

W O R D W A R E

FOR  
ATARI

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# WORD HABITS

**Are your reading and writing habits keeping up  
with the demands of our high-information society?**



Word Habits is a fast and friendly quiz on how well you now read important reports and articles, and how well you write memos, assignments and letters. Use the answers to boost your reading and writing skills.



# WORD HABITS

## THE FIRST STEP

Words are wonderful — if you know how to use them.

Developed over centuries into the English language of today, words are the symbols we use to share our ideas with each other.

English is a grand language, broad and versatile enough for anyone's needs. Elegant and expressive, for the poet. Pragmatic and precise for the scientist or the accountant. Vivid enough to put you in a far-away land while sitting in your living room. Simple and sincere, for friends.

But as useful as English is, language is in danger; it's under attack daily. The major enemies of English are those who misuse words. Does that include you?

The *Wordhabits™* Quiz program will start you on the path toward improving the way you communicate with others and toward upgrading your reading skills, as well.

## How Do Bad Habits Start?

Most of us are reared with the language, barely conscious of words while we learn them. In school we were supposed to learn the good word habits. But bad word habits often shove aside the good. How? Copying others is the primary culprit. Once one lazy word user influences a younger word user, the trail of word abuse is set ablaze.

Because bad habits tend to drive out the good, according to reading expert Myron Q. Herrick, much of the language's usefulness is lost to many of us. Few read at more than one-tenth the speed they're capable of. Speech and writing often are garbled in every facet of life, school, work and play.

## Word Habits and Reading

Good word habits are useful for everyone. If you understand the language, you'll enjoy reading more — whether it's for profit or pleasure.

You'll know that a poem is a poem because the words make images flow gracefully through your mind.

And from reading flows writing and the spoken word. If you can talk to people clearly, you can persuade them to do what you want them to do.

## Advice to Get Started

Our *Wordhabits™* quiz is designed to help you pinpoint some weaknesses in your current word habits. How do you cure those weaknesses? That's what we'll be helping you with in future *Wordware™* programs. But to get you started, we polled some writing experts to give you tips to think about. Use these ideas and the *Wordhabits™* quiz to start making some positive changes.

## Stop Overusing Words

Carla Bender, corporate communications consultant, cautions writers to watch out for the "the-and-it" trap.

"Reread your writing after every draft, looking for the word 'it' and for sentences beginning with 'The,'" Ms. Bender says. "The word 'it' is so vague that often you can't tell what the word refers to. I tell writers they should be able to eliminate the word in almost every case and improve their writing in the process. Another trap is starting sentences with 'The.' Reread your writing and you may discover three or more sentences in a row beginning with 'The.'"

## Practice Writing

An exercise in good writing is to try to copy the style of the short news features found in the front sections of many magazines. Ann Arnott, the originator of the "Mostly Money" column in *Redbook Magazine*, says the two- or three-paragraph news feature is one of the hardest types of writing because you must boil down the essence of a 700- to 1,200-word press release into less than 200 words.

## Be Less Formal

John Neville, a professional business communicator, says business writing often suffers because the writer tries to be too formal.

"Too many writers use long convoluted sentences with lots of parenthetical expressions, trying to sound authoritative," Neville says. "I tell writers to use short sentences in almost a staccato fashion, keeping the language varied. And I see no harm in making business writing less formal by asking for reader involvement. 'Picture if you will . . .' is an excellent phrase to start a sentence."

## What to Look Up to?

What kinds of writing do other writers admire? David Stevens, senior editor of a leading men's magazine, says, "Read the Paul Stuart menswear ads in *The New Yorker* magazine. The relaxed style of easy familiarity with men's fashions in the writing immediately improves your own feel for words."

*Better Homes and Gardens* magazine editors suggest new staff writers read the book, *The Letters of E.B. White*. And advertising agencies often suggest new copywriters read the L.L. Bean catalog. For the rules of writing, most magazines and many journalism schools suggest *The Elements of Style* by Strunk and White.

## Program Instructions

- Load the program into your computer with OSCAR. Then type "RUN." (Refer to your User's Manual if you have difficulties.)
- Read each question carefully and answer "Y" (yes) or "N" (no). Be honest.
- Try the quiz again after your evaluation. Change one answer and see if it improves your score. If it does, you've learned a good word habit.
- Hit "Y" if you want to try another round. Otherwise, type "N."







