**Usage and Abusage**
*A Guide to Good English (Abusus Non Tollit Usum)*

Eric Partridge

London: Penguin

1942 (1999)

- A landmark work on English usage, now updated to take account of changing views and new issues
- Complete coverage of grammatical problems (split infinitives, confused participles), words that are commonly misused or confused (imply and infer, impracticable and impractical) and points of style (different to and different from, would rather and had rather)
- Articles on a range of topics including punctuation, clichés and writing précis
- Advice on how to write clearly and elegantly

His classic work, now in its the third edition, takes a long, hard look at the use - and constant misuse - of English. Declaring war on bad grammar, woolliness of expression and poor choice of vocabulary, *Usage and Abusage* sets out both to highlight problems and pitfalls and offer constructive advice on the proper use of English. Revised and reset third edition of this classic, authoritative reference work on written English.

**Synopsis**

A new edition of Eric Partridge's English usage guide. It has been edited and revised by Janet Whitcut. Attacking linguistic abusage of all kinds, this guide explores a wide range of grammatical pitfalls and problems, and offers advice on the proper use of English.

Eric Partridge was a master of linguistic scholarship. Author of *A Dictionary of Cliches*, *Shakespeare's Bawdy*, and many others, Partridge's *Usage and Abusage*, first out in 1942, was last updated by him in 1973, six years before his death. But life and language tick on, even without Partridge. Now, Janet Whitcut has revised his classic to keep up with the 1990s. One is reminded that "ablution is now intolerably pedantic" for "hand washing," that *errata* should be confined to corrections in books, and that *precipitously* (very steeply) should not be misused in the place of *precipitately* (violently hurried). The entry on punctuation runs for pages and is lucid, literate, and lively. The "Vogue Words" section is completely updated and provides today's connotations for words and phrases from *academic* to *yuppie*, rounding out a scholarly reference that maintains the Partridge standard.

First published in 1942, this classic work by noted British lexicographer Partridge, who died in 1979, has been updated by Whitcut. Recent editions had included American usage, but more has been added here, for example, the difference in use of *speciality* and *specialty*. The list of *vogue words* is almost totally new; Whitcut added *born-again* and *ethnic* and dropped *Bolshevism* and *ego and id*. The entry *Muhammad* notes that *Muslim* is the correct form for believers, not *Muhammadan*, as in previous editions (but the entry *Mecca* still says it "is a place of religious pilgrimage for Muhammadans"). The entry *Jew* is an improvement over the offensive *Semitic; Hebraic, Hebrew; Jewish*. The entry *black* replaces *Negro*, and a racist example has been removed from the list of similes. But most of the book is still pure Partridge; witness the witty entries *Johnsonese* and *woolliness*, for example, which have not been changed. Most entries have not been updated; many still quote examples from newspapers and magazines of the 1930s and 1940s. Libraries with an earlier edition of Partridge on their shelves will be happy to replace it with this new one, and language mavens will still find it interesting reading. For public and high-school libraries, though, it is still too British and too dated to be the first choice for a usage guide. *Webster's Dictionary of English Usage* (Merriam-Webster, 1989) is a better alternative. *Sandy Whiteley* ((Reviewed “May 01, 1995”) - *Booklist*

The first edition of this book was published in 1942 and became a classic reference on the use of the English language. Whitcut has updated this edition for the 1990s but left much of Partridge's original wit and wisdom intact. She also kept many of his original examples and citations to other works, so this new edition still seems somewhat dated. That said, this style manual in dictionary form, interspersed with essays on various topics (including "standard English," "jargon," and "euphemism"), is by turns entertaining and informative. An updated list of vogue words includes such entries as "backlash," "crash," and "syndrome." This book would do well in reference for answering quick questions such as the difference
between "can" and "may," both of which "express the idea of permission." It is also interesting to browse. Recommended for informed readers. *Library Journal*