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*Elements of Style* Review

*The Elements of Style* is a writing guide that was written by William Strunk and E.B. White. This writing guide has four different editions and the first edition publicized around fifty years ago in 1959. This guide is meant to be very short and straight to the point. This book teaches the audience about grammatical rules, writing rules and principles of composition. The book even shows commonly misspelled or misused words and phrases. The first edition of this book only contained the list of commonly misspelled words, the list of misused words and phrases, ten principles of composition, eight rules of usage, and matters of form. It has evolved over fifty years and the fourth edition contains eleven elementary rules of usage, eleven principles of composition, twenty-one reminders on how to approach style, a list of misused words and phrases, and matters of form. This guide has been highly praised for many years and is has even been called one of the most influential books by *Time*. Despite the great praise this guide has received, there has also been criticism against it. In my opinion, this guide is very useful and suitable for a class requires a large writing component.

*The Elements of Style* is a helpful guide for this class. This is due to the fact that this guide is full of important grammar rules that must be followed in order to write a proper college level paper. For example, the guide states that you must add an apostrophe s after nouns in order to make them possessive. Even though this is a basic grammar rule, many people still get this wrong and just add an s after. These grammatical rules span from very basic one such as this example above, to more advanced rules. This is useful for this course since these rules may be forgotten by some and having this guide to remind students is helpful when writing essays. Additionally, another useful chapter of this guide is “An Approach to Style.” This is helpful since this chapter gives the reader reminders on how to write a better essay. These rules are important for writers to remember. These rules include, “do not overwrite,” “avoid fancy word,” and “revise and rewrite.” These rules are especially important for college students since many of them will use big and fancy words in order to come off as intelligent. However, these words are not necessarily needed and can make the piece of writing hard to understand and can even make the point of the piece unclear. Additionally, revising and rewriting are great reminders since many students turn in essays without even rereading them and fixing their mistakes. It is also important to tell writers to not overwrite since many students overwrite to make length requirements that teachers enforce. However, overwriting makes the writer lose their point and the piece may become confusing to read. A large, expensive textbook is really not needed for a course like this one. In my opinion, having a small, concise guide is better. This is because large textbooks often contain too much information and are unclear, which is exactly what *The Elements of Style* warn writers against. In addition, a smaller guide is less challenging for students to read. Huge textbooks take a long time to read and many students may not even read them due to how long they are. All of the principles and rules that this book outlines are appropriate for this course since they serve as reminders for writers. Following these rules and principles will elevate the quality of the piece of writing and will make the writing more clear.

Even though this guide has been praised by many people, others have a different opinion of this book. For example, Professor Geoffrey K. Pullum believes *The Elements of Style* is a terrible guide for writers. Pullum states that some on the guide is useful and does “little damage.” However, he believes some of the grammatical rules that the book enumerates are inaccurate and can be detrimental to a writer. For example, Pullum brings up the fact that the book tells the audience “The number of the subject determines the number of the verb.” Pullum gives examples why this is not always correct. According to the book, the sentence “none of us are perfect” should be “none of us is perfect.” He also disagrees with rules such as, “omit needless words.” In addition to this criticism, *The Boston Globe* reviewed the book and said it was outdated and it was a “hodgepodge”. This guide has also been criticized for only showing and promoting one type of writing when there are many different styles of writing. However, I believe the book is still appropriate and useful. Even though some of these criticisms are valid, they mostly seem like nit-picking. Also, the advice in the book is usually correct, but it may not work in every instance, which is very understandable. Additionally, these books are giving recommendations on how to write and is in no way saying that the author’s styles are the only right ways to write. Also, I believe the book is not outdated since correct composition and grammatical rules have and will also be important to remember.

Overall, I would recommend *The Elements of Style* is to a student that is taking a class that requires a great deal of writing. This guide makes grammatical rules, principles of composition and writing style rules very clear and easily understood, which is very important for college students. Also, this book gives great advice on how to make ones writing clearer and better. Even though there is criticism of this guide, the support and commendation that it receives shows how truly helpful it is. The good advice and the usefulness outweigh the small amount of errors that this book has. *The Elements of Style* is definitely an appropriate and helpful book for any student that is taking a class that involves any amount of writing.