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The Writers Network News

No Rules; Just Write!

Editor: Bobbie Christmas

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Notes:

Some links in this newsletter are shortened with help from www.tinyurl.com, a service that converts long links into short ones.

This format that does not support italics, so italics are indicated with underlines before and after words.

Writer's Quote of the Month

First you're an unknown, then you write one book and you move up to obscurity. —Martin Myers

Martin Myers, who calls himself an obscure novelist, is the author of five humorous novels and a memoir masquerading as a coffee table book. He has been a broadcaster, editor, publisher, actor, puppeteer, comic, restaurateur, car wash operator, copywriter, creative director, and advertising agency principal. (Source: Linked In)

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One: From the Editor's Desk: Marketing Miasma

Dear Fellow Writers:

Something happened today, as I write this. A subscriber to this newsletter wrote to ask if I still edit books. I realized that my newsletter touts my books but never my services, my main way of making a living. I must be the worst marketer in the world! To correct that error, I've added a blurb in this newsletter.

Where does one learn to be a good marketer, anyway, and especially what's the best way to market books? My gut tells me those expensive trailers for books aren't worth the money, and I don't think printed ads do much better.

I've worked for several publishing houses and a literary agent, so I know what publishers look for in a manuscript. I've edited many manuscripts that became best-selling books and/or won awards. I know how to make a manuscript more marketable—let me repeat, marketable—yet after it becomes a book, I'm in a fog. I'm lost when it comes to marketing a published book. If authors ask me how to market their books, I may point them to books, people, and companies that handle marketing, because I have no other information. Zero. Zilch. Nada. Bupkis.

I know this much: whenever I speak at events on any subject related to creative writing, I sell many copies of my book doctor's desk reference book titled Purge Your Prose of Problems, a book that helps writers edit their own work, and Write In Style, my book on creative writing that gives tips on how to make writing as strong as it can be. Unfortunately I no longer speak in person, though, as a result of aging and illness avoidance. Both books are listed on my website, and

Write In Style is listed on Amazon, but through those sources I sell only one or two books a month, hardly what I'd call a masterful marketing.

For now, though, when people ask me how to market their books, if they don't want to pay a marketer, I might suggest a couple of books I've seen listed but have never read. Consider the 2008 book titled *How to Market Books* by Alison Baverstock. Even better, consider the 2020 book by Nicholas Erik titled *The Ultimate Guide to Book Marketing*.

If you have tips or techniques that have worked for you and helped you sell books, let me know, and I'll share the information with our readers.

Yours in writing,

Bobbie Christmas Bobbie@zebraeditor.com or bzebra@aol.com

Author of two editions of *Write In Style*, owner of Zebra Communications, director of The Writers Network, coordinator of the Florida Writers Association Editors Helping Writers service, and senior editor of *Enjoy Cherokee Magazine*

If someone forwarded this newsletter to you, please sign up to get your own subscription. Simply go to <https://www.zebraeditor.com/> to subscribe to The Writers Network News. My promise: I never share your address or send out spam.

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Two: Ask the Book Doctor: About Tight Writing

By Bobbie Christmas

Q: I keep on hearing "write tight, write tight," from fellow writers and others. I'm not so sure what they're trying to say to me. The whole darned issue is driving me a little crazy. How can I ever know what's loose and what's tight writing?

A: Creative writing, whether fiction or nonfiction, reads best and sells better when it gets to the point without wasted words. If I were to tighten your question, I might recast it this way:

I keep hearing "write tight." I'm not sure what people mean. The issue drives me crazy. What is tight writing?

The recast says the same thing as the original, but it's tighter.

Writers who grew up reading classics filled with flowery prose may think they must write the same way if they want to be successful. Many writers "back in the day," however, were paid by the word. Elaborate descriptions added to the word count and paid the author more. Most classics are considered literary or scholarly, but their style won't work for today's readers. Contemporary style calls for clean, tight writing. Fiction readers want a story with an active plot, dialogue that's related to the plot, and action. They don't want to read long descriptions of people, places, and things. Nonfiction readers want information and examples, but they don't need repetition or digression.

Tight writing is devoid of unnecessary words and repetition. It relies on active voice (the boy threw the ball), rather than passive voice (the ball was thrown by the boy). It spurns gerunds and participles ("ing" words) whenever possible.

I'll give a typical paragraph in a memoir as an example and then show my tighter version after my edits.

Original

Well, I remember seeing a very large package on the front doorstep of my house one morning. I started to shriek, "It's here! My very own books are arriving." I could hardly breathe when I was rushing to the front door so I could get the box, bringing it inside.

Tighter

When I saw a large package on the doorstep one morning I shrieked, "My books are here!" I rushed to the front door and brought the box inside.

As you can see, the tighter version deleted superfluous words and replaced weak verbs with strong ones.

In memoirs, especially, I see "I remember" far too often. Of course the author remembers; otherwise he or she couldn't be writing about it.

In fiction and nonfiction manuscripts I edit, I see dozens of words that can be deleted without affecting the final result. While the following piece of dialogue is grammatical, what would you delete to make it more realistic and tighter? "Well, John, I know your eldest daughter, Denise, is about to graduate from high school, so what do you intend to do to celebrate with her?"

Here's what I recommend: "Denise is about to graduate. What are your plans to celebrate with her?" In real life John knows that Denise is his daughter, that she's his eldest, and that she's graduating from high school, not college. All those things can be deleted. In addition, when two people are the only ones speaking, they rarely call each other by name unless they're angry with each other.

I edit manuscripts and can tighten a manuscript for a price. It's time consuming, though, so it's not cheap. Instead I recommend my book *Write In Style*. The book explores and explains many words and phrases that writers can find and refine in their own manuscripts.

Tight writing is strong writing; however writers should initially write without thinking about writing tight. Get the story down first. In the next drafts delete superfluous words and replace weak verbs with strong ones. You'll be amazed at the results.

Bobbie Christmas is a book editor, author of *Write In Style: Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing*, and owner of Zebra Communications. She will answer your questions too. Send them to Bobbie@ZebraEditor.com or BZebra@aol.com. Read Bobbie's Zebra Communications blog at ZebraEditor.com/blog/.

For much more information on these subjects and hundreds of others of vital importance to writers, order *Purge Your Prose of Problems, a Book Doctor's Desk Reference Book* at <http://tinyurl.com/4ptjnr>.

Bobbie Christmas's award-winning second edition of *Write In Style: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing* is available from Amazon at <https://tinyurl.com/y7ppcdkd> or buy it directly at <https://tinyurl.com/y7p9xkbb>.
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Three: Subjects of interest to writers

Members Write . . .

Jim Gilbert wrote, "Thank you so much for your newsletter. I've enjoyed it for years." He reported, "While I'm still in search of a literary agent to represent my books, I have recently had a bit of success on another front. I had two articles published in a quarterly national magazine, *The New Pioneer*. They were in the spring 2022 issue, and I'm expecting a third article to appear in their summer issue, as well. This gives me hope to keep me plugging away in my search for an agent".

Excellent, Jim! It's easier to find an agent when you can prove you have prior publishing success. Keep up the good work.

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Creative Writing Tip:

Always Be Clear! (The ABCs of strong writing)  
Strong writing requires clear writing. Carefully read each passage to be sure the wording is clear to readers and cannot be misinterpreted. Is clarity important? Consider the following advertisement that supposedly appeared in a newspaper: We do not tear your clothing with machinery. We do it carefully by hand.

(Excerpt from *Purge Your Prose of Problems, a book doctor's desk reference*, available only at [ZebraEditor.com](http://ZebraEditor.com).)

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Excellent Editing for Maximum Marketability

Whether you hope to sell your manuscript to a publisher or plan to self-publish, if it's not marketable, it will fail. Zebra Communications edits manuscripts with marketability in mind. Two of the three services we offer include developmental editing and an extensive report filled with advice, explanations, and suggestions on how to improve the manuscript's marketability even more. Look for our services, pricing, reviews, and more at www.ZebraEditor.com.

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Sourcebooks News

Sourcebooks has acquired duopress, a fifteen-year-old independent publisher headquartered in Baltimore. Sourcebooks, Inc., is an independent book publisher located in Naperville, Illinois. The company publishes books, ebooks, and digital products and is one of the twenty largest publishers in the United States.

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Easy Access to Bobbie's Blogs

Read creative writing tips as well as some of my personal experiences. Access the Write In Style blog here:
<https://www.zebraeditor.com/blog/>

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Before the First Book: A Roundtable Discussion

Jai Hamid Bashir, Joshua Burton, and Nanya Jhingran are three writers who share a contemplative engagement with history, intergenerational wounding, and lyric. <https://tinyurl.com/u8dbvp8e>

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The following report is from a recent newsletter of Highroad Global Services, a company that provides executive coaching and conflict management skills so leaders can thrive in these challenging times. (Used by permission.)

Want to Write More? Here's What Works for Me

In this age of COVID and political unrest I find myself thinking about simpler times. I try to live in the present, but I also find fulfillment in recalling meaningful events in my life, like filling in a timeline of who I am.

We all need refuge right now from grief and uncertainty. For me that refuge takes the forms of classic sit coms, music, and writing. Yep, "quirky" is my middle name.

My latest writing project is a memoir of my musical adventures arcing from my childhood in Los Angeles to my present day as the lead singer of The Spirit of Rush. I grew up in LA in the 1980's at the height of hair metal and hard rock. I spent many a weekend on Sunset Strip in Hollywood going from club to club seeing incredible bands, and meeting them! I thought it was time to tell my story.

Writing this book has provided an escape from the world's difficulties, but beyond that it allows me to document my life. Writing can be an outlet, a way to reach new customers, a tool for processing emotions, a way to express thought leadership, and so much more.

Today I want to offer some writing tips that have worked for me. If you want to write more, don't wait! Be bold and say what you want to say.

- Write about what you know and love, not what you think you should write about. Your idea needs to be enough to sustain your interest, so let it be authentic.
- If you're not sure what to write about, grab a blank piece of paper and brainstorm using questions like these: "What is most interesting to me? What do I care about? What is unique about my perspective? How can I help people?"
- Write an outline, at least for your first paragraph or chapter, to get you going.
- To write a book, work a little each day-ish. Thinking about writing a whole book is overwhelming, but writing a couple of paragraphs... well, that you can do! Even writing a few sentences is progress. Forward motion counts more than speed.
- Whenever you finish the day's writing, write down two or three bullet points spelling out what you will write about the next day. This action helps you keep your momentum and avoid getting stuck.
- Write your first draft without much thought to whether or not the writing is good. This is not easy because the human brain loves to judge. Just get stuff down. You can and should edit later.
- Get a copy of the book *Write in Style* by Bobbie Christmas. It's one of the best writing books out there and it will help you with the editing phase. <https://www.zebraeditor.com/book/write-in-style-how-to-use-your-computer-to-improve-your-writing/>
- Let nothing, not even your own self-critic, stop you from writing. Even if you don't believe in yourself, write anyway. I hope this is helpful to you. Writing is a wonderful form of self-expression, whether or not you ever share it.

-Vicki Flier Hudson

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Be My Friend on Facebook

Follow my adventures, opinions, and observations: <http://www.facebook.com/bobbie.christmas>

Follow Zebra Communications on Facebook for news for writers, writing-related cartoons, immediate updates, and other good stuff. <https://tinyurl.com/ydyn3pcu>.

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CMOS Online Q&A

This month someone posed the following question to The Chicago Manual of Style Online:

Q. In CMOS 9.48, on numbered places of worship, shouldn't the example "Twenty-First Church of Christ" read as "Twenty-first Church of Christ"? Why is the second number uppercase?

To get the answer to this question and many more based on Chicago style, go to <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/latest.html>.

The Chicago Manual of Style sets the standard in book publishing for issues such as punctuation, capitalization, and much more. If you write fiction or nonfiction books, you will want to know about Chicago style or be sure to use a professional book editor intimately familiar with Chicago style.

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Write In Style: How to Use Your Computer to Improve Your Writing

We've been told to write tight, but how can we know when we've overwritten? In my five-time-award-winning book *\_Write In Style\_*, you'll learn how to use your computer to find and delete or rewrite words, sentences, and phrases that weaken your writing.

Five-time-award-winning *\_Write In Style\_* leaves grammar to the grammarians. Instead it uses humor and expertise to show writers how to tighten and strengthen their writing style and create a fresh voice. Available as an e-book or printed.

Have you removed all the superfluous words in your manuscript? This book tells you what to look for and change or delete. Watch all your writing improve with tips from this brilliant book on creative writing.

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Want to buy the book in Kobo through Rakuten? Easy. Go to <https://www.kobo.com/us/en/ebook/write-in-style-3>

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News Writing
By Peter Cole

You've gathered the information. You've interviewed all the people involved, the eyewitnesses to the explosion, the police, etc, etc. Now you have to write the story. You have pages in your notebook of facts, observations, quotes. You may have some agency copy, some material from other media. The first thing to do is stop and think. Do not start writing until you have a plan. [Read the remainder of this comprehensive article that works for many types of articles here:

<https://tinyurl.com/4jnz5x88>
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Four: Contests, Agents, and Markets

TC Jewfolk (Minneapolis and Saint Paul) is the Twin Cities' only independent Jewish online media hub. TC Jewfolk celebrates all of you and showcases your ten thousand ways to be Jewish.

Jewish? Jew-ish? We want you to write for us! Topics range from personal Jewish experiences, reviews of Jewish media, your search for the NJP (Nice Jewish Person) and much more. If you have a solid idea, we have the outlet. We appreciate community voices and happily pay our freelance writers \$50-100 per article that we share with our growing audience. In addition to being published on TCJewfolk.com, your article will be shared on our social media channels and in our weekly emailed news digest. Read the full submission guidelines and suggestions here: <https://tcjewfolk.com/about/write-for-us/>. Send all inquiries to editor@tcjewfolk.com.

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NewMyths.com

We like to balance each quarterly issue between science fiction and fantasy, dark and light, serious and humorous, hard and soft science fiction, and longer and shorter works. It also accepts nonfiction, poems, reviews (query first), and artwork with speculative fiction themes. Our readers are not fixated on a single style or tone or genre, but prefer a quality sample of the field. Think tapas or dim sum. New Myths considers submissions between June 1-July 31.

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Full guidelines here: <https://tinyurl.com/yc5645t7>.

Please send submissions as Word or pdf attachments to [editor@newmyths.com](mailto:editor@newmyths.com) Submissions received outside of the submission period will be deleted unread.

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The Bureau Dispatch

The Bureau Dispatch publishes short stories between 500 to 1,500 words. We are open to all kinds of stories, but are partial to ones that explore this quarter's narrative focus.

Submissions are open from April 1st to June 17th, 2022. We want fiction that is compelling and beautifully crafted; narratives that leave the reader breathless and changed. The kind of story that, when all is said and done, elicits a resounding "sh*t, yeah!" Details here: <https://www.bureaudispatch.com/submissions>

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Do YOU have news for The Writers Network News? Send it in the body of an email to Bobbie@zebraeditor.com or bzebra@aol.com. Deadline: 18th of each month.

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Send a copy of this newsletter to all your writing friends. Tell them to join The Writers Network F-R-E-E by visiting <https://www.zebraeditor.com/> and signing up for The Writers Network News.

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With the exception of Zebra Communications, information in this newsletter is not to be construed as an endorsement. Research all information and study every stipulation before you enter a competition, pitch or accept an assignment, spend money, or sell your work.

The Writers Network News: a newsletter for writers everywhere. No Rules; Just Write!

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