

Editor
Tablet Headlines
Box 413
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September 5, 2014
6:30 PM

Dear Editor:

O.K., you've forced me into this. I thought the issue of O.K. was O.D.'d; if it wasn't before it will be now (you hope).

I have just received, and read, the 8/31/2014 7:41 AM issue of T.H. and now feel positively pressured into giving you (all) the final, definitive answer from an unimpeachable* source, The Little English Handbook, Sixth Edition, by Edward P.J. Corbett of The Ohio State University and Sheryl L. Finkle of Northern Illinois University, ©1992 by HarperCollins Publishers Inc. The Handbook says:

O.K. This most distinctly distinctively American expression has appeared in various forms in the written medium: ^{bf}OK, ^{bf}okay, ^{bf}oke, ^{bf}okeh, ^{bf}bkey ^{end bf} among others. But O.K. is the prevailing form. This versatile word has been used as a noun (My boss gave his O.K. to my plan); as an adjective (That was an O.K. thing to do or He said it was O.K. for me to leave the door unlocked); as an adverb (The computer was working O.K. when I left it); and as an interjection (O.K., so let's get going). There is widespread agreement among the arbiters of usage that ^{bf}O.K. ^{end bf} is acceptable in informal, colloquial contexts. ^{bf}O.K. ^{end bf} is widely used in written communications in the business world.

Sadly, online/on-line/on line, Internet, and e-mail/email are not mentioned in the L.E.H., but in the Chapter on "Mechanics", topic # 88 is "Hyphen to Divide Words". ~~At~~ The end of the article discusses words that, if hyphenated, would leave only one or two letters at the end of a line or at the beginning of the next line (e.g. a-bout, o-clear, un-healthy, grass-y, smok-er...); Corbett and Finkle say don't do it! Put the whole word on the same line. "Remember that the hyphen itself takes up one space." Putting, ^{paraphrasing,} ~~a~~ you ~~say~~, one little letter in front of another,

it would seem ^{better form} ~~appropriate~~ to write "email". So, on that point I have to agree with Mr. Porterfield, who wrote, "Why not save a stroke???" (sic) (But I'm not pursuing ~~that~~ ^{thought any further} than a keyboard.)

① So there you have it, folks: no statistics, but at least a source from 22 years ago. (If you want to know what the Fuge Webster's Third New International Dictionary (1996) has to say, you'll have to wait until I can go to the prison library again, next Tuesday.)

The Wheat was a disappointment this ~~wheat~~ week. That definition of divorce is as old as the institution itself.

In reply to Jay Cory's rant about changing terms and meanings in the War and Weaponry Department, I'm sure you will (all) be happy to hear that a fellow (fellowette?) inmate was caught stealing a cupful of ice from the Igloo cooler, ^{that} provides ice water for the entire dorm (33 women). Her punishment is harsh: 30 days confinement to her cubicle; no recreation, no commissary, and no contact visits during that time. The Captain explained: ~~why~~ "This was a terroristic act." I think the offender should have been sentenced to 60 days of "nothing" and NO ICEWATER UNTIL NEXT SUMMER. (I get my cold water from the ~~the~~ water fountain in the day room, even though the Igloo is reachable from my cubicle.)

In reply to Keith Durbin's take on manufacturers' names for their products ("Phone, iPod, iPod etc.") [sic]: Yeah! Right on! You tell 'em! All over the Internet!

And, Bruce, I did "waste another 20 minutes of my life on responding to such idiocy". In fact, since I have to write, by hand, with a cheap, imitation BIC pen, on a rough tabletop that is too high for me and...and...and...oh gosh I'm so upset now ~~that~~ — I look at the clock — I have wasted a full

hour and ^{forty}~~thirty~~ ^① minutes on this inanity.

That should give you some idea of how starved I am for some semblance of sane and sensible conversation. (I tried to read the T.H. to "Asia" and "Jesus" ~~the latter~~ (pronounced 'Hay-Zeus'). Asia kept interrupting me to ask, "So - this is like some other tabloid headlines??", and Jesus didn't understand what "gweer - the relationship" meant. While I was skipping through the page about "O.K.", another gal (in fact, the ^{icecube} terrorist who was supposed to be in her cubicle) walked over, sat down, and the three of them immediately began talking about something more pertinent to their lives, like whether the commissary is out of jalapeño chips.

Why am I still writing? Natty says I "talk [too] much". Anybody out there interested in a prison pen pal? Be a sport: take the load off the old guy and his "archaic spellings" and write to probably the only woman you know in prison in god forsaken Tex-ass. Natty has my address here; you know who I am, I'm just using an on-line "nom de plume". I don't want to pressure anyone, Bruce, Steve Keith. How about it, Cuppy the Cat? (I'm a desperate woman).

Peace, love and all that,

Hope Annis Kind

a.k.a. Annie D. ^{Phinkos} ~~Sinkhop~~

a.k.a. ~~Dusty~~

* P.S. To Natty only: How do you spell "unimpeachable", or "-ible". And how could you let me go all these months, spelling "already" as "all ready"? As soon as I read the lemming cartoon about "All right.", I promptly began misspelling "already". Is that a 'misextrapolation'?

~3 of 4~

over

① after ~~reading~~ editing

P.S. ee Cummings got his inspiration from zen, so I've heard. Of course, ~~at zen is all sitting~~. zen is just practicing sitting still.

Personal to Natty:

P.P.S. I'm glad you're not as mad at me as I thought you were. But, you won't hear from me again for a bit, because I only have ~~two~~ one stamp and no lawyer/client BASE's left. — O.K., I heard that sigh of relief!

This is my last pen, too. I hope Marcy + Denis aren't mad at me.

Ⓐ [Insert before "So there you... ", p. 2] For my arguments for "online" and "email", the L.E.H. offers this:

English reveals its Germanic ~~roots~~ origin in its tendency to form compounds — that is, to take two or more words and join them to create a single unit that designates a thing or a concept quite different from what the individual words designate. A familiar example is the word ~~baseball~~. When the two distinct words ~~base~~ and ~~ball~~ were first joined to designate --- a game [or the ball used], ~~the words were hyphenated~~ --- the words were hyphenated. The article goes on to say "once repeated use made the compound familiar, the hyphen was dropped". Hundreds of compounds are still printed with a hyphen, either because they have not been used enough to achieve status as unmarked hybrids or because [no hyphen] would lead to ambiguity." (e.g. airport, skyscraper, briefcase) [emphasis, and mechanical errors, are mine].
'Nuff said?

> I reopened the envelope to add Ⓐ, above, A of 4~

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September 11, 2014

Re: OK et al

Dear Ms. Kindis:

Thank you for your lengthy letter of September 5, 2014, quoting Corbett and Finkle, authors of *The Little English Handbook* (Harper-Collins [please note hyphen]). The only problem with Corbett and Finkle's dissertation on "O.K." is that they are wrong.

And, please let me remind you, the difference between "basketball" (or "baseball," or "football") and "e-mail" is that the former is a two-word compound, in which the hyphen was dropped long ago through usage, and the latter is a *contraction*, requiring an apostrophe or a hyphen to alert and substitute for the missing letters in one of the combination words. There simply is no comparison of "basketball" and "email."

It's "unimpeachable." Fowler, in *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* (Wordsworth), lists a hundred or more "ible"s but yet many, many more "able"s. The most common "ible"s are "dirigible," "forcible" (but not "enforceable"), "gullible," "tangible" and "terrible" (and "Ish Kabibble," of course). There *is* a *key*: The "soft" forms of the consonants c and g seem to force an i following to ensure the soft pronunciation of the consonant preceding ("enforceable" is an exception to this rule, but it uses a silent e to force the soft pronunciation of the preceding c).

And "already," at least, is a word. "Alright" is not.

Sincerely,

encs
ps

Natty Bumppo
Editor, Tabloid Headlines