

BOOK & ARTICLE REVIEWS

A New English Grammar Has All the Answers

Ayuko Momono & James Hunter

Rossiter, A. (2021). *A new English grammar: American edition*. Linguapress.

Summary: A New English Grammar by Andrew Rossiter (2021), is a clear, well organized, practical guide to English grammar at a high-intermediate to advanced level. With only four chapters, covering verbs, nouns, other parts of speech, and sentences and clauses, it organizes grammar points at the level of core concepts, so that the readers can see the big picture of the “grammar web” holistically.

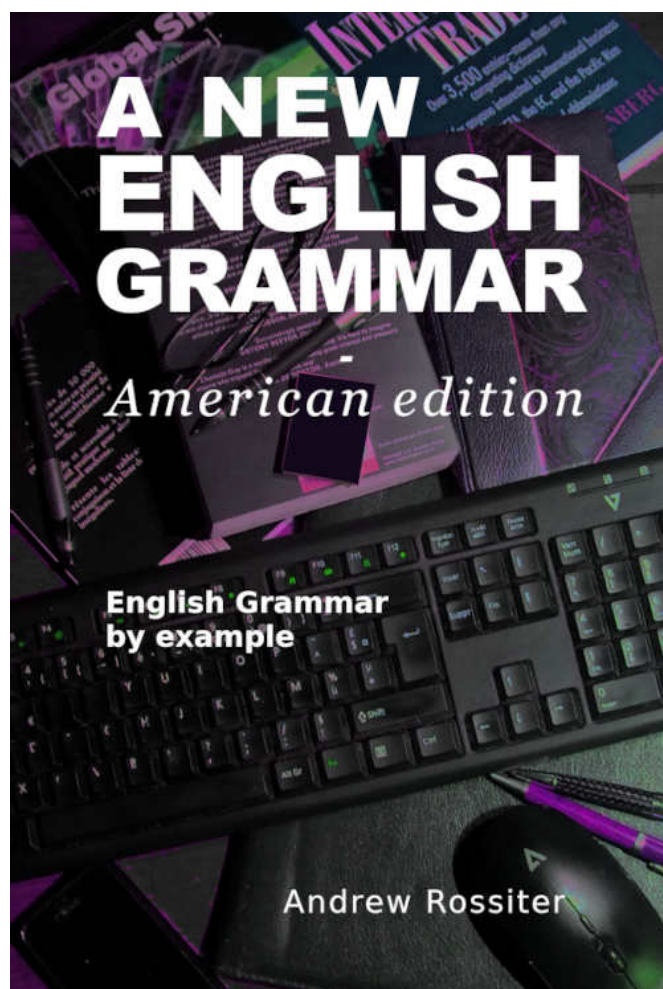
Keywords: practical guide, English grammar, high-intermediate, core concepts

If you were asked the following grammar questions, how would you answer them?

1. *What is the difference between have gotten and have got?*
2. *If it is okay to say, “Football is loved in many parts of the world,” can I also say, “Football is loved by me”?*
3. *Is a gerund a noun or a verb?*
4. *Is look up a phrasal verb? What about look for?*
5. *Can we say, “My family is/are immigrants”? How about “The police is coming”?*
6. *Some grammar books explain numbers are adjectives, but others say they are not. Why is that?*

A New English Grammar – American Edition (NEG), by Andrew Rossiter, has all the answers to these and many other questions. It focuses on how speakers of American English perceive and understand the grammar of the current American English. This book is one of the most practical grammar reference books we’ve seen, where each grammar point is explained in a very simple way with helpful examples as well as warnings about usage pitfalls in only 200 pages of nice, clear, easy-to-read print. The unique organization of the contents makes it possible: the book’s four chapters include verbs, nouns, other parts of speech, and sentences and clauses. Adverbs are explained under the verb section and adjectives are explained under the noun section. When you read about the verb tenses, you will also learn about adverbial clauses of time. Likewise, as you read about pronouns, you will also learn about nouns and adjectives, relative pronouns, and adjective clauses.

Unlike other grammar books which have many individual chapters explaining how different words, phrases, and clauses work, this book attempts to organize the grammar points at the level of core concepts, so that the readers can see the big picture of the “grammar web” holistically,



rather than individually. The organization of NEG is facilitated by an intuitive use of cross-referencing and font colors (so, for example, on p. 34, the “Gerunds and -ing words” section uses different colors for gerunds, verbal nouns, and participles, and the examples that follow use the same colors, making it easier to detect patterns). There is a fairly extensive glossary at the end that refers readers to appropriate sections, and since this NEG is in a digital format, users can easily search for terms.

NEG takes a strong anti-prescriptivist stance, with numerous sections such as on p. 145: “A lot of grammar books claim that it is wrong to start a sentence with a conjunction. This is just not true! And never has been.”

On p.27, the author dedicates 500 words to the topic of

Definitions

The **gerund** is a verb which is used as if it were a noun (Examples 1 & 2 below). Since it is a verb, it can **not** be qualified by an adjective, nor preceded by an article, but, like other forms of the verb, it can be modified by an adverb and take a complement.

A **verbal noun** (Examples 3 & 4) is a **noun** formed from a verb; some verbal nouns end in **-ing**.

Verbal nouns, like other nouns, can take a determiner, and be qualified by adjectives.

A **participle** is an adjective or part of a participial phrase qualifying a noun or a pronoun. (Examples 5 et 6). The present participle is also used in the **progressive** aspect of verb tenses (Examples 7 & 8).

See the differences of use that are illustrated by these examples.

Words in **-ing**: Gerund, noun or present participle (and progressive verb form)

1. **Seeing** is **believing**.
2. **Living** cheaply in New York is quite possible.
3. The book was easy **reading**!
4. He managed to make a good **living**.
5. **Smiling**, the lady told them they'd won the big prize.
6. I heard them **arguing** last night.
7. I'm **taking** my brother to the station tonight
8. The man was **phoning** his friend, when the lights went out.

Example of color coding in A New English Grammar – American Edition

split infinitives, which is arguably less relevant to English learners than to English teachers. The analyses and explanations are generally strong, especially the simplified order of adjectives (p. 131) and the commonsense approach to the passive (pp. 30-33). It does, however, retain some traditional and not very helpful perspectives, such as the self-contradicting use of the term “predicate”: Page 5 insists “Every sentence is made up of a subject and a predicate. The predicate must contain a verb...” while p.153 discusses “Subject, **verb and predicate**” (emphasis added). It might be more useful for learners to abandon the notion of “predicate” entirely, since it contributes next to nothing to an understanding of complements, verb completers (e.g. direct and indirect objects), and so forth. There are also a few additional weaknesses and inaccuracies that we found: the section on articles (p. 98), for example, is disappointing:

The definite article - How simple English is! There is only one definite article, and that is “the”; the only difficulty is knowing when to use it, and when it is not needed.

is all we get; learners might reasonably want more detail on whether a noun is being used in “a ‘defined’ or restricted context” (p.98). And curiously, the section on prepositions of time claims: “English has nine common prepositions of time: only one of these, since, can also be used as an adverb.”

A quick search of [COCA](#) yields plenty of counter-examples: As I said **before**, I'm so glad we met. Or: I'm busy, so I'll see you **after**.

These points notwithstanding, *A New English Grammar – American Edition* by Andrew Rossiter is a very useful resource for teachers and learners alike, and we appreciate the clarity, organization, and ease of use. We both feel that it would be a valuable addition to any teacher’s collection.



AYUKO MOMONO is an ELD (English Language Development) teacher in Spokane Public Schools. She worked at Gonzaga University and Spokane Falls Community College as an ESL instructor for more than a decade after getting her TESL degree at Gonzaga University. For fun, she collects Beatles memorabilia. Contact her at ayukonbu@hotmail.com.



JAMES HUNTER has taught ESL/EFL for over 30 years. He has a PhD in Applied Linguistics from the University of Birmingham, UK, and his research interests include Second Language Acquisition, corpus linguistics, construction grammar, instructional technologies, and teacher development. You can contact him at hunter@gonzaga.edu.