

## ***Writing Tip: A Tribute to the Gregg Reference Manual—the gatekeeper of business grammar since the 1950s***

This is a “hurrah, we’ve been waiting for you” tribute to the new (and final edition) of *The Gregg Reference Manual: A Manual of Style, Grammar, Usage, and Formatting Tribute Edition* published in March of 2010. Its coming is bittersweet.

William A. Sabin (1931-2009) devoted his life to editing *The Gregg Reference Manual* (GRM). According to this last edition, he finished reviewing the 11th Edition with his daughter, Margaret, from his hospital bed on December 29. He died two days later.



William A. Sabin  
1931-2009

GRM has been the gatekeeper of business grammar for over 50 years. First published by John Robert Gregg in 1893 as *Gregg Shorthand* and later published as the *Reference Manual for Stenographers and Typists* in 1951, it became the choice of grammar reference used by typing pools—the last guard at the gate of correct business grammar—in corporate word processing departments. Bill Sabin became the sole author in the early 70s and changed the name to *The Gregg Reference Manual*, 5th Edition, in 1977.

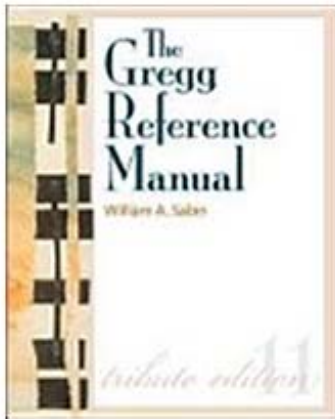
When business professionals began using computers to type their own documents, *The Gregg Reference Manual* was passed from word processing departments to workstations across America. It has provided thoughtful analysis and clear direction on grammar usage ever since.

I believe there are many good reasons for its popularity over the years:

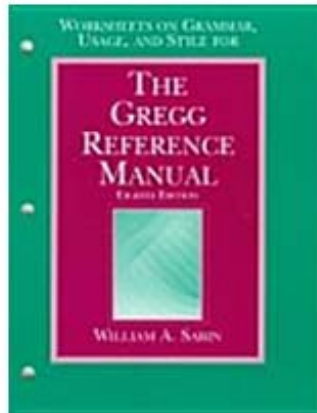
- It’s current with revised editions published every 5-6 years.
- Its Table of Contents, Index and page layout make it easy to use.
- It’s clearly written with many examples as backup.
- It’s a joy to read. Sabin made GRM his life-long, daily expression of love for grammar and usage. You can easily see this love in his prose throughout the book, but it’s especially visible in his passionate *Essays on the Nature of Style*. My favorites are “The Comma Trauma,” “The Plight of the Compound Adjective—Or Where Have All the Hyphens Gone?” and “The Semicolon; And Other Myths.”
- It’s honest. Bill’s famous posture in matters of grammar: “It’s correct, lady, but it ain’t right.” While earning two degrees in English from Yale University, Bill was no pedantic follower of esoteric rules. He was great for laying out the rules and then encouraging writers to follow their instincts. What is more brilliant, beautiful and right?

I was not surprised to learn that Marie, his beloved wife of 50+ years, found one of Bill’s passwords soon after his death: “I love GRM.” How fitting! Millions of us have used GRM as a password into a world of succinct answers to sometimes confusing or controversial grammar issues.

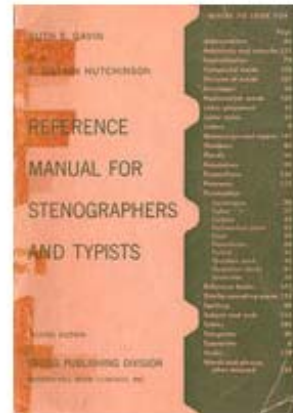
Thank you, Mr. Sabin, for sharing your love of language and being a guiding light for all these years! We love you, too.



Tribute Edition, 2010



Workbook, 1999



First Edition, 1951



*Stan Berry has devoted the past 34 years to improving the writing skills of over 55,000 business and government professionals. After completing his Master's degree from Yale University, he co-authored five books on writing that he uses in his seminars. He's been a member of the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) since 1975 when he served as the newsletter editor and on the Board of Directors for the Twin Cities Chapter. Stan can be reached at [www.BerryWritingGroup.com](http://www.BerryWritingGroup.com) or 612-578-1487.*



**Stan Berry**

*Stu Tanquist has presented at four American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) National Leadership and TechKnowledge conferences and written two best selling ASTD Info-Lines. With over 20 years in the learning and development field, Stu's expertise has ranged from working as a professional trainer to serving as a strategic-level director for training and development. He holds three degrees including a Masters in management. Stu can be reached at [Stu@BerryWritingGroup.com](mailto:Stu@BerryWritingGroup.com) or 612-799-1686.*



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