



Grammar reference
— Anne Hodgson

A teacher and translator for more than ten years, I've run didactic programmes for museums and have created online English courses. Growing up speaking both German and English has allowed me to explore the two languages and their comparative grammar differences. You can learn about these differences with me in the language exercises I write for Spotlight-Online.

Once you have a basic sense of English, a good grammar reference

book will help you to understand why people say things the way they do. Here are my favourites:

● **Practical English Usage** is easily the best reference book for intermediate and advanced users of English. Authoritative yet readable, with clearly presented information, the work puts essential points of grammar in alphabetical order for quick reference. The book anticipates your practical questions and provides many ways to jump right in. You are told, for example, when to use the past tense to be polite, and why we can refer to a “chair leg”, but not a “cat leg”. The book contains an overview of 130 common mistakes, sections on “social” language and headlines, and even one on swear words. By Michael Swan. Cornelsen/Oxford University Press, ISBN 978-3-06804496-4, €37.50.

● **The Cambridge Grammar of English** by two linguists at the University of Nottingham is comprehensive. A compact explanation of how the most frequent English words are used in context is followed by a section on spoken language. The book then works systematically through the parts of speech, each in its own chapter, exploring such questions as the difference between “made of”, “made out of” and “made from”. This is a beautiful and truly exhaustive grammar reference book for the serious student at, say, university level. By Ronald Carter and Michael McCarthy. Cambridge University Press, ISBN 978-3-12534331-3, €39.90.

Grammar practice
— Anna Hochsieder

I grew up bilingually in the United States, Britain, Belgium and Germany. I've worked as an editor for a publisher of English course books for schools, and have taught English to adults for the past four years. You'll find my Vocabulary and Travel Talk sections in every issue of *Spotlight* and my Advanced Grammar, Grammar Revision, Let's Talk About... and Reading Comprehension pages in *Spotlight plus*.

Most grammar practice books can also be used for reference. When looking up a grammar point, you'll find that you can remember it much more easily after doing a few exercises.

● **Essential Grammar in Use** is one of three books in the *In Use* series. This work is aimed at elementary to pre-intermediate learners (levels A2–B1), giving explanations, instructions and translations in German. Each unit consists of a double page, with explanations on the left and practice exercises on the right. The book uses very few grammar terms; instead, the unit headings are examples of the language covered (“I was doing”; “If I had...”). By Raymond Murphy, with Almut Köster. Klett/Cambridge University Press, ISBN 978-3-12-533460-1, €23.50.

● **The Good Grammar Book**, which fully deserves its title, is also aimed at lower-level learners (levels A2–B1). Its layout, with pleasant colours and attractive pictures, makes it especially fun to use. Although it is in English throughout, the language is simple and easy to understand. Each section begins with a test to help you decide which units you'll need to focus on; and each section ends with a revision test (with answers). By Michael Swan and Catherine Walter. Oxford University Press, ISBN 978-0-19-431519-7, €27.50.

● The same authors have written a similar grammar practice book for intermediate to advanced learners (levels B2–C2): **How English Works**, Oxford University Press, ISBN 978-0-19-431456-5 (with answers), €28.75.

● For advanced learners, especially those preparing for exams such as the Cambridge Advanced, the in-depth **Longman Advanced Learners' Grammar** (levels C1–C2) offers plenty of opportunity for practice, including typical Cambridge-type exam tasks. Four pages of theory are followed by four pages of exercises on each topic area. Diagnostic tests help you decide what to focus on. Answers are included. By Mark Foley and Diane Hall. Longman, ISBN 978-0-58240383-3, €23.50.

Vocabulary
— Dagmar Taylor

I've been teaching general and business English to adult learners, in companies and at university, for about 16 years. These days, I'm a busy but happy language editor at *Spotlight*, organizing the material you read in our language section and making sure that it is optimally suited to the needs and ability of learners.

For the more advanced learner — who is studying English, has to write in English or is just “in love” with the English language — a few excellent vocabulary reference books can really help.

● To improve the level of your English, you'll need to learn to use combinations of words. Common examples, such as “burning ambition” and “newspaper kiosk”, are essential building blocks of natural-sounding English. The **Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English** shows all the words and phrases commonly used in combination with each headword. I use this dictionary a lot, and I wish I'd had one like this for German when I was studying. ISBN 978-3-46411714-9, €30.30.



A good grammar reference book can help you understand why we say things the way we do



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● Using a thesaurus, you can avoid repetition and say things in a different way. Thesauri contain lists of words with a similar meaning. The **Oxford Learner's Thesaurus** also includes opposites, word links, advice on pairs of confusable words as well as examples of almost every synonym. Book and CD-ROM: Cornelsen/Oxford University Press, ISBN 978-3-06800454-8, €36.95.

● How can you expand your vocabulary quickly and systematically? Do some self-study with vocabulary practice books. **English Vocabulary in Use** is definitely my favourite. This book is designed for self-study, and follow-up material is even included in the key. Vocabulary is attractively presented — often with colour illustrations — with exercises on the opposite page. Each book begins with excellent advice on learning vocabulary. The index lists all the words covered as well as the phonetic transcriptions. In the upper-intermediate book, topics in the 100 units range from words from other languages (fjord, dachshund, sputnik), through similes (as red as a beetroot), to the language of signs (“Fishing: permit holders only”). All the books now have

assess sth. [ə'ses]	etw. beurteilen/überprüfen
authoritative [ə:'θɒrɪtətɪv]	zuverlässig, fundiert
beetroot ['bi:tru:t] UK	Rote Bete
comprehensive [ˌkɒmpri'hensɪv]	umfassend
cover sth. ['kʌvə]	etw. behandeln/erwähnen
daunting ['dɔ:ntɪŋ]	entmutigend
diagnostic test [daɪəg'nɒstɪk ,test]	Einstufungstest
exhaustive [ɪg'zɔ:stɪv]	allumfassend
overview ['əʊvəvju:]	Überblick
part of speech [ˌpɑ:t əv 'spi:tʃ]	Wortart
permit holder ['pɜ:mɪt ,həʊldə]	Inhaber(in) (eines Angelscheins)
phonetic transcription	Lautschrift
[fə'netɪk træn'skrɪpʃən]	
revision test [rɪ'vɪʒn ,test]	Lernfortschrittstest
simile ['sɪməli]	(Rhetorik) Vergleich
swear word ['swɛə wɔ:d]	Schimpfwort
task [tɑ:sk]	Aufgabe
unit ['ju:nɪt]	Kapitel, Einheit

CD-ROMs full of extras, including interactive games and a built-in dictionary. You can even create your own tests and record your voice to practise pronunciation. By Stuart Redman, Michael McCarthy, Felicity O'Dell and Ruth Gairns. Cambridge University Press. Elementary: ISBN 978-0-52161464-1; Pre-intermediate and intermediate: ISBN 978-0-52161465-8; Upper-intermediate: ISBN 978-0-52167743-1; Advanced: ISBN 978-0-52167746-2, €25 each. The **Test Your English Vocabulary in Use** books have been designed to help students assess their progress.

Further recommendations

By reading *Spotlight*, you're already doing a lot for your English. Our monthly exercise booklet, *Spotlight plus*, lets you practise vocabulary and grammar (see page 55). *Spotlight Audio*, with 60 minutes of material, will improve your listening skills (available as a CD or download; see page 8). *Spotlight-Online* (www.spotlight-online.de) is updated every day with glossed articles and language exercises (see page 8). Our Language Pocket Guides can be ordered from *Spotlight* (abo@spotlight-verlag.de); the fifth one will appear in April 2009. *Spotlight Verlag* also publishes *Spot on*, for teenage learners, and *Business Spotlight*, which is mainly about English used in a business or work context.

Such a long list of recommended products may seem daunting, but you really need only one of each. When deciding which reference works or practice books to invest in, it's important to identify the ones that will best suit your level, your needs and your learning style. Once you've done the reading, the exercises and the listening, the most important thing is to go out and use the language. Having the right tools will make it easier to reach your ultimate goal — to feel truly comfortable communicating in English. ●

Listen to two of the authors on Spotlight Audio