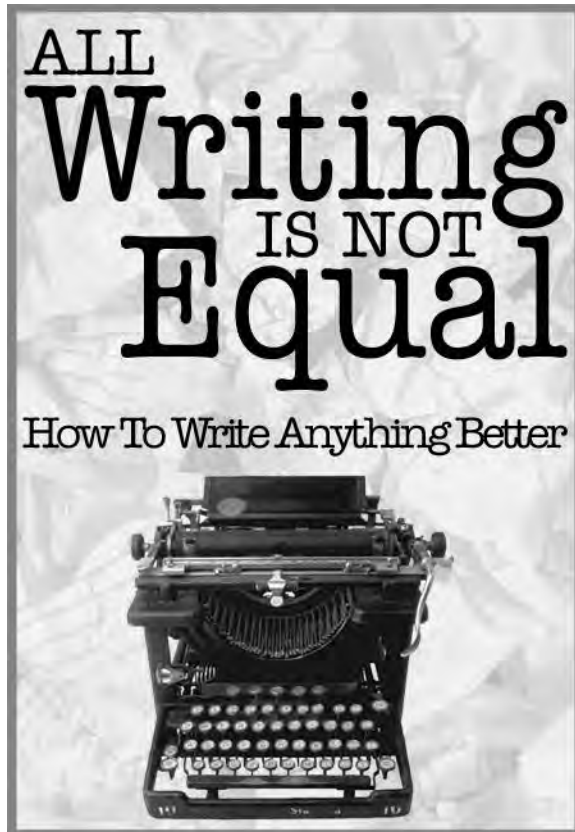


I. Writing & Style



3.

Ten “its” for writing fast & writing well

Gene Fowler said, “Writing is easy; all you do is sit staring at a blank sheet of paper until drops of blood form on your forehead.” Know the feeling?

Those of us who do it, love it, but writing is not without pain. Especially when the deadline is only hours away and the article you need to write is one of several items on your day’s plate. It’s one thing to be a writer, it’s another doing it. For many, writing well in a compressed period of time seems impossible. But you can write quickly and write well. Here are ten “its” that can help.

Know it. Good writing derives from clarity. Clarity comes from knowing what you’re writing about. What’s your purpose? What’s the point? What are you trying to prove? What’s the central idea?

Research it. Collect your facts and examples. Do your polls and interviews. Research thoroughly before you begin writing. Get what you need to address who, what, when, where, why, and how. Be sure to verify names, titles, and anything else you’ll need to

include. Writer's block is almost always due to inadequate research!

Organize it. Make a map connecting each piece of information. Make a simple or elaborate outline – whatever works for you. Write the headings on 3 x 5 cards and organize your research (clippings, notes, etc.) beside each card. Try using the AIDA structure: create Attention that engenders Interest that stirs Desire to take Action.

Write it. Quickly. Stack your research and start writing through the pile as fast as you can. Don't worry about transitions or try to write perfectly the first time. Relax, have fun, and get something on paper. Just keep writing all the thoughts that occur as you work through your research, even if they are incomplete. If you're blocked, do more research!

Leave it. Walk away. When you've exhausted your research and feel you've written yourself out, stop. Take a break. Let it cool off.

Clean it. Good writing is concise. Use no more and no fewer words than necessary. Cut the fluff. No matter how magical a phrase seems, cut it if it doesn't fit the flow. Rewrite and rearrange your paragraphs. Often a buried paragraph makes the best lead. Double check your facts and attribute all your quotes.

End it. Say what you need to say and then stop! Stick to the point and don't write past it.

Speak it. Read what you've written out loud and fix what doesn't sound right. The ear hears what the eye

misses. You will be amazed at how this dramatically improves the quality of your writing.

Release it. Know when to let it go. Stop tweaking it to death. You're good at what you do so have confidence in what you've written. It's good. You've done your best and it's time to move on and do it all over again! Deadlines are forever.

Print it. And be proud! After all, you are a writer.