



Oxford A-Z of English Usage

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Is it correct to pronounce "mischievous" as a three-syllable word (**miss**-chi-vuhss) or a four-syllable word (miss-**chee**-vi-uhss)? If it is right to use "alumni" as the plural of "alumnus," why is it wrong to use "octopi" as the plural of "octopus"? Should we write "12 am" or "12 a.m."? What is the difference between "principle" and "principal"? Is it "just desserts" or "just deserts"?

If you don't know the answer to these questions, if you need a quick and effective guide to correct English, then *Oxford A-Z of English Usage* is just what you are looking for, containing a gold mine of useful advice on a wide array of common writing and speaking problems. Based on Oxford's world-renowned dictionary research program and packed with vivid examples of real usage (and misuse) from contemporary sources, this guide provides essential information on the kinds of issues writers face every day. Readers will find more than 600 entries arranged in alphabetical order, shedding light on common issues of uncertainty and confusion (affect / effect; compliment / complement; loath / loathe), on questions of punctuation and pronunciation, on grammatical terms, and much more. In addition, there are more than 20 special feature articles on specific topics such as abbreviation, euphemism, hyphenation, and folk etymology (where we learn that though more than half the examples in print use "just desserts," the proper word is "deserts," meaning reward, not "arid land").

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