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[On Writing Well - William Zinsser](#)

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[On Writing Well by William Zinsser](#) is a very popular book with over a million copies sold. If you have considered writing or becoming an author, this is a super book. After a few months of writing several blog articles, I felt I was beginning to get the hang of writing. And while not all I have been writing was wrong, I picked up many ways to improve from this book. I had no idea how many writing mistakes I have been making.

There are many areas that all of us can do better by reading this book. This is the 56th book I have read this year, but just the second on how to write. This one is worth your time to read.

Mr. Zinsser is a college professor who has taught many classes on writing. He explains in the beginning of the book that there is no such thing as the perfect way to write. Each person is unique and must find the methods that work for that person.

But whatever we choose to write about, we must really care about the topic and know much about it to do it justice. We need to convey the topic so well that it leaves the reader knowing that we know much more about that topic than what we have written.

WHAT I LEARNED FROM “ON WRITING WELL”

Simplicity is the key to success in writing. Clutter is a disease in American writing today. Too many big words and too many unnecessary words are used.

Good writers strip every sentence to its cleanest components. Thousands of ways are there to overdo it in writing. Mr. Zinsser uses Henry David Thoreau as a perfect example of how to write simply using Walden as an example. Clear thinking becomes writing. Words and sentences should flow logically and sequentially.

Writing is hard work and a clear and concise sentence is no accident. To get a good book, write, rewrite, and rewrite again. It may take 3 or 4 rewrites to make it right.

Clutter is the laborious phrase that needs to be pushed out. The short word meaning the same thing is best used. Great writers and authors use simple words. Minimize the use of adjectives and adverbs, particularly when they are doubling the same meaning. Do not repeat a thing by use of adverbs.

Be thankful for everything you can throw away in rewrites. Simplify, Simplify as Henry David Thoreau encourages.

Style is very important, and you should learn to write in your own style. To get your style right, you must relax when writing. All people have hard days. We must keep writing, even when we hit that wall. Just write. Believe in your own identity and your opinions. Use the energy provided by your ego. Keep it going and write and then write some more.

You will build an audience when you master the tools of writing. Simplify, prove, and strive for order. It takes time to find your perfect writing system.

The words are the only tools you've got. Learn to use them with originality and care. You learn to write by writing. Your first articles will not be great but continue to write, study, and improve. Learn to force yourself to produce a certain number of words on a regular basis. To have unity, everything must fit when you put it together.

Write about things that interest you. Your enthusiasm about a subject will show to your readers.

Interesting writing can be about your travels but be sure to include specific information about why it was a good place to visit. Don't just list out a bunch of places or sites you visited.

Whatever your job, be yourself when you write. Keep it simple and to the point, even in emails or business correspondence.

Remember that humor can be your secret weapon in non-fiction writing. You can blend humor in a serious topic to make a point.

Develop your own voice that readers can recognize when they read your book. You should have a unique style which is yours and only yours.

Many decisions have to be made in writing. What will you write about? How will you structure your words? You must maintain your focus and intention. To be an effective writer, one must be organized.

Mr. Zinsser urges his students to protect their work. Do not let editors drastically change your articles. He is so determined on this point that sometimes he has bought back some writings rather than have a modified version printed.

You need to learn and grow in writing. You need to write as well as you can and continue to improve. Can you get better? Certainly, we can all improve over time with effort and perseverance. You must study, learn, and grow. We need to strive to develop that perfect style that is ours and ours alone. Our words should flow and be entertaining to the reader.

As we develop as writers, our style should develop us into a unique writing personality.

As I said in the preface of the article, if you want to be a good writer, this is a book you need to read. [On Writing Well by William Zinsser](#), you will learn many important things about simple writing, writing with clarity, and unique style.

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