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Tips For Better Writing

By Kent E. Butler

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by: **Kent E. Butler**

It is certainly true that we don't get a second chance to make a first impression. As the impression we make on the Internet is almost always with the written word, is it unfortunate that there is so much poor writing bouncing around in cyberspace. The following tips are intended to help you make a better first impression.

Speaking of first impressions, I don't want to present myself as "the Final Authority". Dave Barry readers know that would be "Mr. Language Person". I'm just a guy who's been writing marketing and training materials for a couple of decades and I've picked up a few things. If they are of value to you, I'm glad I could help.

Know your audience. Who are you trying to reach and what is the best approach to accomplish your goal? Should you be informal, strictly business or something else?

Plan what you want to say before you type the first word. Make a few notes. You will stay on message better and present a more readable piece.

No matter how extensive your vocabulary, resist the impulse to dazzle your readers. You may impress some but you'll lose many more. Common, everyday words work just fine – that's how they became common.

Avoid jargon whenever possible. Yes, almost every undertaking has its own language, just write at the level most appropriate for the vast majority of your readers. If in doubt, see 3. above.

Syntax (sentence structure) matters. When I hear something like, "Me 'n' John went to..." it's like fingernails down the chalkboard! People who speak that way probably write the same way, I figure. If your word processor has a grammar checker, use it – the spell checker won't help in this kind of situation.

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The other person always comes first, so it is "John and I went to...". The trick for determining whether to use I or me is to drop the other person and say it. I doubt you'd say "Me went to...". Right?

Short sentences are more powerful than long ones. They are easier to read and hold the reader better. It might just be two words: Janet smiled. Depending on what preceded it, those two little words could be very powerful indeed. Think how important this sentence can be: I do.

If you're writing ads and you'd like them to stand out, avoid using the same approach "everyone else" is using. Look at how many ads use some variation of "Make \$16 Million Before Lunch!!!!!!!!!" and then do something else for yours. Nobody really buys that stuff anyway, do they? Use your imagination.

Some words simply cannot be modified, so don't. Among these, for example, are unique and pregnant. Nothing can be "very unique" because unique means something of which there is only one. And a

woman is either pregnant or she isn't. She cannot be "somewhat pregnant".

Punctuation is critically important. If you don't think so, study the following sentence. It can be punctuated to create opposite meanings: Woman without her man is nothing.

I think the most grossly overused punctuation mark is the exclamation point! There is a school of semi-thought that seems to have concluded that a thing is more important, or exciting, or urgent if multiple exclamation points are used, as in: Buy NOW!!!!!! Actually, it just means the writer doesn't know much about punctuation.

Use comparative suffixes (-er, -ier, -est) rather than "more". The weather is getting cooler, not "more cool". She is happier, not "more happy".

Enjoy your writing, it can be a real adventure!

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Kent Butler has been in marketing and sales since just after the discovery of dirt. He has written a great variety of things, from sales letters to screenplays. If this piece was helpful to you, he's happy. You are cordially invited to explore his Internet Resource Center at

If you became a customer, of course, he'd be even happier (not more happy).

Have You Plotted Your Story Before Writing It?

By Nick Vernon

Creative Writing Tips -

Tips For Better Writing

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

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

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