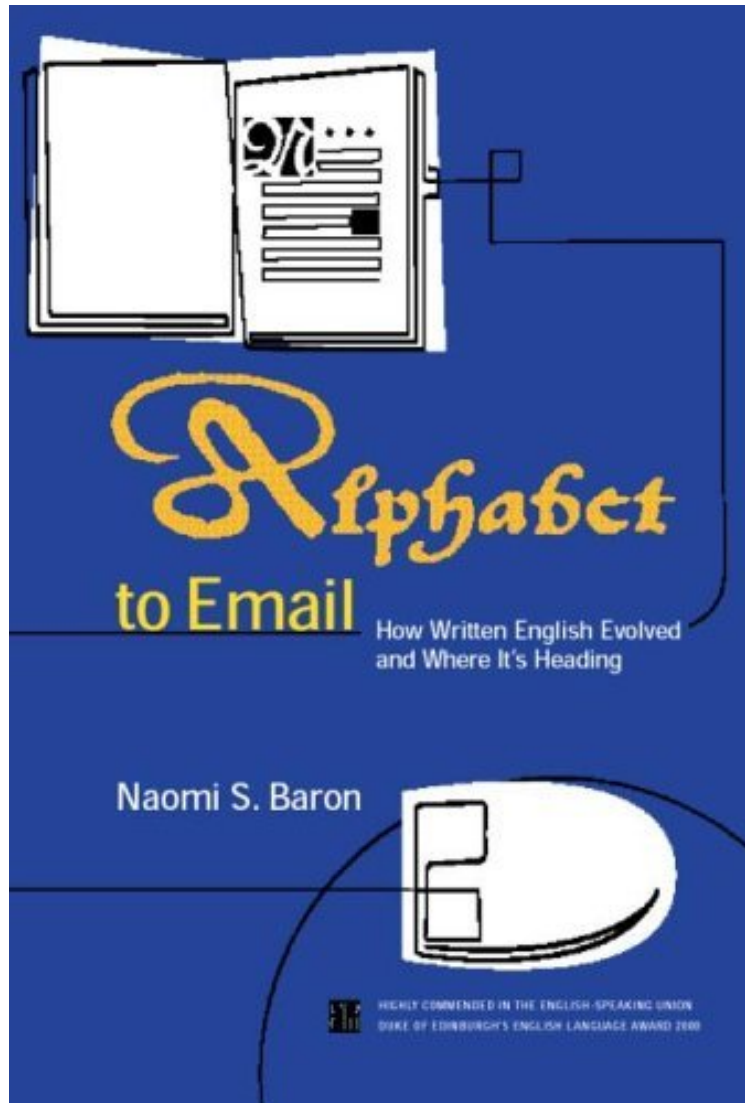


[Free] Alphabet to Email: How Written English Evolved and Where It's Heading

# Alphabet to Email: How Written English Evolved and Where It's Heading

Von NAOMI S. BARON

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Produktinformation Veröffentlicht am: 2002-06-01 Erscheinungsdatum: 2002-06-01 File Name: B000OI0J00 | File size: 37.Mb

**Von NAOMI S. BARON : Alphabet to Email: How Written English Evolved and Where It's Heading** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Alphabet to Email: How Written English Evolved and Where It's Heading:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Should Formal English Always Merge with Spoken English? Von Donald Mitchell Alphabet to Email is the history of the development of written English from the adoption of the current alphabet to the present day. The book is written in a

simple, clear style that makes the points easy to understand, and the argument is well structured. Written at a level the layperson can easily comprehend, the book provides many helpful insights into the current trends in written expression towards a more emotional, briefer colloquial style. The book raises important questions about the potential future for traditional, formally written English that will be of interest to most readers. Those who like to understand more about language will definitely enjoy this book. Those who are interested in developing a more literate society will also find this book a must read. People who are unsure about when to be more formal and when to be less so will probably get a number of valuable ideas from this book. Those who do not like to read formal English will wonder why anyone would write or read such a book. The book's basic thesis is that English started as an oral language with only primitive written capabilities until the current alphabet was applied. During the Middle Ages, written English developed to record oral English both as an "aide memoire" but also to create permanency where that was important. Beginning in the 17th century, written English began to take on its own, separate form and developed the rules as we know them today. That evolution continued until around 1950 in the United States, when written English began to increasingly mimic spoken English. E-mail is the latest expression of this trend, often replacing telephone calls, voice mail, and letters but in a form closer to voice mail than to the others. Ms. Baron characterizes the current state of this convergence as being quite far along. She wonders if students and teachers will at some point simply stop reading formal English, despite knowing that it exists. Certainly, that process is far along. Reading lists for classes are very brief now, and yet many students listen to tapes, watch videos, or read summaries. Ms. Baron notes that the purpose of writing is degenerating into simply being an information carrier, in the simplest form possible. She also observes that individual writing is merging into collective writing where "individual authorship, responsibility for telling the truth, and intellectual property rights are coming under fire." The mass forms of electronic writing mean that writing is becoming malleable over time, rather than a fixed product. Spencer Johnson rewrote each printing of "Who Moved My Cheese?" in response to reader reactions, for example. That would never have occurred in an earlier period. Book reviews came to mind as I read the book. The people who write these reviews are a tiny minority of all people who buy and read books. The reviews mostly fall into a few categories. Most reviews are from people saying that agree with the book, and that it made them feel good to read it. This is a classic oral communication form. The next most common category is a review that focuses on the usefulness of the material in the book for some purpose. That is clearly close to oral communication, like a tip you give people you know. Another category is one where people focus on the writing style in the book. Content usually gets little attention. Although ostensibly about the written word, the form of the review is usually to state a few simple conclusions without examples and is rather like the tips mentioned above. Many other reviews are brief summaries of the book and simple comparisons to well known books that seem to be based solely on reading the jacket copy. These are also informational of the verbal sort. Another subset involves disagreeing with the author and explaining why. These reflect formal thought, but are usually informally conveyed in terms of language and sentence structure. Rarely does one see a review of the sort that would appear in a newspaper or magazine, even though every writer of these reviews is familiar with that form. Clearly, the future belongs to Hemingway. If you want an audience, you'd better make it simple and brief. I learned that I should shorten up my reviews on from reading this book. This echoed a recent conversation with a well-regarded publisher in which he told me that business books should be half the length of my latest one. That was quite an epiphany for me! After you finish reading this valuable book, I suggest you make a conscious decision about which writing styles (and lengths) you will use when and where. That will lead you further back into what you are trying to accomplish by writing. In some cases, an e-mail is faster than a visit or a call. In some cases, it is more likely to get to the person. In other cases, formal writing can have an impact for which nothing else can substitute. Being conscious of what you are trying to accomplish can make all the difference!

**Kurzbeschreibung** In *Alphabet to Email* Naomi Baron takes us on a fascinating and often entertaining journey through the history of the English language, showing how technology - especially email - is gradually stripping language of its formality. Drawing together strands of thinking about writing, speech, pedagogy, technology, and globalization, Naomi Baron explores the ever-changing relationship between speech and writing and considers the implications of current language trends on the future of written English. *Alphabet to Email* will appeal to anyone who is curious about how the English language has changed over the centuries and where it might be going. **Pressestimmen** 'Naomi Baron has succeeded in writing a fascinating yet erudite, and quite compact, history that draws together threads from a bewildering variety of sources.' - Pam Le Gassick, *Society of Indexers* 'At one level, *Alphabet to Email* is a fascinating chronological history of written English; at another, it is a carefully argued case for preserving the distinctions between oral and written language.' - Ilana Snyder, *Journal of Sociolinguistics* **Kurzbeschreibung** In *Alphabet to Email* Naomi Baron takes us on a fascinating and often entertaining journey through the history of the English language, showing how technology - especially email - is gradually stripping language of its formality. Drawing together strands of thinking about writing, speech, pedagogy, technology, and globalization, Naomi Baron explores the ever-changing

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