

The Proof Angel Summary of

Grammar and usage: March 2015

Using the exclamation mark

The exclamation mark is one of the most abused punctuation marks. Some people use it extensively when they want a piece to look informal.

The danger with that, and any other loose usage, is that it is very difficult to tell whether it conveys surprise or annoyance.

As a general rule, the simple plan is:

If in doubt, don't.

For a more detailed discussion, [this flow chart](#) is useful.

The complicated history of colour definitions

Defining colour gradation is very difficult.

We all know what we mean by a certain colour name, but we can never be sure if that word prompts someone else to imagine the same colour as we do. It is a bit like working out if my headache is worse than yours. This post has some [interesting background](#).

The difference between writing and speaking

Here is an interesting post highlighting some of the differences between [spoken and written language](#).

Do you need to talk posh?

If you need to talk (or write) posh, [this post](#) could be useful.



The history of the word "cartoon"

Cartoon is a word with an interesting background. [Find out more here](#).

The Proof Angel is the trading name of Sarah Perkins, freelance editor and proofreader.

The march of the adjectives

Some languages have very strict rules about word order. In English, there are various conventions that some people regard as rules. This post puts the case for listing your [adjectives in the correct order](#). Unless you need to emphasise the relative importance of the words used, of course.

Coffee mugs for grammar nerds

Even if you don't want a [grammar mug, this post](#) is worth looking at just for the comments. Wouldn't you think someone would check the products for anything controversial?

12 Old words that survived by getting fossilized in idioms

English is a rich language with roots in many different cultures. Our modern vocabulary includes [some strange survivors](#), even though some of them are only used in one or two phrases.

Talking about autism

Do you have any contact with someone with autism? If so, this article about [use of language](#) might be useful.

A history of slang quiz

This quiz about slang covers some interesting ground. In the words of its title, do you have a [vulgar tongue](#)?

12 Misused English words

Most of these [usage problems](#) are pretty common, so it is worth looking at them again. I was a bit surprised what some people think peruse means...

10 Things people once complained would ruin the English language

This is another one to add to the "there is nothing new under the sun" list.

People have been worrying that the English language is doomed for hundreds of years. I'm sure there are many other items that could be added to this list of [10 things people once complained would ruin the English language](#).

But that is enough to be going on with for now. Our language has a lot of life left in it yet!