

Media Kit

Get a Grip on Your Grammar: 250 Writing and Editing Reminders for the Curious or Confused by Kris Spisak

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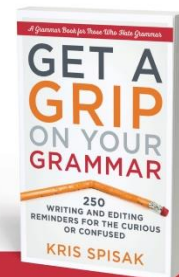
—Charles Euchner, former Yale University Lecturer, Author of *Keep It Short*

“You’ll want to keep a copy on your desk.”

—Meg Medina, National Book Award Finalist, *Burn Baby Burn*

“Kris Spisak’s delightful, breezy take has dark powers.”

—Kevin Smokler, Author of *Brat Pack America*



Just as we should think before we speak, we need to think before we write.

Most of us are not poets or novelists, but we are all writers. We email, text, and post; we craft memos and reports, menus and outdoor signage, birthday cards and sticky notes on the fridge.

Get a Grip on Your Grammar is an *Elements of Style* for the Twitter generation. It is a grammar book for those who hate grammar books, a writing resource filled with quick answers and a playful style—not endless, indecipherable grammar jargon.

Designed for student, business, and creative-writing audiences alike, its easily digestible, occasionally witty writing tips will finally teach you:

- The differences between “lay” and “lie.”
- The proper usage of “affect” and “effect.”
- Where to put punctuation around quotation marks.
- The meaning of “e.g.” versus “i.e.”
- The perils of overusing the word “suddenly.”
- That apostrophes should not be thrown about like confetti.
- And 243 more great tips.

Writers owe it to themselves and to everyone who sees their written words to get it right. With *Get a Grip on Your Grammar*, they finally can.

Author Bio:

With degrees from the College of William & Mary and the University of Richmond, Kris Spisak began her career as a college writing instructor; however, after six years in the classroom, she transitioned to professional writing and editing. Helping writers sharpen their craft was the driving force behind her book, *Get a Grip on your Grammar: 250 Writing and Editing Reminders for the Curious or Confused* (Career Press, 2017), and the creation of her writing program, [Grammartopia](http://Grammartopia.com).



“Grammartopia,” Kris Spisak's signature grammar game show has seen standing-room only audiences and has been praised by students, teachers, business professionals, writers, and non-writers alike.

For more information: <http://GrammartopiaLive.com>

Interview Questions/Talking Points for *Get a Grip on Your Grammar* by Kris Spisak

1. What do you want people to take away from this book?

Grammar isn't something to be intimidated by or to be snobby about, and it certainly isn't something to fight over. There are simply lessons that remain untaught or unsolidified in people's minds. English might be our native language, but that doesn't mean we understand it as well as we should. We are all human, and the English language is hard. We rush our communications because we live busy lives; however, what is more important than our expressions of our ideas? Personally, professionally, and creatively, there's room for us all to do so much better.

2. Why is grammar important?

Grammar is important because clarity is important. The world will never know the brilliance inside your head unless you can craft it with precision. This is true for fiction writers, journalists, composers of academic essays, and business communicators alike.

Grammar ignorance isn't bliss; it can be devastating. A weak understanding of English language use is the cause of missed job opportunities, lowered grades, love poems gone wrong, and certainly rejection letters from publishers. Getting a solid grip on your grammar can impact a life for the better. Even being a writer and an editor, I don't think I'm biased when I say that.

3. We all had grammar classes in school. Why do you think we are still constantly forgetful or confused about proper English writing rules?

Remember how fun it was to diagram sentences in middle school? No? Me either. So often, writing skills are taught so dryly, using vocabulary that's both intimidating and inaccessible. The English language doesn't always follow logic, and it can be overwhelming. That dilemma is exactly where this book came from.

4. Your title also speaks to those who are "curious." Do you fall into that category? Are words really that interesting?

Are words interesting? Heck yeah, they are. Imagine that first culture—the Sumerians—that preserved their thoughts and lives in clay. Look at the trails of etymology where a word like "go" hijacks its past tense spelling from an entirely different word, and that's why "went" looks nothing like the present tense form. How could you argue this isn't interesting?

Our words carry us through our lives, be they words of business or pleasure. The rules of grammar and the possibilities of word choice might be complicated, but they can be fascinating if you look at them from the right angle.

5. How did you learn to improve your writing? Did you just pay attention in school?

People so often think of writing well as a pure talent or as a skill learned by those who aced English class, but it's so much more than that. Writing is a craft. It takes time to master—if

anyone ever masters it at all. Powerful communication requires continued education, and for anyone who takes this on, their writing will be all the better for it.

6. What are some of your grammatical pet peeves?

Of course I have personal pet peeves—“further” versus “farther,” for example, or “nauseous” versus “nauseated”—but I’m not one to go around correcting people’s English unless they are asking me to. When they ask me to, oh, I can have some fun, but no one likes to be torn down for simple mistakes.

7. What effect has Twitter had on grammar?

You can look at Twitter and text messages and see the downfall of grammar and punctuation, or you can realize that people are communicating with writing more than they ever have in human history.

8. In an era of spell-check and autocorrect, do people still need to learn to spell correctly?

Spellcheck and autocorrect are sometimes life-savers, but when we become dependent on them and neglect to think for ourselves, mistakes creep into our writing that we never intended. These tools will not help with your usage of “affect” versus “effect” or “insure” versus “ensure.” They won’t stop you before you apply for that job as “manger,” instead of “manager.”

These days, we have endless tools at our fingertips. We should enjoy their benefits but not become so reliant that we neglect our own final proofing before pressing “send.” A final read-through often takes one minute or maybe two. That small amount of time can prevent miniscule and massive mistakes, but they will only prevent them if the writer knows the difference.

9. You’ve said that communicating correctly is a form of respect. What’s the connection?

When we are children, we learn to look others in the eye when we speak to them. Knowing how to use our words well is not any different. We respect ourselves by showing that we can convey our ideas intelligently and articulately, and we respect others by not wasting their time.

When it comes to the aggressive tone of recent political conversations, respect in communications can go a step further. Being able to disagree without swearing, using all CAPS, or multiple exclamation points is apparently a conversation that we need to have in 2017. What better time than now than to dive in and change the language dynamic? If we want to be the change we want to see in the world, the first step is explaining ourselves, after all.

10. When publishing a book, a writer will have (or can pay for) an editor. Why do they need to know the intricacies of punctuation and grammar?

Writers cannot believe that they’ll have an editor later who will fix the flaws in their manuscript. If a book, short story, or essay is full of typos and weak structuring, a publication will not take the author seriously enough to even begin a conversation about editing. It’s up to all every

writer to present a project as polished as possible before even thinking about next steps. If they don't, there will be a lot of rejections in their future.

11. What do you see as the biggest flaw in corporate email communications?

Clarity is essential in business communications, but so often, it isn't there. Writers need to ask themselves, what is the point of this message? And what should the reader do about it? So often the point of an email is lost amid wordiness, and the call-to-action is never clearly stated.

Results-oriented professionals are often next in line for that promotion, but if that individual has muddled communication skills, that climb up the corporate ladder will be dramatically slowed.

12. What inspired you to write a book about grammar?

Words matter. You could argue that how we use our words matters more today than ever before. Everyone has a voice, so why not use it? And if you're going to use it, use it well.

So many books about business writing etiquette, bettering communication skills, and grammar rules are as dry as we remember from pre-adolescence. I wanted to create a writing resource that was jargon free, easily digestible, and written with a sense of humor. *Get a Grip on Your Grammar* is a writing resource for those moments of temporary bewilderment and for those moments we all want to show off our absolute best.

13. Does being a grammar expert help or hinder you as a creative writer?

As a fiction writer, I leave my editor self behind as craft my early drafts. If I worried about perfection with every word and squiggle of digital ink, I would never get to that final page. When I do get to the editing, my process may be meticulous, but forcing myself to pay attention to every single word choice creates a manuscript that is fine-tuned when I get there.

14. What is your next project?

The project that became *Get a Grip on Your Grammar* has had an interesting journey from a weekly writing tips blog to an indie published ebook to the literary-agent-represented, traditionally published book that it has become. That weekly writing tips blog continues on kris-spisak.com, and I'm having more fun with it than ever.

As for other projects, I have two novels in the works, which I hope to find homes for in the near future, and I don't think my non-fiction side is anywhere close to finished. I have a new grammar-based project that's bubbling in the back of my mind, as well. Stay tuned for that.

15. What advice do you have for writers, and for the grammatically challenged?

No matter how well educated or how confident we may be, our writing skills can always be better. Writing is a craft to practice and improve. The more we draft our written words, the stronger that they will become. And if someone happens to be looking for a resource, *Get a Grip on Your Grammar: 250 Writing and Editing Reminders for the Curious or Confused* is now available from your favorite bookseller.

Endorsements and Early Press for *Get a Grip on Your Grammar: 250 Writing and Editing Reminders for the Curious or Confused*

"Is it a dash or a colon here? Should I write first person or third? Is it 'already' or 'all ready'? In this handy manual, grammar guru Kris Spisak offers us her thoughts and tips on the writing questions that dog every writer's life. You'll want to keep a copy on your desk."

– Meg Medina, Author and National Book Award and Kirkus Award Finalist (*Burn Baby Burn*, Candlewick Press, 2016) and Pura Belpré Award winner (*Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass*, Candlewick Press, 2014)

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"I know about as much about grammar as I do about kite surfing, but Kris Spisak's delightful, breezy take has dark powers that give a rookie like me fingers instead of left thumbs, light instead of fog."

– Kevin Smokler, Author of *Brat Pack America: A Love Letter to 80s Teen Movies* (Rare Bird Books, 2016) and *Practical Classics: 50 Reasons to Reread 50 Books you Haven't Touched Since High School* (Prometheus Books, 2013)

"If you add one book to your home library this spring, make it local author Kris Spisak's new book, *Get A Grip On Your Grammar*. Fabulous help for you, your kids, and those upcoming graduates!"

– The Little Bookshop, Midlothian, VA

["Kris Spisak on Writing, Publishing, and the Dire Importance of Grammar"](#)

– Huffington Post – May 2, 2017

["5 Commonly Confused Words Starting With A" \(Get a Grip on Your Grammar excerpt\)](#)

– JaneFriedman.com – April 18, 2017