

Does this paint a mind picture?

| Category | Wind speed (km/h) |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| Calm | <1 |
| Light air | 1-6 |
| Light breeze | 7-12 |
| Gentle breeze | 13-19 |
| Moderate breeze | 20-30 |

Does this paint a mind picture?

| Category | Description |
|-----------------|--|
| Calm | Smoke rises vertically |
| Light air | Smoke drifts |
| Light breeze | Wind felt on face; leaves rustle |
| Gentle breeze | Leaves and small twigs in constant motion |
| Moderate breeze | Raises dust and small paper; small branches move |

What is effective writing

Effective writing secures defined objectives

- from a defined audience
- while keeping within defined constraints
- and contributing to better relationships.

Define readers and objectives

- A typical reader ('persona')
Gender? Age? Education? Occupation?
Finances? Interests? Reading habits?
- Purpose: Inform? Explain? Persuade?
- Outcome: What would you like the reader to do on reading the document?

Features of effective writing

- **Useful**: relevant; pitched at right level
- **Clear**: who does what to whom
- **Vivid**: paints pictures in the mind's eye
- **Specific**: free of vague generalities
- **Confident**: no ifs and buts
- **Organized**: follows a clear sequence
- **Friendly**: uses personal pronouns

Is your writing trim and fit?

- Visit WritersDiet website
<www.writersdiet.com>.
- Paste a 100- to 1000-word extract from your writing sample into the text box.
- See the result of the 'check-up'.

Is your writing trim and fit?

- **Lean:** fat-free prose
- **Fit & trim:** in excellent condition
- Needs toning: would benefit from a light workout
- **Flabby:** judicious editing required
- **Heart attack:** may call for editorial liposuction!

Make underlying sequence explicit

- Text often has an underlying sequence, a sequence determined by time, space, size, importance, and so on.
- Make such sequence explicit.

Avoid abstractions

Standby power consumption is much smaller than the total power consumption of appliances during running mode. However, due to the long running hours of appliances in standby mode and high penetration rate of certain appliances, total standby power consumption for the country can turn out to be significant.

Make writing concrete

Even if electricity consumption in standby mode is only 10% of that in normal mode, millions of appliances in standby mode for hours add up: 68 million TV sets in cities, left in standby mode for 10 hours a day, mean more than 1.5 billion units—enough to supply electricity to 1000 villages for 1 year.

Develop analogies

. . . the genome is as a kind of instruction manual for the body. Viewed this way, chromosomes can be imagined as the book's chapters and genes as instructions for making proteins. The words are called codons, and the letters are known as bases. — From *A Short History of Nearly Everything* by Bill Bryson

Develop analogies

Like lips whispering very close to an ear, synaptic communication between neurons has three basic components: the presynaptic terminal of the axon, which sends signals (corresponding to lips); the synaptic cleft (the space between lips and ears); and the post-synaptic site on the dendrite that receives signals (the ear).

From In Search of Memory by Eric R Kandel

Develop analogies, give examples

Some materials are like music: the gaps are as important as the filled-in bits. Holes in a material give it useful properties that the equivalent dense material would not possess. Take bone, for example: its open, porous structure provides spaces for capillaries and soft tissue but ensures that bones, while rigid and strong, are not heavy.

— From *Made to Measure: new materials for the 21st century* by Philip Ball

How loud noise affects hearing, 1

Imagine walking over a grass patch. When you look back, you cannot see your route: the grass blades recover and bounce up again. But if trampled upon repeatedly, the route becomes a permanent path.

How loud noise affects hearing, 2

The same thing happens to the ears' hair cells: they bend when exposed to loud sounds. They can bounce back during a recovery period but with repeated exposure, the damage is permanent. —

Dr Ellen Lafargue, Director, Center for Hearing and Communication, New York

Mention numbers, size, etc.

- Be specific: How large is large? How small is small?
- A large number of people were present.
 - More than 200 people packed the room.
- Add a bit of urea to each pot.
 - Add a teaspoon of urea to each pot.

Mention numbers, size, etc.

- Pitchblende contains uranium. Marie and Pierre Curie purified huge amounts of the natural ore.
- From several tonnes of pitchblende, 400 tonnes of washing water, and hundreds of buckets of distilled sludge waste, they extracted 0.1 g of radium.

Use abbreviations sparingly

U A S

- Unmanned Aircraft System
- Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker
- Universal application server

I C A R

- International Conference on Advanced Robotics
- Information Centre About Asylum and Refugees
- International Committee for Animal Recording

Use a friendly tone

Writing is, after all, a personal transaction between two people, even if it is conducted on paper, and the transaction will go well to the extent that it retains its humanity. Therefore, I urge people to write in the first person—to use ‘I’ and ‘me’ and ‘we’ and ‘us’.

William Zinsser, *On Writing Well*

Use a friendly tone

- Kindly specify your requirements so that steps can be taken to comply with the specifications.

Versus

- Let us know you needs so that we can meet them.

Use prepositions to untangle nouns

- Untangle noun-stacks and re-arrange them with proper prepositions.
- GHG emissions related impact mitigation
versus
■ Mitigating the adverse effects of emissions of greenhouse gases

Put first things first

- Before you invest, read the fine print.

Versus

- Read the fine print before you invest.

Put things positively

- We cannot admit more than 50 participants.

We can admit up to 50 participants.

- Do not buy if the price exceeds Rs 150 per tonne.

Buy if the price is up to Rs 150 per tonne.

Tackle writing systematically

- Write the core message in 25 words.
- Expand the message to a page.
- Prepare and revise an outline.
- Expand the outline: target at least 400 words per session. Write fast; forget about errors.
- Revise only after at least 2000 words.

Tips on scheduling writing

- Write and revise the outline whenever convenient.
- Keep large chunks of uninterrupted time for writing text.
- Set targets: number of words a day.
- End a session at a point from which it is easy to resume.

Learning to be a writer

- Effective writing is an acquired skill.
- Elements of acquiring a skill
 - Progressively difficult tasks
 - Regular practice
 - Supervision
 - Monitored progress

Progressively difficult tasks

- Ten sentences a day for 30 days
 - Each sentence at least 12 words long
 - No repetition of a single pattern
- Ten sentences on one topic a day for 30 days; twenty for another 30 days
- Rewriting what you have read
- Summarizing what you have read

Read extensively

- Prefer books to magazines, newspapers.
- Read popular fiction to absorb the common patterns of grammar.
- Read writers known for the quality of their prose.
- Spend ten hours on reading for every hour you spend on learning to write.

Extensive reading: some numbers

- Proficiency: neoliteracy to near-native
- Reading speed: from 60 to 150 words per minute
- Vocabulary: from 50 to 18 000 words
- No. of books to be read: 25 to 370
- Time required: 2 to 280 hours

Extensive Reading Foundation http://erfoundation.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ERF_Calculator.png

<https://www.readinglength.com/>

Reading Length

How long will it take to read that book?

Search for any book

Search!

Lengths of some novels (word counts)

| Title | Words |
|---------------------------------------|---------|
| War and Peace | 593 467 |
| Atlas Shrugged | 567 815 |
| David Copperfield | 356 164 |
| The Da Vinci Code | 138 997 |
| Pride and Prejudice | 121 853 |
| Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone | 77 506 |
| Goldfinger | 85 574 |

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STAGE 2

STAGE 3

STAGE 4

STAGE 5

STAGE 6

<https://elt.oup.com/student/bookwormsleveltest>

It all started when the big, white bird flew out of the shiny leaves and yellow flowers. It rose up suddenly and turned away towards the mountains. I followed it. What else could I do in the middle of such a bright April day, at the foot of the White Mountains of Crete?

The road was hot and dusty, but the valley was and full of the sound of . The white wings which flew before moved quickly in and out of deep shadow of the trees and air was full of the sweet of the lemon grove.

a / an / some / the

Quick Reads: rationale

- About 15% adults in Britain think that books intimidating, difficult or boring or cannot find the time to read.
- Quick Reads show that books and reading can be for everyone and commission big-name authors to write short books that are easy to read.

Quick Reads



<https://readingagency.org.uk/adults/quick-guides/quick-reads/>

Quick Reads: specifications

- Easy-vocabulary, 130-page books
- No more than 20 000 words long
- Sentences that average 15 words
- Words of one or two syllables.
- Paragraphs of ten lines or shorter
- Chapters no more than seven pages

www.macmillanreaders.com/level-test/

Macmillan Readers Level Test

What reading level are you?

It is _____ today.
cold
dark
hot
rich

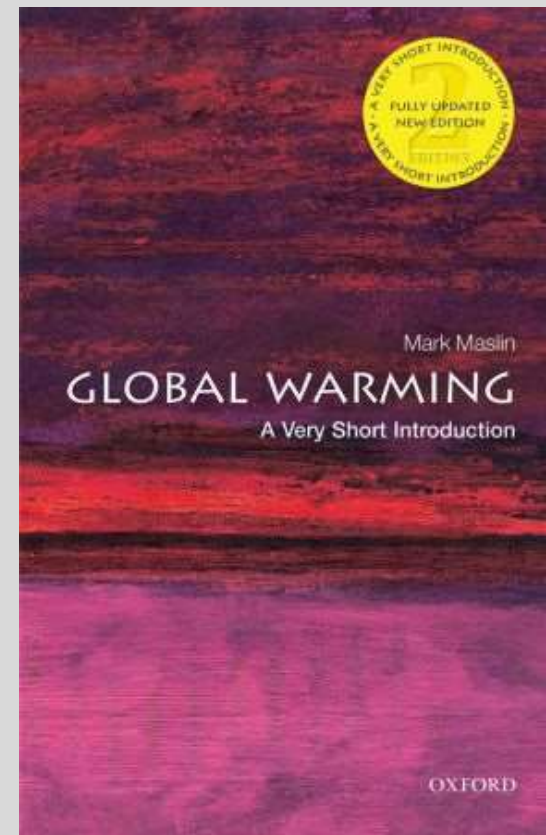
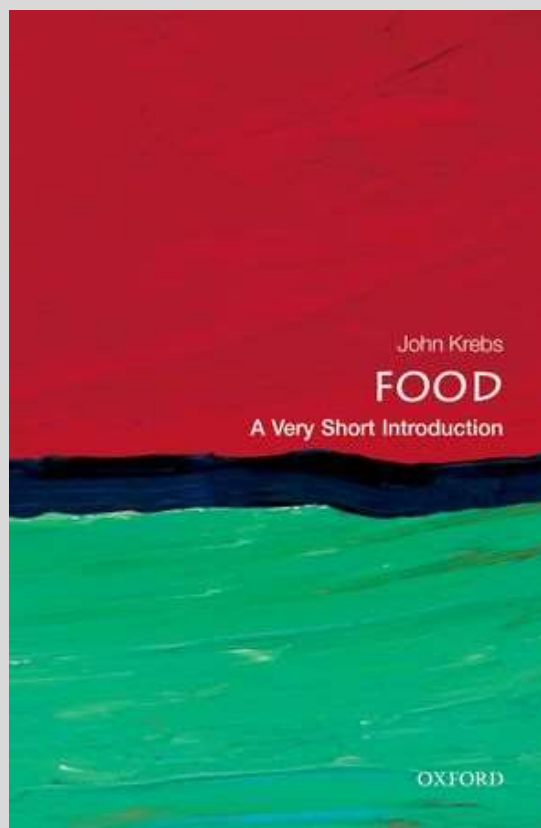
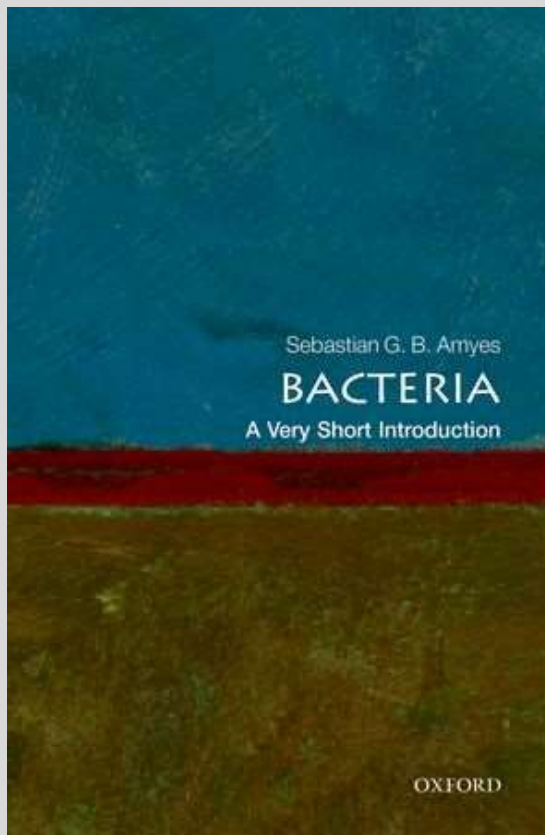


Select the correct answer

Very short introduction to

11 × 17.5 cm, ~150 pages, ~40 000 words

<www.oup.com/vsi>



Royal Society Insight Investment Science Book Prize

Awarded by the Royal Society since 1988 for best popular-science writing to encourage the writing, publishing, and reading of good and accessible popular science books.

Royal Society prize: 2018 shortlist, 1

- **The Unexpected Truth About Animals: stoned sloths, lovelorn hippos and other wild tales** by Lucy Cooke
- **The Beautiful Cure: harnessing your body's natural defences** by Daniel M Davis
- **Hello world: how to be human in the age of the machine** by Hannah Fry

Royal Society prize: 2018 shortlist, 2

- **Liquid: the delightful and dangerous substances that flow through our lives** by Mark Miodownik
- **Exactly: how precision engineers created the modern world** by Simon Winchester
- **Inventing Ourselves: the secret life of the teenage brain** by Sarah Jayne Blakemore

Baillie Gifford Prize

- To reward the best of non-fiction
- Formerly known as The Samuel Johnson Prize (1999-2015)
- <https://thebailliegiffordprize.co.uk/>

Baillie Gifford Prize, past winners

- Chernobyl: history of a tragedy by Serhii Plokyh (2018)
- How to Survive a Plague by David France
- East West Street by Philippe Sands
- Neurotribes: the legacy of autism and the future of neurodiversity by Steve Silberman
- H is for Hawk by Helen Macdonald

PEN / E O Wilson Literary Science Writing Award

- Celebrates literary excellence in physical and biological sciences.
- Books that exemplify the quality of writing the award is designed to acknowledge include [Silent Spring](#), [The Double Helix](#), and [The Lives of a Cell](#).

PEN / E O Wilson Literary Science Writing Award

- **2018** The Butchering Art: Joseph Lister's Quest to Transform the Grisly World of Victorian Medicine
- **2017** Patient H.M.: a story of memory, madness, and family secrets
- **2016** Thunder and Lightning: weather past, present, future
- **2015** War of the Whales: a true story
- **2014** High Price: a neuroscientist's journey of self-discovery that challenges everything you know about drugs and society

The National Academies Keck Futures Initiative

Awards to recognize, promote, and encourage effective communication of science, engineering, medicine, and interdisciplinary work within and beyond the scientific community.

<https://www.keckfutures.org/awards/index.html>

The National Academies Keck Futures Initiative

- **2017** Hidden Figures: the American dream and the untold story of the black women mathematicians who helped win the space race
- **2016** The Narrow Edge: a tiny bird, an ancient crab, and an epic journey
- **2015** Stuff Matters: exploring the marvelous materials that shape our man-made world

Do I Make Myself Clear?

WHY WRITING WELL MATTERS

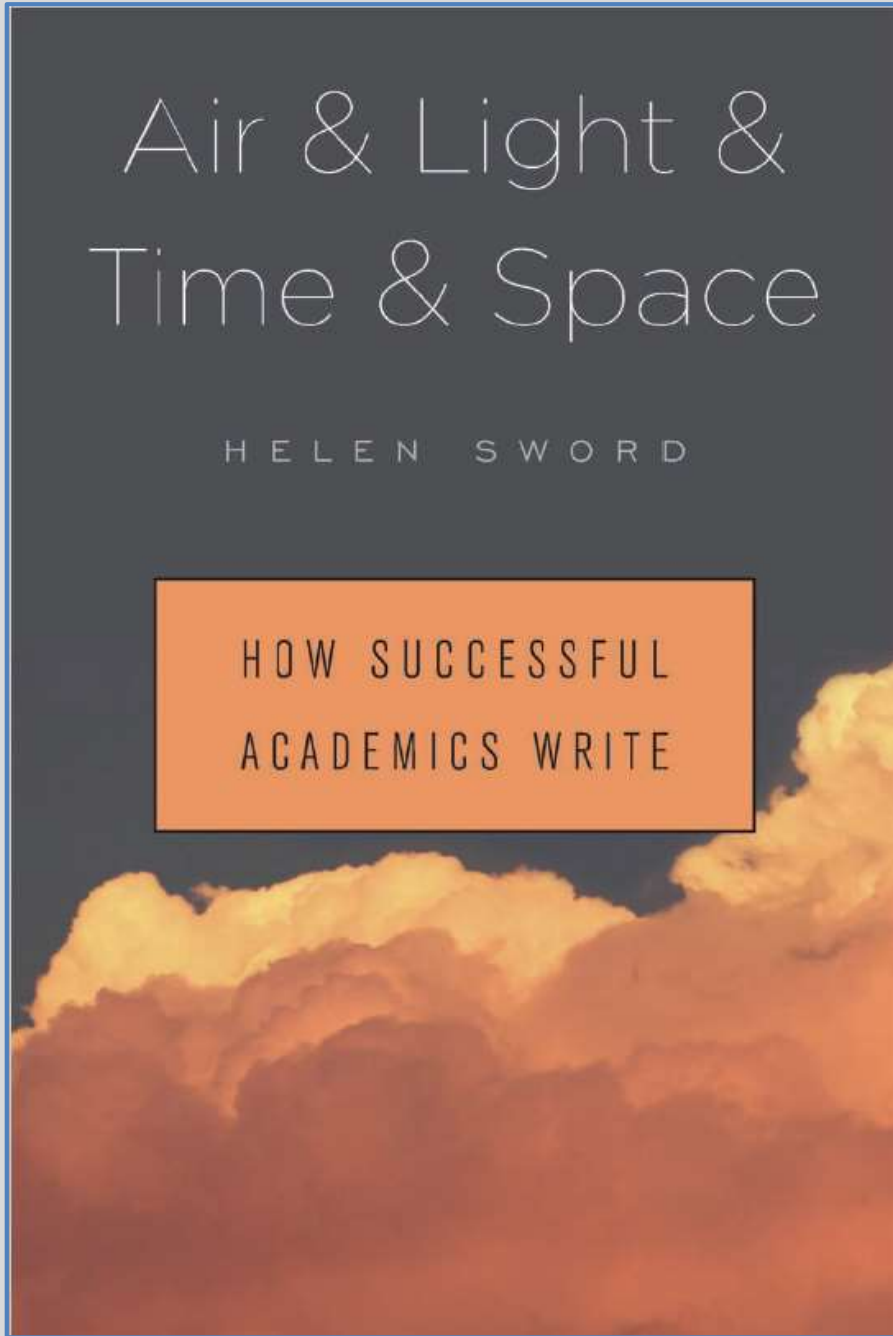
Harold Evans

Author of They Made America

Air & Light & Time & Space

HELEN SWORD

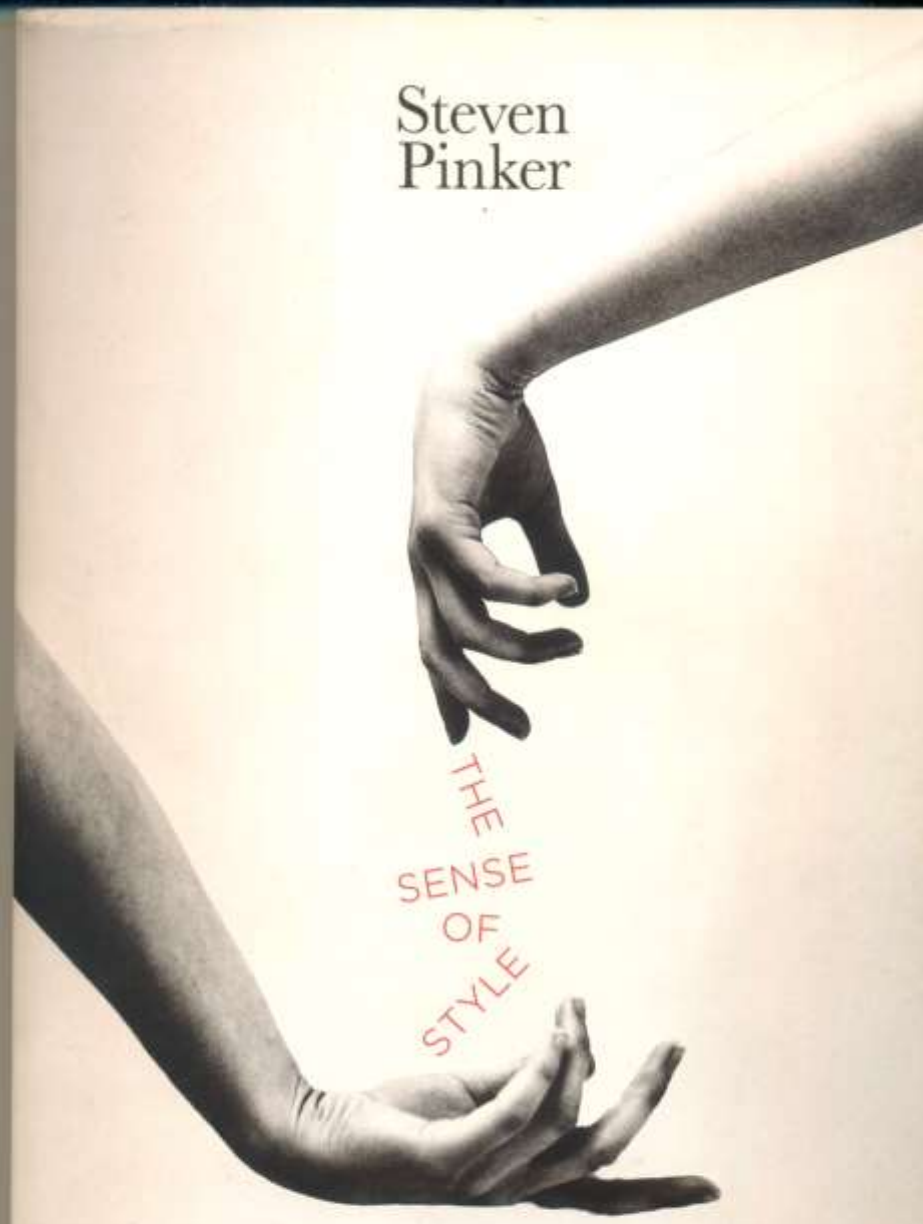
HOW SUCCESSFUL
ACADEMICS WRITE



The
Writer's
Diet

*Helen
Sword*

Steven
Pinker

A black and white photograph of two hands reaching towards each other from the left and right sides of the frame. The hands are positioned as if they are about to grasp each other, with the fingers slightly curled. The background is a plain, light-colored surface. The title 'THE SENSE OF STYLE' is printed in red, capital letters, oriented vertically between the two hands.

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Gowers

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FINANCIAL TIMES

Recommended reading

- Evans H. 2017. *Do I Make Myself Clear? Why writing well matters*. New York: Little, Brown. 408 pp.
- Sword H. 2017. *Air & Light & Time & Space: how successful academics write*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. 266 pp.

Recommended reading

- Sword H. 2015. [The Writer's Diet](#), 3rd edn. Auckland: Auckland University Press. 78 pp.
- Pinker S. 2014. [The Sense of Style: the thinking person's guide to writing in the 21st century](#). London: Allen Lane (Penguin Group). 360 pp.

Recommended reading

- Gowers E and Gowers R. 2014. [Plain Words: a guide to the use of English](#). London: Particular Books (Penguin). 320 pp.
- Cutts M. 2013. [Oxford Guide to Plain English](#), 4th edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 320 pp.

Recommended reading

- Groopman J (ed.). 2010. [The Best of the Best American Science Writing](#) [2000–2009]. New York: HarperCollins. 346 pp.
- Dawkins R (ed.). 2008. [The Oxford Book of Modern Science Writing](#). Oxford Univ. Press. 419 pp.

Recommended reading

- Silvia P J. 2007. [How to Write a Lot: a practical guide to productive academic writing](#). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. 149 pp.

I always tell my students that to write well, they have to write. And to write, they have to be willing to write badly. People who are willing to do something badly and keep practicing are the ones who improve; people who give up because they aren't willing to do it badly, don't.

—Rosanne Bane

Forget theory—start writing



Forget theory—start writing

- The centipede was happy quite
- Until the toad - for fun -
- Inquired which foot came after which.
- He stopped to think: that was the hitch
- That wrought his mind to such a pitch
- He lies distracted in the ditch
- Considering how to run.

*Here's wishing you
the very best*

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