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**6 TIPS FOR BETTER WRITING**

By Bob McElwain

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When writing most anything, the objective is produce copy that is easy to read. This is particularly true on the Web, because chances are the majority of your visitors and newsletter readers are in hurry-up mode. They'll pass on anything that seems hard to read. Here are ways you can improve the readability of your work.

1) The simplest word available is the best choice.

Mark Twain often got paid by the word. He once commented he preferred city over metropolis. Sure, the "joke" is that he got paid for either word, and that city is quicker and easier to write. But he also knew it made his work easier to read.

2) Avoid using adverbs and adjectives.

"This is very hard to do."

"This is awfully hard to do."

"This is hard to do."

Which of the above do you feel is the best? I've asked a loaded question here, for "best" doesn't really apply. To strengthen your work, minimize the use of qualifiers. There is simply no question here. The last form is the strongest.

The point? Adverbs such as "very" and "awfully" often weaken, rather than strengthen. In the previous sentence I was

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forced to use "often," for without it the sentence is not true. That is, adverbs and adjectives do not always mess things up. But they often or usually do.

Alternatively, consider breaking the flow. Then hit hard. For the above, try:

"This is an awesome task."

This is a stronger claim than, "This is hard to do." Which is best depends upon the way you want to make your point and who you want to make it to.

3) Keep sentences as short as possible.

Above, "This is hard to do," is also the better choice, for it's shorter. Here's a sentence I wrote for another purpose. (I'll refer below to this as the, "Original.")

"Subheadings must flow from the headline, revealing the major benefits so that at the end of the page, the reader has a good feel for the content, even when only the headlines are scanned."

It's much, much too long. 34 words. While it's not hard to read, it does slow reading because the length makes it more difficult to follow. Personally, I try to hold to under 15 words, and less whenever possible. Even though it's longer (45 words), the following revision is easier to read.

Revision #1: "Subheadings should flow from the headline. Each should reveal a major benefit to the reader. And at the end of the page, you want the reader to have a good feel for the content. This matters because most only scan the headlines and subheadings."

4) Seek brevity and eliminate unnecessary words.

Revision #2: "Subheadings flow from the headline. Each reveals a major benefit to the reader. Collectively they need to describe page content. This matters because often only subheadings are scanned."

This version is only 28 words. Which of the above do you prefer? Actually this is another trick question in two ways.

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First, it's the wrong question. You should be asking what your readers prefer. The better question is which of the three versions best makes the point clear to your readers? And which will they find easiest to read?

Second, what you prefer does not matter. That's just personal reading taste. What does matter is which of the above better fits the way you want to write.

I might use the original form to introduce a topic. Then follow up with a paragraph or two about each of the key points included or implied in the sentence. However, Revision #1 is stronger, and usually my choice.

### 5) Use Bulleted Text

Revision #2 is a bit blunt. It doesn't flow well from beginning to end. If your writing tends to be in this form, use lots of bulleted text. In this format, brief works great. Further, there's no requirement for even complete sentences.

Subheadings ...

- > Flow from the headline
- > Reveal a major benefit to the reader
- > Collectively describe page content
- > Are often all your visitors sees when scanning

Bulletting allows brevity. And it makes it easy for your readers to follow. One thing I love about this format is that it adds more space to the page. It helps to erase that sense of great black globs of text.

### 6) Edit and rewrite. Then do it again. And again.

Editing often lifts modest work to first rate. But to make this happen, think of this fundamental task as more than editing. Think of it as rewriting. Do so routinely, and your work will improve with every piece you write. Always seek ...

- > A better word than one you have used, and a simpler one is best

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- > Try to replace several words with fewer
- > Rewrite an entire sentence, even a paragraph, if you can find a way to make your point more clearly and/or briefly

### Wrapping Up

You can beef up your writing just as you can improve any skill. All it takes is time. In the above, the need for rewriting part of your work is the item most often overlooked.

It's tough to impossible to keep all such ideas in mind as you seek to communicate your thoughts. One effective approach is to focus on one idea each time you begin writing.

If you seek to improve one aspect of your work in each writing session, then edit and rewrite, your work will constantly improve. Try it. And see for yourself.

Bob McElwain, author of "Your Path To Success." How to build ANY business you want, just the way you want it, with only pocket money. Get ANSWERS. Subscribe to "STAT News" now!  
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### **Have You Plotted Your Story Before Writing It?**

**By Nick Vernon**

Creative Writing Tips -

The writer, who doesn't have the time to plot, always finds the time to rewrite.

Sound familiar?

I've been guilty of this too, back in the early days of my writing apprenticeship. I was so eager to get stuck into writing my story that I wouldn't bother with plotting.

Plotting gives you a sense of direction. It's your map, which will lead you to write your story. Leaping into the unknown rarely works. Without a plot several things can happen.... Our stories aren't focused

We lose our way Our characters don't come to life because we don't take the time to develop them

We get stuck The story strays from us

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And all this happens when we haven't figured everything out first.

Your plot is the foundation of your story. It's the skeleton, which will hold your story together. Your plot is there to work everything out first - to see if it can be worked out, and then flesh out that skeleton with other elements that make a story.

Plotting is the difference between writing a story for yourself and writing one for an audience. Writing for ourselves doesn't require too much strain because we only have ourselves to please. It's when we have to please our readers that the hard work begins.

If you are aiming to sell your stories, plotting is a must.

Have you plotted your story before writing it?

Besides his passion for writing, Nick Vernon runs an online gift site where you will find gift information, articles and readers' funny stories. Visit

Have You Plotted Your Story Before Writing It?

3 Main Tips for Writing Articles along with 3 mini tips on your word choice

10 Quick Tips To Writing Profitable Articles

7 Tips for Writing Winning Resume Cover Letters

Ten Tips to Simplify Your Business Correspondence

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Ebook Authors Interviewed

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101 tips to stay fit and live longer.



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