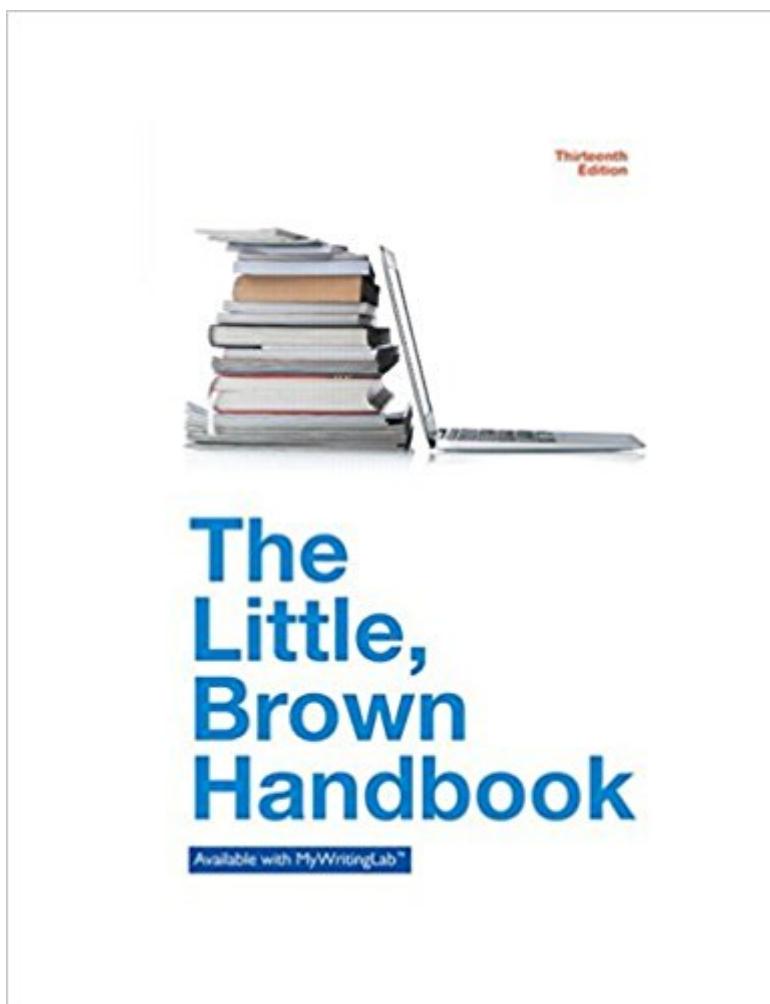


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I taught this book for three years at a community college. It was in between using two Diana Hacker books Rules for Writers and the Bedford Handbook. For myself, this book is very comprehensive. If I could, I could have taught the entire course using this text, although our college requires an additional "reader." There are enough sample essays and other pieces in here that the reader portion could be done with this book. Its approach is encyclopedic to grammar, punctuation, usage, and spelling problems. I also found its section on composition essentials very well done, particularly chapter 4 on paragraphs. I found their explanation of how to do MLA papers and research papers in general quite useful. Before we used this textbook, I would usually download supplementary information from net websites on paragraphing and MLA papers to fill in the gap between what students wanted to know and what the textbooks said on these and other subject. However, the Little Brown Handbook was so full of information, that I did not have to do that during the years I used this book. This is a good book if one is embarking on a serious campaign as a writer. When I was more active as a writer, I found that other writers and copy editors on publications I worked on continually stocked up on such books. These are the best places to look for clarification on problems of grammar, mechanics, and usage. Surprisingly, even for the experienced degreed writer, what such books say about improving rhetoric or diction is often useful, the basics we can forget easily. As such, even though our college has moved back to Hacker, I will keep it out as a reference for my own writing and editing. Yet, as a text book for an individual composition course, its sixty dollar price, makes the book an outrageous drag on already emptied student pockets. The scandal of the price of university texts needs to be exposed and investigated.

Although intended primarily for students, The Little Brown Handbook is an excellent reference for all nonfiction writers. While writing my own recent book on option pricing, I consulted it often regarding the use of colons, semicolons, dashes, and other fine points of punctuation. It even served as an arbiter of correct grammar and usage in the occasional dispute with my copy editor! Almost everything critical to good writing is covered--from organization, paragraph coherence, and sentence structure, to punctuation, word choice, and issues of style--and in sufficient detail to be useful to the working wordsmith. Guidelines for academic writers, a discussion of the American Psychological Association (APA) style employed in the social sciences, and suggestions for use of the internet in research, also appear in The Little Brown Handbook. All in all, this book should be found near the Strunk and White classic, The Elements of Style, on any writer's bookshelf. I would unhesitatingly recommend it to anyone who writes, either for pleasure or for a living. Jeffrey Owen

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