

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-07343-1 - The Printer's Grammar  
John Smith  
Frontmatter  
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### **The Printer's Grammar**

The author of this 1755 work is unknown – John Smith may not even have been his real name – but internal evidence from the book suggests that he may have spent some time in northern Germany, and he also shows familiarity with aspects of French printing. Smith describes the typesetting of books but not the actual printing, so it is possible that he may have been a compositor or a printer's reader. The work is a comprehensive survey of all aspects of typesetting and composition, dealing with the formation of type, regular- and irregular-bodied letters, accents, kerning, upper and lower case, spacing, rules, braces and fleurons, and non-Roman fonts including Greek, Hebrew, black-letter, Old English, and Chinese, as well as mathematical and astronomical symbols and music. There are also sections on casting off copy, composing, imposing and correcting, giving a fascinating account of the eighteenth-century compositor's craft.

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# The Printer's Grammar

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THE  
**Printer's Grammar:**

Wherein are Exhibited, Examined, and Explained,

THE  
**SUPERFICIES, GRADATION,  
 and PROPERTIES**

OF

The different Sorts and Sizes of METAL TYPES,  
 cast by LETTER FOUNDERS:

Sundry ALPHABETS, of ORIENTAL, and  
 some other Languages;

Together with the CHINESE Characters:

The FIGURES of Mathematical, Astronomical,  
 Musical, and Physical Signs;

Jointly with Abbreviations, Contractions, and Ligatures:

The Construction of Metal Flowers — Various Tables,  
 and Calculations—Models of different Letter-Cases;  
 Schemes for Casting off Copy, and Imposing;

And many other

REQUISITES for attaining a more perfect knowledge both in the  
 THEORY and PRACTICE of the ART of PRINTING.

WITH

DIRECTIONS to Authors, Compilers, &c.  
 how to Prepare Copy, and to Correct their own Proofs.

The Whole calculated for the Service of All who have any  
 Concern in the Letter Press.

By JOHN SMITH, *Regiom.*

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[ i ]

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TO THE  
R E A D E R.

**T**HE publication of the following Effay is the result of a resolution to make a stand against the joint difasters that long have harrassed me, and threaten to pursue me to the last confines of retreat: For tho' infirmities and ailments are become habitual to me; yet when their concomitant consequences presented themselves more gaffly to me, I was on a sudden prompted to think of guarding against their further incroachments: But knowing myself unable to do it by the usual exercise of my profession, I concluded to publish Proposals for printing this Grammar; which had the good effect, that in a short time so many declared themselves in favour of my undertaking, that I had no room to doubt of succeeding in it. And notwithstanding a considerable number of my Subscribers have proved Apostates since, the Work has nevertheless been continued, and is brought to a conclusion by the aid of the permanent

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manent Encouragers thereof ; and especially by the interest of some particular Well-wishers, who have shewn themselves so assiduous in promoting my expectations, that it demands my public acknowledgement. By these helps, and by having been permitted to print at prime cost, I have been enabled to carry this Grammar to its proposed length : but how it will be received by those who have not yet examined into the merits thereof, will soon appear by the success of the remaining Copies. In the mean time I shall use no art to gain the approbation of those who were under apprehension, that this Work, being of a troublesome and expensive nature, if it was not done as it *should be*, would be better not done at all ; since I am not ignorant, that our ideas of the same thing are not *always* the same ; and therefore hope they will reverse their opinion, and judge more favourable of the whole. I myself, *now*, find that it is not done as it should be, by having been too circumstantial in the Theoretical part of this Grammar, thinking it incumbent in a Compositor to be acquainted with the *Properties* of letters, as well as to know their *Situation* in the boxes. But the study of the first is now become obsolete, and called *immaterial*, according to the compliment that was given by one to the contents of our first Number : and another pronounced it an insignificant work, and even  
quitted



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quitted it, on seeing in it the Sorts of a Fount of Letter, which ( he added ) he could have in the Horn-book. But neither these nor other aggravations have hinder'd me from pursuing my design ; and from introducing, according to the proposed compass, what I thought might be of service to such as know still less than what may be gathered from this Volume ; which has been compiled under such disadvantages as well of body as of mind, that I hope the many Witnesses thereof will not expose me where I am deficient. Nevertheless, if there are those who expect what I have not promis'd, they may thank themselves for being disappointed ; for I did not intend to touch in *this* part upon the History and Practice of *real* Printing ; considering that these two articles would fill more sheets than we have done in describing the business of a Compositor. Neither did I propose to embellish this Essay with Pictures, by having several things either cut in wood, or engraved in copper ; but have compos'd the Schemes for Imposing, as well as some Drafts of Cases ; judging it not pertinent in work of this kind to make a shew of the manoperation of any other artist than Compositors ; or to introduce any thing else but what is cast by Letter-founders, and may therefore create employment for the Printer ; but which cannot be expected from Characters or Representations that have  
their

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their formation either in wood, or in copper. It may therefore be said, that a work of the nature of this Grammar cannot be done as it should be, without the generous assistance of Founders, in furnishing the undertaker thereof with Sorts as should be exhibited, but which either cannot be met with in Printing-houses, or else are not in condition good enough to serve for Specimens. A work of that perfection might have been expected, had Mr. PALMER lived to execute his well-concerted Plan for that part which was to have treated of the Practice of Printing; in which he would not have wanted such helps as I could not expect, on account of not being in the same superior station—an advantage which many times prevails against real merit. Jeune however as this performance may be look'd upon, it is not void of such Articles as Mr. *Palmer* would have treated upon, according to the Contents to his own work: and *this* having the advantage of being done in a Printing-house the most compleat, has afforded means to grace it with particulars that otherwise could not have been expected. In the meantime I am unwilling to lay aside the thoughts I have entertained of compiling a Sequel to this Part, containing The HISTORY and Present STATE of PRINTING; for which undertaking I would hope the favour and indulgence of the Public.