

Writing To Win More Business: **Sharpening Your Skills**

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Shameless Plugs

- 1982 Pulitzer Prize, Local Spot News, K.C. Star/Times
- Original staff member, USA Today
- Interviewed O.J. Simpson before his famous ride in a white Bronco



Grammar

It does save lives.

**I like
cooking my family
and my pets.**

**Use commas.
Don't be a psycho.**



Spelling

But I love my aunt!



Clarity

Read what you write before hitting the send/save button.

SETTING IT STRAIGHT

Typographical error

Due to a typing error, Saturday's story on local artist Jon Henninger mistakenly reported that Henninger's band mate Eric Lyday was on drugs. The story should have read that Lyday was on drums. The Sentinel regrets the error.

Found at: englishfailblog.com

Shared by
Grammarly



Getting started

“Writing is hard, even for authors who do it all the time. Less frequent practitioners – such as the business executive with an annual report to get out – often get stuck in an awkward passage or find a muddle on their screens, and then blame themselves. What should be easy and flowing looks tangled or feeble or overblown – not what was meant at all. What’s wrong with me, each one thinks. Why can’t I get this right?”

Roger Agnell

What we write

- Emails
- Correspondence
- Marketing material
- Proposals/RFPs
- Interview questions
- Quarterly reports
- Executive summaries
- Letters of intent
- Commission agreements
- Market updates
- Submitted articles
- Descriptive narratives
- White papers
- Blogs



Authoritative Content

- 1. Insight:** Insight is the personal understanding gained as a result of coming in contact with particular information. Insight is the understanding gained from your own point of view. It is knowledge or information mixed with your personal experience.
- 2. Simplicity:** Simplicity is about presenting information in an easy-to-understand manner. Simplicity is about making the information easily memorable by breaking it down from a complex whole to small, understandable bits. Simplicity is the evidence of insight.
- 3. Depth:** Depth simply refers to how detailed your content is. Depth is about how well you're driving home your point. Depth is the extent to which you break down the concept of which you're writing.
- 4. Breadth:** If depth is about details, the breadth is about association. It answers the question: "How do the insights you're sharing relate to other relevant concepts/subjects/principles/ideas?"
- 5. Relevance:** The point of providing authoritative content is to help those reading it grasp and understand what you've written. People don't read for the mere fun of reading: they read because they want to learn and apply that knowledge or information.

Inviting Content

- 1. Don't think about it:** Hemingway once said, “The first draft of anything is shit!” You're going to edit, then edit again, then edit again. If you need to step away from what you're writing for a few minutes, by all means do so.
- 2. Read it out loud:** Look at an email you recently sent to a business colleague. Does it include the phrase “per our conversation?” Have you ever struck up a conversation with your favorite bartender with “as you requested ...” Normal business people, conducting normal business, don't talk like that.

Inviting Content

- 3. Keep sentences short:** Who remembers Micro Machines? Remember the commercial? A fast-talking voice touted the attributes of these tiny toys, always ending with: “Remember, if it doesn’t say Micro Machines, it’s not the real thing.” Normal speech requires you to take breaks to breathe. Writing requires breaks. Shorter sentences – 30 words or less – mimic natural conversation and increase readership.
- 4. Common words:** Who among your business associates use SAT words in normal, everyday conversation? I thought so. We tend to use words with less than three syllables when we speak. When writing, try to avoid highly technical, or industry specific jargon. That is, unless, if it’s a document where that type of writing is required. Try to use common vocabulary and expressions whenever possible.

Inviting Content

- 5. Speak in the first person:** Every paper, assignment or article you wrote in grade school, high school, and college. The news. Government reports. These are all formal methods of communication. They are thorough, complex, and objective. Which often means they're cold and impersonal. And they're always written in the third person. Inviting content speaks directly to the reader.
- 6. Get active:** Readers prefer the active voice. It creates clarity and allows us to communicate effectively. In active voice, the subject of your sentence performs a specific action. This helps to eliminate ambiguity and creates an authoritative tone.

“Thrown under the bus.”



Peter's Top 10 Pet Peeves

Enormity: Look it up before using it as a synonym for enormous.

Notoriety: Should not be used as a synonym for publicity or exposure. Consider the root of the word.

The deal set a new record: As opposed to setting an old record ...

Incorrect literary reference: "I don't think we're in Kansas anymore, Toto." Either get it right or don't use it. It's actually, "Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore." And ... "If you build it, they will come." It's actually, "If you build it, he will come."

In exchange for: How about just "for?"

Awkward construction: Will gave the ring to his girlfriend that he won in the poker game.

There is nothing wrong with "said:" It is OK to use said multiple times. Refrain from using stated, quipped, suggested, chuckled, added, continued, offered, etc.

In fact: In fact, don't use it!

Eager/anxious: There is a difference, unless there is anxiety in everything you do.

Disregard for the English language: This includes words such as Flatizza, Quesalupa, Nu, Vu, Convo, Deets, etc. Don't get me started on "Chat Slang." @teotd

Social media do's and don'ts

Social Media Do's:

- Do consider your targets
- Do set clear objectives/strategy
- Do pick your media
- Do prepare a plan
- Do measure the results

Social Media Don'ts:

- Don't forget to engage your audience through tagging
- Don't forget the visuals
- Don't "spam" your audience – self-promotion is okay, but also remember to engage and share knowledge
- Focus only on the short term ROI

Which is write?

1. **Affect/effect**
2. **Compliment/complement**
3. **Principle/principal**
4. **Phase/faze**
5. **There/their/they're**
6. **Your/you're**
7. **Its/it's**

Writing Resources

- <https://www.grammarly.com/>
- <http://www.poynter.org/>
- The Elements of Style
- On Writing Well
- American Heritage Dictionary
- Roget's II: The New Thesaurus
- Associated Press Style Book

The Final Word

