

Grammar Goddess Communication

Look Smart Sound Smart

Why Do I Teach American Grammar?

-by Susan Rooks, The Grammar Goddess

Why do I teach American grammar to grownups? To business professionals?

As my mother constantly asked, “Didn’t everyone learn it in school?”

Well, first of all, no. We didn’t all learn it in school, and there are several reasons for that.

Yes, the teachers tried, but there’s a huge difference between being taught and actually learning.

Second, the last time most of us were exposed to grammar was about eighth grade, after which we were often told by our creative writing teachers that we should just express ourselves and not worry about those pesky punctuation details.

And in eighth grade, most of us were 13 or 14, our hormones were raging, and we were likely much more interested in the cute boy or girl sitting next to us than in listening to any lessons given by someone old – like over 25.

How could we have known we’d grow up to care about the stuff teachers taught us, especially things like grammar? We weren’t listening back then, and it’s been maybe 20, 30, or 40 years since “back then” anyway. Who remembers exactly what we were taught?



Really? You do? Your nose just twitched ...

Third, we often decide how to write or speak based on “what everyone else does.”

The problem with doing that? Most of us are smart, but we’re not always smart in the same way. Following the HR VP’s way of using semicolons, for instance, might not work, because although she’s smart as a whip with people and HR issues, she might not be so smart about American punctuation rules.

Fourth, American grammar is different from other variations of English grammar. We have some rules (especially those concerning the use of quotation marks), some spelling (*humor* or *humour*, *realize* or *realise*), and some usage differences that are just part of our way of speaking or writing.

And as we are more and more a global community we often see articles written in a different version, and if we’re not sure about our own system, we can get confused about what we’re supposed to do here.

So the answer to the burning question of “Why do I teach American grammar?”

I teach American grammar and usage, so my clients will look and sound as smart as they are. It’s that simple.

