

# The Proof Angel Summary of

## Grammar and usage: September 2015

### One little word that can damage your credibility

When I was at school, they warned us against using this one little word. Just. We were told not to use the phrases "just a housewife", or "just a typist". Both phrases imply that a sensible, worthy occupation is trivial. [This post takes the idea further.](#)

On the other hand, questions starting "Can I just check..." can be very handy in difficult meetings. It can be a good way to draw attention to a basic, obvious point that some people are overlooking.

### All Greek to me

The Greek economy is a centre of focus a lot at the moment. Some complicated and scary things have been going on. My bet is that not many of us understand it all thoroughly.

In fact, [it's all Greek to me.](#)

### Words with strange origins

When you see the background to some of these [common words and phrases](#), you might be considering not using them any more. Some of them are quite gruesome.

### Words that come from characters in books

Here is some interesting background to words that come from [characters in books](#).

Well, most of them come from books. The Mikado isn't really a book at all, is it? It is either a score or a libretto, depending on which you have in your hand at the time.

### Words made up by authors

Here is a nice little list of [words that first appeared in fiction](#).



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

## The origins of every day expressions

English can be a strange language. There are many common expressions we use all the time without any idea where they came from, or what they originally meant. We just know what we mean by them today. Here are [14 expressions with crazy origins that you would never have guessed](#).

## The decline of the definite article

According to some recent research, the [definite article is in radical decline](#).

On the other hand, let's look at why this sentence from George Washington in 1790 sounds so old fashioned:

*I embrace with great satisfaction the opportunity which now presents itself of congratulating you on the present favourable prospects of our public affairs.*

The main factors are:

- It is long.
- It is passive.
- Look at how he uses "the".

And the list goes on. For example, we don't often talk about prospects these days.

## Swear words and the history of English

According to [this post, English swear words](#) are closely related to German ones. So I wonder where the phrase "Pardon my French" comes from?

## The origins of ditto

Is ditto falling out of use? We used to write ditto marks or the full word when we wanted to repeat something, but now it is so easy to copy and paste. Now invoices are produced from a computer database, ditto is less useful there.

Here is a post about [the origin of the word ditto](#).

My Dad would often say "Ditto, ditto, Brother Smut" when he wanted to draw an argument to a close. I wonder where that one came from?

## Well known phrases

This quiz about [well known phrases](#) is interesting. Several had more to them than I expected.

## Misused words

Well here is a topic that comes up from time to time. [A list of words that get misused](#). I reckon it has to be worth repeating, as the errors are so common.

## How well do you know the language of handwriting?

Give [this quiz a try](#) and find out.

## 19 Reasons Why Grammar Nerds Are More Likely To Be Successful

Some of these are rather debatable in my view. Does all the discussion on the web about Grammar Nazis really give the impression that they are great leaders because they know how to communicate in a way that helps others improve? Pointing out errors may be motivated by a desire to help people to improve, but it is rarely taken that way. Anyway, here is a list of [reasons why grammar nerds succeed](#).

## Words that get muddled

Today I've got a list of posts about words that often get muddled:

- Comparing [gratis, gratuitous, and gratuity](#).
- The difference between [disinterested or uninterested](#).
- Deciding between [in to and into](#).
- On a slightly different tack, [embarrassing yet common malapropisms](#).

## What does bun mean to you?

Now here is a question to bring out the regional variations in us. [What does bun mean to you?](#)

## The 69 rules of punctuation

Depending on your point of view, this post is either a helpful summary, or an oversimplification. See what you think of [the 69 rules of punctuation](#).

## Discussing terminal illness

This post covers the difficult territory of the language you can use when [discussing terminal illness](#).

## Grammar rules

Here is a collection of posts about grammar rules:

- Do you follow [grammar "rules" that you don't understand?](#)
- Why [spelling and grammar](#) are important.
- Working through [improving a sentence](#).

## Teaspoons, tea, and tea language

Here is a slightly unusual post, about [teaspoons, tea, and tea language](#).