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Writing it Right!

By PETER DE PRADINES

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The most important sentence in any article is the first. If it doesn't induce the reader to proceed to the second then your article just died.

Still with me? Good, let's look at powerful writing concepts:

Simplicity
Lack of clutter
Brevity
Style.

These will ensure your articles live long enough for you to retire, collecting the pension they've earned.

Maximum Simplicity:

The secret of good writing is stripping every sentence to its cleanest components. Each word serving no function, drop it. Every long word that could be shorter, make it so. Frequently the higher the writer's education or rank the worse their addiction to unnecessary words. This affliction is not recent.

In 1942 a Presidential senior staffer wrote concerning the blackout required by war-time conditions:

Such preparations shall be made as will completely obscure all Federal buildings and non-Federal buildings occupied by the Federal government during an air raid for any period of time from visibility by reason of internal or external illumination.

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Roosevelt suggested:

Tell them that in buildings where they keep working to put something across the windows.

Minimum Clutter:

Fighting clutter is like fighting weeds – the writer is always slightly behind. New varieties sprout overnight and by noon they're part of everyday speech. Nixon's aide John Dean said on television during Watergate, "at this point in time". By next morning this had replaced the word "now" in the American language. By sunset it had spread

across the English speaking globe faster than a Love–Bug virus!

Word meanings get twisted creating more clutter. It seems that today people always "address" things instead of actually dealing with them. "Experiencing" is another splendid example. Your dentist may ask if you're experiencing pain. What he'd say to a five year old is: Does it hurt? Any doubts which is most effective?

Brevity:

Mark Twain: Had I more time, I should have written less. Enough said!

Specific Style:

Few of us realise how badly we write. First it's essential to strip sentences to bare bones, ensuring removal of all surplus baggage. Only then can we consider style – that with which we to seek to charm our readers.

Style is where we focus our words on distinct audiences. Here the sonnet and the recipe part company. Though going their separate ways, they must still share the same powerful common ingredients.

Get excited:

If there's no enthusiasm in the writer there'll be none in the reader! Allow your writing to get emotional – let your readers know you're keen. They may disagree strongly with your views but at least they'll read them. Boredom – and your writing has just committed suicide!

Adverbs:

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Most adverbs are clutter – effortlessly easy – myself personally – don't say that the radio blared loudly – blared means loud, how else can anything blare? Virtually unique is like saying somebody is virtually pregnant. Either they are or they're not! Virtually shouldn't get a look in!

Noun Breeding:

Why is it nobody goes broke these days, they have money problem areas. It no longer rains, we have precipitation activity or thunderstorm probability. Get real – say what you mean – simply.

Credibility:

Credibility is as fragile for a writer as for a politician. Don't inflate anything. Get caught in a single bogus statement and everything else you write will be suspect. Don't do it.

Contractions:

Your style will be warmer and truer to your personality using contractions such as "I'll" and "can't". Check if your style is stilted by reading it out loud – to your spouse or to your dog. Which doesn't matter. You'll soon pick up the style in your voice – does it work for you? Does it flow, does it sound right? If not, do it again.

Paragraphs:

Keep them short. Writing is visual. It catches the eye before it has a chance to catch the brain. Short paragraphs put white space around your writing and make it look inviting. Long chunks of type can discourage readers from even starting.

Rewriting:

You're going to hate this one! Rewriting is the essence of writing well. It's where the game is won or lost. We all have emotional equity in our first draft; we can't believe it wasn't born perfect. The odds are it wasn't. Read it again tomorrow. Consider Mark Twain's comment about brevity. Use what time you have to distil your words to the potency of good whisky.

Go with YOUR flow:

There's no subject you don't have permission to write about. I've read

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articles on fishing, flying, football, pistons and perfumes. Plus dozens of subjects in which I thought I had no interest. People often avoid subjects that are close to their hearts, assuming readers will think them "stupid".

No area of life is stupid to someone who takes it seriously.

Follow your fancies and you'll write well. Apply these powerful principles – and you'll do it even better! You'll engage, enlighten and entertain your readers. This is all they will ever ask of you.

PETER DE PRADINES is OEO (Only Exec Officer :) of the HiperNet Group: <http://GoCritique.com> On-line peer-to-peer free site critiques. <http://Protiques.com> Professional critique assessment services. <http://Teekers.com> Discussion forum for the critique community. <http://4SiteJournal.com> Weekly newsletter on web design & tips.

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

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.

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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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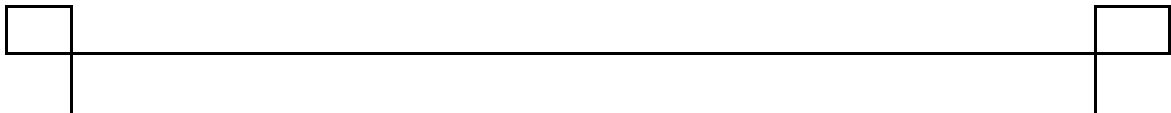
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