



## 10 PRACTICAL HINTS TO MAKE ANYTHING YOU WRITE MORE EFFECTIVE

### 1. Put Pen to Paper.

Seems elementary, my dear Watson, but you would be surprised how much writing never gets done because this step is not taken. Until pen to paper happens, nothing else happens. You can't write in your head. You can only think and imagine in your head. It is the act of putting the pen to paper that is magic. We all have thoughts and imaginings swirling around in our heads all the time. Putting the pen to paper is like the pump handle; sooner or later the spilling begins. The paper is like the basin that catches the thoughts that flow out. Use writing by hand with a real pen on real paper instead of going right to the keyboard as a way to open the gate to your mind or better to prime the pump for the spilling.

### 2. Write the First Sentence Last.

Don't try to begin with perfection. Just begin. To produce a well-crafted piece, you cannot write the first sentence until you know what will follow.

### 3. Don't Wait for the Muse to Move You.

Move your hand across the page to move the muse. The muse is like a genie in a bottle; you have to rub the bottle to let the genie out.

### 4. There Are No Rules - But the World Thinks There Are.

If you want the world to read what you have written, you may have to fake it. You may have to seduce your readers. Even though there are no rules, every language has a fundamental structure. Learn it and build within it. And if your boss has been deputized by the grammar police and insists on certain things you know are just plain wrong, like, for instance, *never end a sentence with a preposition* or *never begin a sentence with "and,"* it may be better not to end a sentence with a preposition than to try to correct your boss. Just remember the Golden Rule (so I lied): the one with the gold rules.

### 5. Read, Read, Read.

Read the good always. Read the bad sometimes. Read the ugly only until its ugliness reveals itself. The more you read good stuff, the less bad and ugly stuff you will want to read. You will learn how to improve your own writing by reading the well-written of others.

## 6. Write with Your Ears.

Read what you have written aloud and listen to it. Even the words on the page rely on sound for their effect.

## 7. Have Someone You Trust Read What You Have Written, But Don't Ask That Person to Tell you if it is Good or Not, and Don't Say "Tell Me What You Think?"

Instead ask specific questions to find out if you have done what you set out to do. Are you looking for flattery or are you looking for feedback?

## 8. Spelling Counts.

I have heard of people reading resumes who, when they come across a misspelled word, drop it into the reject file and move on to the next one. I know, it doesn't seem fair but (see #4)

## 9. Take the Time to Make it Shorter.

Start by looking for phrases that can be single words: "blue in color" is no better than "blue." "Short in stature" tells no more than does "short." Then look for clauses that can be phrases or even single words. "The man who was from Boston" can be "the man from Boston" or even "the Bostonian."

## 10. Be Active. Be Concrete. Be Economical.

### **Compare:**

The dog was hit by a car.

The Limousine slammed into the Saint Bernard.

The Volkswagen bumped the Saint Bernard.

The Chihuahua bounced off the Smart Car

The Great Dane collided with the Smart Car.

Notice how each tells a quite different story or at least paints a different picture.

**Bonus suggestion:** If you feel you need help to get your writing up to snuff, click on the tab "Instruction" after you go to [BillBacheBrown.com](http://BillBacheBrown.com).