

Let Me Help You

# Sell Your Homework

12-Week Course of Study:

*24 Ways to Write  
What You Think*

*Lesson 1*

**STOP, WORLD! I WANT TO SPEAK**

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# INTRODUCTION

## STOP, WORLD, I WANT TO SPEAK!

Red flags are waving  
Danger is coming  
Daily,  
mail delivered to our homes  
warns citizens  
that it's time  
to stop,  
watch,  
listen,  
think  
and  
**speak up!**

Let's look at your mail. From the American Center for Law and Justice comes this alert:

As I sat in the Supreme Court and listened to Justice John Paul Stevens deliver the majority's decision in the *Santa Fe v. Doe* case, I knew the legal ramifications would be troubling. The Court had just banned student-led prayer at football games in a way that further confused and distorted the area of protected religious speech in the schools.

Tragically, the ruling blurred the distinction between government speech and private student speech, while censoring the free speech rights of students across America.

Right then, I knew this case had to serve as a "wake-up call" for Christians across America.

You open another letter from Jay Alan Sekulow and you find this:

The Supreme Court tells our kids they can't pray at football games . . .  
The ACLU sues to ban "In God We

Trust” . . . A federal judge sends “prayer police” into public schools. . . . City officials tell Christians using public facilities, “If you pray, you can’t stay.” It’s time to face the shocking reality of anti-Christian bigotry in America.”

He goes on to say:

**It’s time for a reality check. Your rights as a Christian citizen are being stripped away. And there is no way to “sugar coat” what is happening.**

**That’s where we find ourselves in America today—thanks in part to the latest round of U.S. Supreme Court rulings and a host of lawsuits from groups like the ACLU.**

**This state of affairs is intolerable . . . and it’s getting worse.**

You open another envelope and it contains a letter that says:

**Dear Christian friend of the Jewish people:**

**I cannot state it strongly enough – as the persecution of Jews worldwide continues at an alarming rate, I need you to respond to this letter today.**

**My prayer is that you share my concern for the Jewish people’s most urgent cry for help – the pressing need to show the Jewish people that, through Jesus, there is hope.**

**It’s worse than you think. You’ve probably heard shocking news reports of Jews being victims of horrible crimes . . .**

A letter in the same mail comes from Alan Keyes, who writes:

**You know of the disgraceful scandals, impeachment, and national security failures inflicted on America by Bill Clinton! And the shameful pardons he issued! But there is one ticking “time bomb” of the Clinton “legacy” you may never have heard of – even though it could demolish the foundations of our freedom if we take no action!**

**That “time bomb” is the United Nations International Criminal Court Treaty.**

**Not only is it an unprecedented assault on American sovereignty, but it overrides your Constitutional rights and uproots the principles of the Declaration of Independence. This globalist scheme is explicitly un-American, and it will have terrible consequences for your liberty and your family’s security!**

**All of these appeal to you to do something.**

They want you to stand up and be heard. Right now, while there is still time.

There may come a time when our freedom to speak up will be taken from us as the Puritan ethic fades out of fashion.

But how do you speak up now? These lessons are written to tell you how.

**Now, short of shooting the President, breaking a world record or taking off all our clothes and walking naked down Main Street, most of us will go**

virtually unnoticed through this world. The public seems totally disinterested in us unless we create some kind of scandal. And even then, all we get is some momentary nod.

Like as not, we'll grow and bloom and wither and the world will go on—uncaring.

It's a funny thing. The public vests us with rights that stand up in a court of law. People pay taxes so we can go to public school and get an education. They stop for us in crosswalks. They address us as "Dear" when they write us and sign themselves off as "Very truly yours."

**But will they ever listen to one word we have to say? Never.**

Have you ever stopped to ask, "Why not?" Or are you so brow-beaten by now you're convinced nothing you could ever say would interest anyone anyway.

Somehow we get that idea early in life.

Maybe it all goes back to infancy when we wanted to talk in public places before we knew any syllables that made sense to people. Our parents shushed us up at once. People were looking.

Our teachers in primary grades made us raise our hand if we wanted to speak and, usually, we had to wait our turn. Then, when we were finally called on, we forgot what we wanted to say.

**We got another kind of message** when we wanted to play hide-and-seek and everyone else wanted kick-the-can.

We wanted hamburgers for lunch and everyone else wanted hot dogs. We wanted to go to Grandma's and everyone else wanted to go swimming.

What we thought didn't matter then and we've carried into adulthood that what we think doesn't matter now either.

But it does.

A one-vote change in every precinct in Illinois would have put Richard Nixon in the White House in 1960. Don't they say:

**For want of a nail the shoe was lost,  
And for want of a shoe the horse was  
lost.**

**For want of a horse the rider was  
lost,  
And for want of a rider the message  
was lost,**

**For want of the message the battle  
was lost.**

**All for the want of a nail.**

That lesson comes through loud and clear. An insignificant nail made all the difference. It's another way of saying that no nail is insignificant.

**And no person is insignificant.**

One black woman, by saying one word, "No!" when told to go to the back of the bus, changed life in this entire nation.

One television commentator, speaking after a presidential message, can kill the entire effect of an important speech.

The vote of one man on the Supreme Court can break a deadlock and create a law that will control the lives of citizens in our entire nation for generations to come.

One opinion article, written by a concerned citizen and printed in a newspaper, can have a telling effect on countless voters.

**We need YOU** to stand up, wave your own flag wildly and tell the world what YOU think. The erosion of our rights, our privileges, our Judeo-Christian ethic calls for a Paul Revere who will sound the alarm so that we may marshal our forces and win the day.

Perhaps YOU are that Paul Revere, the right man or woman at the right time to alert your world about the enemy that's coming.

The right man at the right time can change the world. (Indeed, the right Man at the right time did change the world.)

**There is power in the voice** of one person—man or woman. And that power can be multiplied thousands of times when one person, you, with an opinion you are willing to share will put your words on paper and pass them on. Keeping your thoughts to yourself, you edify yourself alone. Publishing your words, you may influence many.

And the world will listen if what you have to say is significant.

Or fresh.

Or original.

Or enlightening.

**Do you go along with the crowd** or are you a person of strong likes and dislikes?

**Do you believe** everything you read?

Everything you're told?

Do you trust politicians?

Used car salesmen?

Or do you ask why and how and what for when everybody else just sits?

**If you like things** the way they are, why go to all the bother of pointing out new directions?

But let's measure the intensity of your convictions and see if you have a reason for your reactions.

Check the degree (on the next pages) to which you react to the suggested topic and then give a reason why you feel the way you do.

You may go into ecstasy over a given item.

You may tolerate it.

You may be totally neutral.

You may have a distinct dislike for it.

Some items may affect you physically or spiritually or visually. Your background, your childhood experiences, your mother may all have been influences that determine your reactions.

Take your time and see if you can articulate clearly just what you feel.

SELL YOUR HOMEWORK: STOP , WORLD, I WANT TO SPEAK!

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>I LOVE IT</b>	<b>I LIKE IT</b>	<b>NEUTRAL</b>	<b>I HATE IT</b>
<b>Unisex</b> Why? _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Liver</b> Why? _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Gun control</b> Why? _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Male nurses</b> Why? _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Unions</b> Why? _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Mice</b> Why? _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Acupuncture</b> Why? _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Horoscopes</b> Why? _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Cats</b> Why? _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Democrats</b> Why? _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Republicans</b> Why? _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Divorce</b> Why? _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

SELL YOUR HOMEWORK: STOP , WORLD, I WANT TO SPEAK!

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>I LOVE IT</b>	<b>I LIKE IT</b>	<b>NEUTRAL</b>	<b>I HATE IT</b>
<b>Boxing</b> Why? _____ _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Women's lib</b> Why? _____ _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Bible smuggling</b> Why? _____ _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Gay churches</b> Why? _____ _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Long hair on men</b> Why? _____ _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Working mothers</b> Why? _____ _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Abortion</b> Why? _____ _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Garlic</b> Why? _____ _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Live-in In-laws</b> Why? _____ _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Pornography</b> Why? _____ _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Bible study</b> Why? _____ _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Old hymns</b> Why? _____ _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

ITEM	I LOVE IT	I LIKE IT	NEUTRAL	I HATE IT
Prayer meeting	_____	_____	_____	_____
Why?	_____			



**All right, now that you've expressed yourself, what are you thinking? Is it a good test?** Or are you saying to yourself, "So what? This test doesn't measure what I feel. Just because I couldn't care less about gay churches or mice or Bible smuggling, does that mean I have nothing to say to the world?"

**In a way, it is a good test.** It does bring up controversial issues and make you take a position. Of course, liver isn't controversial in itself; but you have to admit it does divide the nation. You like it or you don't. No one is in between.

**And in a way, the test is bad.** You can like liver and cats and unions and Democrats and women's lib just as much as you tolerate the rest of the list. So what does that mean?

Maybe what you're saying is that you can live with strong flavors (garlic, liver), and you can live with animals (cats, mice) and you can tolerate people who are different (male nurses, gays) in the way they express their compassion and love. But surely somewhere you have a bottom line.

Look at your answers to "gun control," "unions," "boxing," "women's lib," "abortion," and "live-in in-laws."

Here are threats on life, on human rights, on privacy.

**Are you neutral about these?**

If you are, maybe you should put these lessons aside and turn on your television set. These lessons are not for people who are happy with the status quo. They are for people who don't like what they see going on around them. They don't like the social deterioration that's now commonplace in this country. They don't like the watering down of standards.

**They don't like hypocrites** in public office. It makes them mad when they find out that of all the Senators and Representatives who voted that the U.S. should enter a 20th century war only one son of one of them ever served in the Armed Forces—and his was a behind-the-lines appointment. All the others had their sons excused from serving.

**It makes them mad** that children of parents who earn as much as \$16,000 a year can—in some areas—get free lunches in school.

**It makes them mad** that abortion is a way of life, that pornography is sold

in corner markets and readily available on the internet, that banks in many states confiscate dormant savings accounts and turn them over to the State.

**It makes them mad** and they want to do something about it.

Or there may be people who have a lot they want to say. They have stories they want to tell. They've had experiences that have taught them lessons or changed their lives. They want to share them with others and see someone else changed.

**But they don't know how** to go about it. They don't know how to say what they're brimful ready to say. They need a guide.

And that's what these lessons are for. They are a guide to show you at least 24 areas where you can share what YOU really think.

We'll look at how the people who've cornered this market are already doing it; and we'll practice their techniques, using your ideas.

Who knows? Maybe you'll be another Erma Bombeck or Pat Buchanan or Art Buchwald.

Or better yet—maybe you'll create a niche for yourself that will make all three of them move over.

But, wait a minute! It's not all that easy. There's one question teachers of writing never answer, much less raise.

### **What do you do with the clutter?**

Writers collect books on writing, articles they've clipped for research on

current topics and on material they plan to write. They have collections of envelopes, stamps, erasers, pens and pencils, markers, paper clips, light bulbs, copy paper, back-up copies of articles and letters to editors they've already sent, check books. The list goes on and on.

Trouble is, they mound on your desk near your word processor. Then they go out of sight, fall to the floor under the desk, tumble into a waste basket, get forgotten. Tons of time goes to waste as writers search for the item they must have NOW.

### **So what do you do?**

I buy shelves and stack my books on their backs in piles with their titles reading horizontally. I don't have to turn my head to see which book is where. I gang my piles so juvenile novel writing is in one stack, short stories in another, blockbuster novel writing in a third, self-publishing in a fourth. I have piles for news writing, interviewing, home business. I could fill this page.

**I also have boxes** and file drawers of papers and tests and syllabi for courses I've taught. To sort them because my son says he will rent a dumpster when I die and empty the house, especially my office, I use the stairs that connect our daylight basement to the kitchen.

I cut pages with blank backs into fourths and secure bunches with rubber bands.

Then I sort an armful into piles on the stairs.

I use them to identify categories I'm sorting (permissions, features, garden, cooking, cleaning tips). I staple the paper to the edge of the stair above where the pile will sit.

**I gather up the piles** and put them each in a three-ring notebook labeled on the spine so I know that medical matter is in this book, gardening info in another, cooking ideas in another, sold articles, ideas, journalism syllabi—it all goes by category into its own notebook and gets filed on a shelf. It's with its own and out of the way.

**I buy black** plastic stacking trays and put all the notes and drafts of a given book manuscript inside.

I go through the mail I've dumped in a box and sort out the bills. They go in a black stack tray near my desk. I put it so the back of the tray faces me. I attach a stick-um label to it that says "To pay." I keep my check book, small tabulator and the bills in that tray.

**I have** a tray marked "To Buy" for the supplies I'll need. I have a tray for my desk telephone address book. I keep a tray for tools like my stapler, a small plastic tape dispenser, liquid paper, glue, small ruler—the tools you constantly need that get scattered over desk and table tops and buried first.

I have a tray for material "To Read." I have a tray for copyright forms and permissions I get. Of course, there's a "To Do" tray and a tray for marketing

ideas.

**I buy** paper boxes that have eight 9" x 12" slots. I have nine boxes, labeled and full.

I've bought the small plastic drawer sets that have four 9" x 9" drawers in each stack. I keep scissors in one drawer, paper clips in another, pens, pencils, markers, glasses (I'm always putting them where I can't find them)(I have old tumblers for my keys), labels, erasers, sugarless hard candy.

**I buy paper** accordion boxes and label the slots

I have three 48 slot shelves I buy boxed and assemble myself. I use one for computer discs and software manuals. I use one for CDs of music and for finished manuscripts and one for miscellany like vendors cards, missionary letters, letters from friends I should answer, handouts, announcements—important stuff I should keep—somewhere. You can use one to sort things when you don't have stairs.

**I also have** two bulletin boards and two four-drawer files and three two-drawer files in my office plus a closet with a water heater and shirts for next season. All of this is in a corner of our utility room.

Have a place for everything. When you use something, use it and then put it back and say out loud where you put it to help you remember. Have an 8 ½ x 11 inch box for drafts you won't use. The blank backs have two uses: 1) cut

in four pieces, they make great scratch paper; 2) uncut, you have clean sheets for the next draft.

Always date drafts and messages and reminders. Don't rely on the date in the PC. The stacks on your desk lose their value if you don't know which one you did last or got yesterday.

Also always identify phone calls with not only the name of the caller but who it is or why the call. We forget by Tuesday which John called or whose number this is.

**My problem** is that I have so many places to put things I can't and don't remember where I put what.

Today, I thought of the solution.

I will buy a telephone-address book and use its alphabetized pages to write down each item I'm filing and where I am putting it. When I want something, I'll just pick up that book.

If none of this works, I'll go back to pawing through the piles till I find what I'm looking for, hoping I remember what it is by the time I find it.

# WE WHO SPEAK MUST HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY

What kind of words  
make people listen?  
Is everything we think,  
every sentence we utter,  
every word we write  
going  
to be

immortal?

**Is the world really clamoring  
for what we've got to say?**

Hardly.

If you're going to persuade the world to stop so you can speak, you've got to say something significant. Or, as I said, you've got to be original and fresh. We're tired of the same old thing said—or written—in the same old way.

**We want a prophet** who will stand up against a crowd rushing down hill and say, "No, not this way. That way!" We're waiting for the voice, as it were, crying in the wilderness. We want someone with convictions who will

speak up. We want him to shout, but to make sense and be sensible.

The late Erma Bombeck was original and fresh. You've got to write that way, too, if you want the kind of audience she had. And all she did (we'll study her in more depth later) was take what everybody already knows and tell it again.

How do you hide something from a teenager? Erma knew. You hide it under a dish towel!

Of course, you say. You knew it all the time. But it took Erma to say it first. Where were you?

**How would YOU** hide something from a teenager? Write your answer here:

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Let's give YOU a test for originality and freshness and color.

**How would YOU** describe a magazine advertisement for a dieting program that features a large—really large—woman in one picture and the same woman slimmed down to nothing in the other:

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**How would YOU** describe what it's like to grow old?

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**Women's' fashions?**

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**How would YOU** get a relative to pick up dropped clothes and put them

in a hamper?

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**How would YOU** lose ten pounds by Christmas?

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**How would YOU** read a menu in a dark restaurant?

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**How do YOU** figure out who owes what when you have lunch Dutch with five friends?

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**What do YOU** tell the emergency room nurse when a two-year-old drops a toy dump truck on your head from ceiling height, him standing on the top bunk and you fishing for a penny on the floor?

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**How do YOU** come into the house quietly at four in the morning?

Or, better yet, how do you wake up someone inside the house when you're outside, you've lost your key and you don't want to rouse the neighborhood?

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**Writing with appeal means that you present life's problems as they actually occur**, and then you solve them in a unique and sensible fashion. You build up the reader's curiosity with the dilemma you face, and then you deftly solve things with your own sweet reasonableness and common sense.

Many novelists try to write their hero into a corner, giving him no way at all out of his problem. I know I do. And time after time, I've found when we get to the crisis that the hero knows what to do all by himself. He seems to figure out what he should do and there's no other way.

You may not have been able to come up with an immediate and clever answer for all the problems listed above, but just wait a little while.

Your subconscious might come up

with a solution more clever than anything Erma could devise.

**What did she have to say** about the large woman/slender woman ad mentioned above? She describes the woman in the first picture as wearing a dress that would "slipcover New Jersey." The 30-days-later picture shows the same woman now resembling a "well-dressed thermometer."

Erma puts it neatly when describing what it feels like to grow old. She quotes someone who described aging as fun because finally one's body could succumb to gravity and "fall around your knees."

Here's women's fashions as only Erma could say it.

**She says that** women's clothes are neither practical nor comfortable. Zippers require arms 72 inches long. Other "touches" do unnatural things to their bodies. She says that all women agree that "if it doesn't kill you wearing it, it isn't worth wearing."

Being locked out without a key comes from my own experience. I merely went to our bedroom window inside which I knew my wife was sleeping. I called plaintively in a little-boy voice:

"Mommeeeeeee."

**She woke at once**, fearing our young son was sleep-walking outside. It was that easy!

I have no bright answers for the

other several problems. And you may not either. Just because you don't doesn't mean you can't write appealingly. This is just an exercise.

But, hopefully, some of you have found that you've got a gift for that kind of thinking and writing.

One other thing Erma does is write clearly. Her column is no Magna cum Theologicus Philosophicus. You can understand every word she writes. You wouldn't read it if you didn't.

**It's essential that you write in the language of the people if you want to be heard in this world.** Use the facts of common life. Hold us to the faith once delivered to the saints. Communicate with us on the level of Everyman.

You will never write, "Glutenous fungi resist adhering to perambulating spheroids of a granite consistency" when you want to say something like "a rolling stone gathers no moss."

Neither will you play with usage the way Dennis the Menace did recently when, holding a carton near kitty and her dish, he told his mother, "Uncle Charlie says he watered the horse. Well, I just milked the cat!"

**You never want your reader to have to read your material twice to figure out what it is you're trying to say.** You are not writing a textbook. Your reader passes your way once. You get one shot. If he doesn't get the message then, he never will.

Have you ever measured your writ-

ing against the "fog index"? It can be an eye-opening experience.

Go get something you've written recently. Don't use a letter. Use material where you've told a reader what to do or how to do. Use a description you've written—or your last article. If you have nothing to use, write something now. Use about 200 words. Write on one of the following, perhaps:

**1. What Makes Men Cry**

2. My Most Significant Religious Experience

3. Why a Woman Should Be President

4. What I've Learned from Other People's Children

5. Cures for Colds

6. How to Save a Marriage on the Rocks

7. I Married a (washing machine/ airplane/football/rod and reel—something your spouse brought along he/she can't live without so neither can you).

Type the article double-spaced. If you don't type, make a covenant with yourself that you'll learn. You save a bundle when you can type your own manuscripts.

**Now, select 100 words from either the beginning, the middle or the end of your article.**

Box them.

Count the number of sentences. If you have a portion of a sentence left at the end of your 100 words, estimate

whether it is a quarter sentence (.25), a half (.5) or three-quarters (.75). Add this to the total number of complete sentences you've counted within your 100 words.

Now, divide the number of sentences into the 100 words to find out the average number of words per sentence. Remember, if you have a decimal in your average-number-of-sentence figure, you will have to move it over. You can't divide a decimal number into a whole number. Add a zero to your 100 and put a decimal after that. Also, put a decimal up on the answer line (the quotient). Now divide away.

I know. Some of you smarties have a pocket calculator. You're way ahead of me.

Now you have the average number of words per sentence.

**Your next step is to count all the words of three or more syllables, except three kinds:**

- 1) Proper nouns (capitalized names)
- 2) Hyphenated words
- 3) Words where a suffix is the third syllable (readier, committing, contentment).

Add the total number of appropriate three (+) syllable words to your average number of words per sentence.

Now multiply that sum by point 4.

Your answer is your "fog index." It represents the grade level on which you write. If your answer is 6.4, you write on a level that a person who has been four months in sixth grade would

understand. If it's 8.6, you write on the level suitable to a person who has been six months in grade eight.

**In this measurement**, you will want a low figure. Six, eight—these are fine. It's when you get into the tens and teens that you're in trouble.

Erma Bombeck's "Dieters adept at stretching—even truth" scored 8.4. Her article on women's fashions scored 7.6. A column of Art Buchwald's scored 5.8. The Twenty-Third Psalm was 7.9.

**Now, there are a couple of flies** in the ointment. This method rewards the person who writes in short sentences. The more sentences in your 100 words the lower your average-words-per-sentence answer will be. It fines you for using words with three or more syllables.

Also, it's just a method. It's not exact.

Good writing is clear, easily understood and it's interesting. Ease of readability, this method asserts, allows long sentences and short but rewards shorter sentences and shorter words

You've just learned a method for writing clear and simple language. Now, how can you make your style compelling?

**Let's go back** to the beginning. Make a spectacle of yourself and you will attract attention. People are curious. There's novelty when a person walks downtown in the buff.

Leave your shades up at night and all the cars driving by will slow down. People are really curious. Show them that you are a little different and/or that your opinions are original and significant and they'll take notice.

But how do you do that?

You let your own personality show through.

There's one thing that is totally distinctive about you.

**It's who you are.** You in all your individual identity are totally unique. There is no other person on earth just like you. Oh, people will always tell you that you remind them of Uncle Charlie or Aunt Sophie or that man who works down at the bank. (People tell me I look like Mr. Rogers of "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood." Poor him!) But there is not now and there never has been or will be another you.

No one else has your genes.

No one else was born to your parents the moment you were born. Oh, you may have had a womb-mate, but he/she was born at a different time.

**No one else knows** all the people you know or has been all the places you've been or done all the things you've done. You may have brothers and sisters who shared your room, your clothes, even your bed; but not one of them is you.

They were never sent home from school for painting their face in art class the way you were.

They were never sent home from the lake by an angry grandfather just because they were late for supper—the way you were. No matter that you'd looked forward all year to spending two weeks in July with your grandparents—all by yourself. "You were late. You go back home with your mother."

**No one else was followed home** by all the boys in the third grade and beaten within an inch of his life—the way you were. They always went after the runt.

No one else ever fell and almost drowned in the baptistery in front of the whole church—the way you were. You'd been first on the platform when they called up all the youth group who'd been to camp. When they said, "Make more room. We've got more young people here," everybody pushed and moved you off into the water.

You'll never forget it to your dying day! But it makes you totally unique.

**Were you brought up** during the Depression in a little town down state where everyone went to one high school and you could buy hot dogs buried in sauerkraut for a nickel?

Say so. Let it color your writing.

You've got a heritage to build on in your writing that millions of people know nothing about. Many of our great novelists of the 1930s and 1940s set their scenes in their home town and peopled their books with their friends and neighbors.

**Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt*** may have seemed superficial, but he was totally authentic. Babbitt was the common man of his era. He lived in a typical home and was married to the typical wife. He did the things expected of such a person and thought the thoughts. Every reader across the nation recognized him as “home town” and identified with him.

The author wrote what he knew. He drew from his own experience. His prose was so personable because he was in it. Writers are still doing that today.

You must do it, too.

**Capitalize** on what you know. Share it. Let it show again and again in your writing.

Learn to express what you are and what you feel and what you know. Color your prose with your individuality. Share what you are with others. Let them inside those locked doors. Develop a frank candor—a genuine honesty—that lets you share your treasures with them.

A Briton, Laurie Lee, wrote his wonder when he met his infant daughter for the first time. His article in “Reader’s Digest” in January 1965 was profound because he wrote from his heart:

**Newborn . . . she looked already a centenarian, exhausted, shrunken, bald, tottering on the brink of an old crone’s grave.**

He sees her growing younger day by day as she fills out. He credits each inhalation of air as serving to help heal the marks of birth and death she wore when first she emerged into daylight.

He uses the figure of the tides to show what her life is like with its times when she sleeps and times when she eats.

**Her frail self-absorption is a commanding presence, her helplessness is strong as a rock.**

He says he catches himself listening to her silences as if she were some great engine . . . purring upstairs.

**When awake, and not feeding, she snorts and gobbles dryly, like a ruminative jackdaw, or strains and groans and waves her hands about as though casting invisible nets. I see her hauling in life . . . working blind . . . in a darkness where she is still alone.**

He speaks in another place of taking her each night to bed like a book while he lies close and studies her.

He says **her face is a sheaf of masks which she shuffles through aimlessly.**

He’s a careful observer. He’s chosen an appealing subject.

He’s writing fairly simply.

He does have a few three-syllable words. You certainly sense his love for his newborn. All that he is comes out compellingly.

**He sets a high standard.** I could never write that well. But the principle remains the same—you bring to your blank page what you know and what you are and then you tell the truth.

Now, it may be that you have prejudices most people hide under the rug. Maybe it's time to bring them out and air them. Maybe there's more to your viewpoint than other people have been willing to consider. They've never thought your thoughts so how can they have your insights? They need your perspective and sense.

My wife infuriates me when we've been to a lecture followed by questions and she has sat there not saying one word. Then in the car on the way home, she'll say, "Someone should have asked that man such-and-such."

And with one question she could have cut through his logic and pinned him to the wall.

**Why didn't she speak up** when she had the chance? "Well, I didn't want to embarrass him . . ."

The world is a poorer place because the people who think, the people who have convictions, don't speak up. Often they don't because they fear the consequences. They don't want to be labeled "troublemakers." They don't want to "split the church."

**Let's say you have the solution** for juvenile delinquency in the public schools. You think it makes sense to sponsor a state-wide initiative to bring spanking back into the schools the way

it was when you were a teen. But you do nothing, perhaps out of fear that your house will be bombed by angry students. Nothing gets done and violence continues.

Those of us who are willing to speak need to know we're standing on solid ground. Just speaking up is not enough. Thinking clearly is essential. So few people use principles of logic when they attack or defend a point or issue. Many writers let feeling or emotion direct the advice they give other people. We need you to poke holes in shallow thinking. We need you to let in light. The following chapter goes into this more thoroughly in its presentation of logical fallacies.

**Another part of good writing** is limiting each article to an essential point or points. So many writers mount their horse like young Lord Ronald in Stephen Leacock's short story, "Gertrude the Governess." He got on and "rode madly off in all directions." You need to uncover the essential ingredient of the argument you're attacking or of the insights you're revealing or of the lesson you're teaching or of the experience you're sharing. Get to the heart of the matter and concentrate on it. Then you'll get it across to the reader.

(Note: The essential ingredient may have several parts to it.)

**Good writing appeals** when it handles items of universal interest. The warts on Aunt Sophie's elbow leave us

cold. But if you perceive that people get warts at times of great emotional stress and you can document the fact inside and outside your family with quotes from authorities, you might have something that would interest everyone.

There's that "significance" again.

And you need to develop a writing style that is enthusiastic—full of life. You can do this by filling your sentences with verbs and verbals. They convey action. You do well when you have one verb or verbal (participle, infinitive, gerund) to every five words out of your 100. You do better when the ratio is one-to-four, best when it's one-to-three.

**Verbs with their participles,** infinitives and gerunds strengthen language. Prepositional phrases weaken it.

Do you know a preposition when you see one? Maybe you need my "Easy English" workbook being distributed by Glory Press of West Linn, Oregon. In it I teach a preposition poem I wrote to the music of "The Halls of Montezuma." Sing it:

**"A-ha-long, across, against, among, above,  
A-ha-round, before, behind, but, after, of.  
"Be-he-low, beneath, beside, between, beyond,  
In, to, toward, under, up, until, upon.**

**"Eh-hex-cept, for, from, at, by, off, on, about,**

**Through-hoo out, through, into, with, within, without.**

**"A-ha-long, across, against, among, above,**

**A-ha-round, before, behind, but, after, of."**

Because I had several left over after finishing that immortal poem, I put them in the title. It's "The Outside, Inside, Like, Down, Over, During, Near."

**Having a lot** of prepositional phrases is like having a lot of adjectives and adverbs. Your style becomes cluttered and static. Action verbs and good nouns make it strong and convincing. This is one of the secrets of persuasive writing.

Avoid passive voice verbs that use the past participle (ends in "ed" or "en") with a "be" helper (is/am/are/was/were).

But don't go overboard. Don't become so conscious of how you are writing that you stiffen up. Stay natural. Stay YOU. Write like you talk.

**Now the pep talk is over.** I want to explain how the rest of these lessons are organized.

They present 24 different kinds of articles that people can write for newspapers and magazines—24 vehicles that will carry what you think to your reader. I want to present the material,

discuss it and illustrate it with examples that show there's a method behind each one.

We'll begin with a short section on libel and with another listing logical fallacies to watch out for. Your knowing these will help you level your scalpel at liars and cheats who try to diminish your position with sarcasm, insults and false blame.

We'll look at the speech critique, the expository article, several kinds of editorial columns to use when you want to instruct, commend, persuade, correct, praise, entertain or discuss. At the end we'll take a short look at markets where articles such as these may be printed.

Opinion writing is much easier when you consult good texts. Here are four with their table of contents to give you a good idea of what they contain.

**THE MAGAZINE ARTICLE** (*How to think it, plan it, write it*) by Peter P. Jacobi (*Writer's Digest Books, 1597 Dana Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45207*)

1. The Motivation—the Obligation
2. Where Ideas Come From
3. Matter and Manner Count, But First Think Focus
4. Information Gathering
5. Structure, the Blueprint of an Article
6. The Writing Begins
7. Leads and Endings
8. Narration and Description—Humanization and Visualization
9. Exposition, the Meat of Most Articles—Making it Tasty and Digestible

10. Additional Techniques—Compression and Fictionalization

11. Behind Some Words, Essential Concepts Throb—How to Add Thrust and Depth to Your Work

12. A Couple of Case Studies

13. In Expansion—The Essay and Other Hybrids

14. Some Concluding Remarks—Providing Those Finishing Touches.

**ARTICLE TECHNIQUES THAT SELL** by Louise Boggess (*Available from Louise at 4016 Martin Drive, San Mateo, CA 94403*)

1. Ideas
2. Viewpoint
3. Slant and Formula
4. Hooks
5. Informative Article
6. How-To-Do-It Article
7. Self-Help Article
8. Controversial Article
9. Art of Living Article
10. Research and Query
11. Expansion Devices
12. Characterization
13. Profile Article
14. Plotting Fiction
15. Personal Experience Articles
16. Nostalgic Articles
17. Humor Articles
18. Transitions
19. Polishing
20. The Business of Writing

**CRITICAL THINKING AND COMMUNICATION** (*The Use of Reason in Argument*) by Barbara

*Warnick and Edward S. Inch (New York: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1994)*

**Section 1 Introduction**

1. Arguments and Argumentation
2. Arguments in Context

**Section 2 The Anatomy of Argument**

3. Argument Claims and Propositions
4. Evidence: The Foundations for Arguments
5. Reasoning: Making Inferences

**Section 3 Criticizing and Analyzing Arguments**

6. Fallacies: The Detection of Faulty Arguments
7. Argument Analysis and Criticism

**Section 4 Constructing Argumentative Cases**

8. Principles of Case Construction
9. Arguing About Values
10. Arguing About Policies

**Section 5 Communicating Arguments**

11. Language and Argument
12. Arguers, Recipients, and Argumentation

**HOW TO WRITE LIKE AN EXPERT ABOUT ANYTHING**  
*(Bring Factual Accuracy and the Voice of Authority to Your Writing)*

*by Hank Nuwer (Cincinnati, Ohio: Writer's Digest Books, 1995)*

1. The Elements of Expertise
2. Ideas Under Construction
3. Research and Interview Like an Expert
4. Analysis Without Paralysis
5. Make Your Writing Sing
6. Be Your Own (Maybe Your Best) Editor
7. Other Opportunities For Experts
8. Attitude Adjustment
9. Expertise Has Its Limits
10. Marketing Your Work.

Dear Friend:

This free lesson gives you a taste of what my lessons will bring you. I've kept the cost low. Please come with me. It's time for you to write--and speak up!

Professor Dick