

Introduction

Writing is an art. Writing like an amateur is a mistake. You may be a writer just starting out, but you should never write like one. The musings of amateur writers of all genres are filling the discard piles of literary agents from New York to California. The reason? Mistakes a professional would never make.

No, there is no shame in being a new writer. The shame is writing like one. We all have our stories to tell, and tell them we should. Life is interesting. The current boom in publishing has brought out the bard in us all. We no longer have to plead with agents to represent us or entreat publishing houses to take our books. If we want to publish our work without the benefit of a traditional publishing house, we can create an e-book, self-publish cheaply with print-on-demand, or self-publish expensively with all the bells and whistles. If anyone wants to see their work in print, they can.

There is a hitch in this giddy-up however. Regardless of how you choose to publish your book or story, you should make it a priority to write it well. It is only vanity that gives rise to the assumption people will plunk down \$25 for a book the writer did not care enough about to write well. It is a misconception that writing is merely the act of putting pen to paper or that it is just a printed form of talking.

Writing is the art of making a story come to life—to change minds, influence opinion, educate, inform, or entertain. It is not just writing for writing's sake. It is learning what the principles of good writing are and recognizing errors when they present themselves. In other words, learn which mistakes to avoid, and then write with confidence.

Learning to recognize the 10 most glaring mistakes amateur writers make will help you sidestep writing land mines to write well. What you have to say is important. The world is waiting for your unique point of view, your one-of-a-kind style, and the visions from your imagination. The world wants to read what you have to say, but only if you write it well. Anyone can write like a professional and you can too.

This book is the first step to writing well. It is not a grammar book. It is a stylebook. It does not cover everything, but it does put you on the right path.

I have designed this book so you can easily identify style errors in your writing and instantly correct them. You will not have to slog through technical jargon to get the point or understand the concept. You can read what the mistake is, what it looks like when written, and how to cure it. If you are in a hurry, you can jump to the *Quick Cures* in the appendix to get your answers. I've also designed this book so you will have ample space to take notes and try out the concepts.

The process for using this book is simple. Read the principles outlined, look for the mistakes in your own writing, and then rewrite your text eliminating those mistakes. You will see an immediate improvement in both the clarity and impact of your work.

Like everything in the world of writing, nothing is absolute. The rules and suggested cures mentioned here are foundational for every professional writer. However, you will find that professionals often break these rules to achieve specific effects. New writers should learn the basic principles first, and then break the rules if they dare.

This book is a quick and easy reference for eliminating those obvious new-writer errors sure to keep you out of the arena of professional writing.