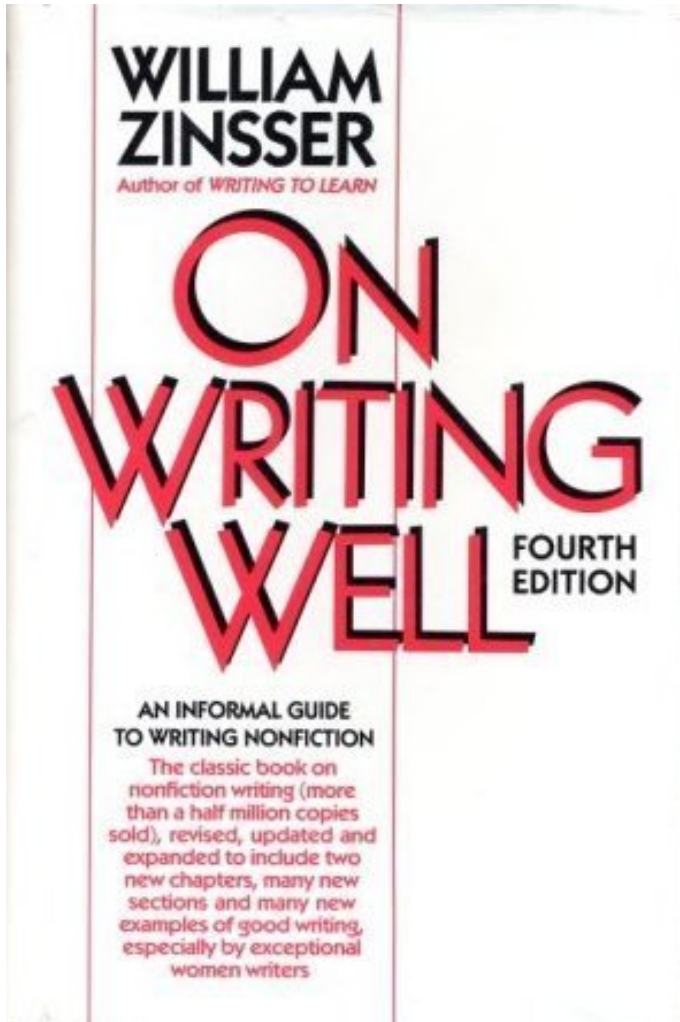

William Zinsser

On Writing Well



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Author: William Zinsser

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Description

Whether you write an occasional professional letter or a daily newspaper column, William Zinsser's *On Writing Well* should be required reading. Simplicity is Zinsser's mantra: he preaches a stripped-down writing style, strong and clear. He has no patience for excess (most use of adjectives and adverbs, he writes, just adds clutter) or tired phraseology (for instance, he'd like to outlaw all leads involving those "future archaeologists" most often found "stumb[ing] upon the remains of our civilization"). He recommends that all writers of nonfiction read their work aloud (don't commit something to paper that you wouldn't actually say) and write under the assumption that "the reader knows nothing" (not to be confused with assuming the reader's an idiot). In addition to the chapters on the expected--usage, audience, interviews, leads--Zinsser also focuses on such trouble spots as science and technical writing, business writing, sports, and humor.

Insightful reviews

Steven: One of the oldest ways to master a craft is through imitation and writing well is no different. Zinsser's book stands alongside Strunk & White's "Elements of Style" as one of the best guides on how to write clearly and effectively. The book's tone and style is much like a series of lectures from a professor who projects a sense of knowledge, warmth, and passion.

Zinsser illustrates many of his points through the use of personal anecdotes and examples culled from writers of different disciplines. They all point to two of writing's main sources of inspiration: people and places. Without these as a starting point, there is no entry point for the reader or for the writer.

What separates and ultimately elevates Zinsser's book from Strunk & White is that Zinsser delves into the mentality of the writer, how she or he can approach writing and make the crucial decisions, and how to apply such principles as espoused by Strunk & White. I found that Zinsser's most important point was that good writing comes from a desire to write well, repeated effort, and judicious editing.

Shanae: This book may have a few valuable suggestions throughout, but it is difficult to reap Zinsser's lessons through his sexism and eurocentrism. He uses his own work (Haircurl) in the "Humor" chapter for no good reason because he really doesn't do anything with it except to show that it is funny. Unfortunately, it is not funny, and it is actually quite offensively mocking women. In "A Writer's Decisions" he describes a piece he wrote with thickly layered romanticism about a desert tribe that exoticizes his subjects by using language like "ancient" "mystical" "natives". His use of language is definitely presenting his personae (something Zinsser encourages every writer to do), unfortunately his personae is a bourgeois anglophile. Though he is of German descent, "The Sound of Your Voice" is the clearest example of his disdain for "the other" as he praises English words and language used based on the King James Bible, Elizabethan period, and expresses disdain for verbs of Latin origin. Like I said, this book MAY have a few valuable suggestions, but there was nothing in it that I had not heard before and thus could probably find somewhere else where I would not have to endure Zinsser's sexist and

eurocentric "humor".

Taka: Read the first two parts--

Witty, concise, and informative, the first two parts on "Principles" and "Methods" are brilliant. These parts, however, constitute 30% of the book. The rest of the book - that is, 70% - is uneven and can be skipped without missing out on anything important.

The only chapters I found worth reading are those on "Science and Technology," "Business Writing," and "Writing About Arts," all of which are in Part III. Other than these, none of the chapters say anything that hasn't been said already and can be skimmed or skipped, according to your interest in the particular subject of each chapter.

One nugget of advice I found extremely helpful and would like to share is this: "Forget the competition and go at your own pace. your only contest is with yourself."

I couldn't have said better. Writers are egomaniacs who care too much about what other people think of their writing.

My advice: read the first two parts and only read what interests you after that.

Francisco: How do you learn how to write, really, except by way of writing. yet now and then, it's worthwhile to pause and view the artwork of excellent writing, the craft. This recognized little e-book will be the reflective pause to help you be care-full, love-full, along with your work. The publication is not only extra of the standard stuff you have got regularly heard. the recommendation given by way of the writer is artistic and his examples of fine writing are informative and insightful. and since sturdy writing is usually attached to the interior lifestyles and ethical intensity of the author, a lot of what he says applies to the final word resource of the written word: the writer's attitude, her realization and integrity. do not allow the "nonfiction" within the name deter you from examining this for those who write fiction. The bankruptcy on "travel writing" is an on-the-button presentation at the construction of "place" that is crucial in fiction. learn slowly, enable the humor and customary experience of the writer seep into your writing blood in order that it will probably move out spontaneously on your words. yet might be the easiest present this ebook provide you with is the feel that you, the writer, are yet a humble, traditional employee utilizing skill, intelligence and center to create anything attractive and true.

Cathy DuPont: With Steve's review, i used to be reminded that I had learn this years in the past and it really is in my "book closet" the place i've got all my writing reference books. while did I learn it? Well, i might need to imagine again and that i can determine it out however it will take some time and that i could otherwise be interpreting than cross down that specific "memory lane." 5 stars shows what i assumed of this booklet and blissful to understand that it is contents are nonetheless legitimate today.

Viviana D. Otero: I first learn On Writing good years in the past while i used to be assigned to co-

teach a writing path for Duke University's expertise id software (TIP) the summer time of 2000. i presumed then, i used to be ready to coach a number of extremely smart adolescents in regards to the parts in writing nice nonfiction. It became out, however, that I discovered even more in regards to the writing method because of Zinsser. the pinnacle teacher for the path had learn the e-book and educated me that our sessions will be doing in order well. as soon as I accomplished the book, i used to be surprised at simply how little I knew approximately what used to be thought of first-class writing. It used to be the easiest e-book I ever learn in my lifetime, and that i made convinced i bought the recent variation as soon as it was once published. Now that i've got began writing my own memoir, it has once more are available in handy. Insert On Writing good is an ideal device for the intense scholar and for the author who simply wishes that little encouragement to maintain typing. The well known author's instruction manual provides us many tips on numerous different types of writing. As Zinsser in actual fact and magnificently tells us, "Good writing has an aliveness that retains the reader studying from one paragraph to the next, ant it's no longer a query of gimmicks to "personalize" the author. It's a query of utilizing the English language in a manner that would in achieving the best readability and strength."(5) Zinsser absolutely practices what he preaches! I simply want Claire Messud learn this booklet completely ahead of she wrote her novel The Emperor's Children. On Writing good is a needs to learn for all who like to write!Zinsser, William. On Writing Well, thirtieth Anniversary Edition: The vintage consultant to Writing Nonfiction. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2006.

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