

The Proof Angel Summary of

Grammar and usage: December 2014

The word virus is being bandied about a lot at the moment. It is a strange and rather scary word, isn't it? Find out [more about its history here](#).

So what is a novel?

We all know that language develops over time. Mainly, that is a useful thing. Sometimes I do wonder what on earth people are trying to achieve by these changes.

This is an example of the latter. Apparently, [novel is increasingly used to mean any book](#), whether it is fiction or non-fiction. That is just confusing. What is the point?

Stigmatized and still alive: English in the time of "ain't"

Do you believe that declining standards of English mean the end of the world is nigh?

If you do, or if you are a disciple of *Gwynne's Grammar*, you might find [this post enlightening](#). As the writer says, English is more flexible & robust than some people think. It can be used for many different purposes without impact on other areas.

Ahem, ahem: the language of coughing

A cough is a fairly normal part of life. It is a symptom of many different medical problems, which is why we are told we should tell our doctor if we have been coughing for more than 3 weeks. I suppose I shouldn't be surprised that there is so much to say about the [history of the word](#) itself.

What is the origin of the word 'codswallop'?

Rather disappointingly, Oxford Dictionaries' answer to this question is that we don't know. Still, [the speculation](#) is quite interesting.



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That eggcorn moment

We've all heard well known phrases being abused. It often happens when people have misheard something & not thought about what they are saying. Sometimes it is just a slip of the tongue. Linguists have [a word for these mistakes](#).

I like going at it like a bowl in a china shop. Presumably the bowl is sitting on a shelf?

Why is it the first, not the oneth?

Have you ever changed the date in a document and ended up with something like the 1th of November? It is very easy to do, and annoyingly difficult to spot, as people tend not to look properly at the date when they are checking their work. Find out about [the root of the problem here](#). Then try more about [why we say 2nd, rather than 2th](#), and ["third" and "thirteen"](#).

12 common grammar problems

This one doesn't need much introduction. This list of [common grammar problems](#) has something for everyone.

Common Latin abbreviations

Do you know when to use e.g or i.e? Many people get confused about these two. If you can remember the translation, it helps. [Find out more here](#).

Are your adverbs in the right place?

One of the most common causes of a silly sentence is the misplaced modifier. It happens when a sentence includes 2 points, and it isn't clear who is doing what.

My English teacher always used this example, which she found hugely amusing:

Wearing my pink frilly party dress, the big red bus came over the hill.

So the bus was wearing the dress. It would be better to write:

I was wearing my pink frilly party dress when the big red bus came over the hill.

Here is a reminder about how this [relates to adverbs](#).

About nip

Nip is a strange word. We nip things in the bud, and we nip to the shops. Find out more about [nip here](#). I must admit I'd never heard of nip and chips though.

Do you know the difference between irritated and aggravated?

There is a [subtle difference](#) here that many people overlook.

8 commonly misused words

Here are some nice little cartoons to help you [avoid confusion](#).