some of the contents have been changed completely: there are explanations of the differences between British and American usage, new pronunciation guidelines, and new entries reflecting the politicizing of speech (sexist language, political correctness). The most famous and endearing aspect of Fowler's, the treatment of the split infinitive, has been rewritten to provide more explanation than wit. Some of the contents have only been updated and clarified, retaining the same examples. For instance, the second edition seeks to define "dead letter" apart from "its Pauline and post-office uses"; the new edition changes this to "apart from its theological and post-office uses"; both use "quill pens, top hats, [and] steam locomotives" as examples of objects that have fallen out of fashion. The result is a work that is different from the original and more useful, but academic libraries will want to keep the first and second editions as well. Other libraries will definitely want to update their copies; this work will be a standard in the field for years to come. Neal Wyatt, Chesterfield Cty. P.L., Va.
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From [Booklist](#)

First published in 1926, *Fowler's Modern Usage* was revised in 1965 by Ernest Gowers. Now Robert Burchfield, the editor of the *Oxford English Dictionary* for almost 30 years, has undertaken a thorough rewriting of what he has termed "a fossil." Fowler still gives advice on choosing the right word, word formation, pronunciation, and punctuation. However, now there are lots of examples from the 1980s and 1990s. Burchfield has gotten rid of Fowler's amusing but often useless headwords ("Between Two Stools"). He provides new usage for words such as *gender* (Fowler said it was only a grammatical term). Fowler is now much more reflective of current usage than *Partridge's Usage and Abusage* [RBB My 1 95], which only got a cosmetic revision.

Burchfield's explanations of the usage of problem words such as *that/which* and *like/as* are clear. Fowler used simple respelling for pronunciation; Burchfield uses the International Phonetic Alphabet. The book still has no index, and even the classified index from earlier editions has been dropped, but long entries now have

tables of contents. Many writers will be loathe to give up their old Fowler, but libraries with an earlier edition will want to add this new one, which will be used by writers long into the twenty-first century.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Geraldine Dube:

Have you spare time for just a day? What do you do when you have far more or little spare time? Yes, you can choose the suitable activity with regard to spend your time. Any person spent their own spare time to take a wander, shopping, or went to the actual Mall. How about open or maybe read a book eligible The New Fowler's Modern English Usage? Maybe it is being best activity for you. You know beside you can spend your time together with your favorite's book, you can better than before. Do you agree with it is opinion or you have other opinion?

Mindy Martinez:

The book untitled The New Fowler's Modern English Usage contain a lot of information on the idea. The writer explains your ex idea with easy approach. The language is very clear and understandable all the people, so do definitely not worry, you can easy to read it. The book was compiled by famous author. The author provides you in the new period of literary works. You can read this book because you can please read on your smart phone, or program, so you can read the book inside anywhere and anytime. In a situation you wish to purchase the e-book, you can start their official web-site in addition to order it. Have a nice learn.

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