BASIC CONCEPT OF WRITING

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by

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Basic writing is a pedagogical term for the writing of "high risk" students who are perceived to be unprepared for conventional college courses in freshman composition. The term basic writing was introduced in the 1970s as an alternative to remedial or developmental writing.

In her ground-breaking book Errors and Expectations (1977), Mina Shaughnessy says that basic writing tends to be represented by "small numbers of words with large numbers of errors." In contrast, David Bartholomae argues that a basic writer "is not necessarily a writer who makes a lot of mistakes"

("Inventing the University," 1985).

Elsewhere he observes that "the distinguishing mark of the basic writer is that he works outside the conceptual structures that his more literate counterparts work within"

(Writing on the Margins, 2005).

In the article "Who Are Basic Writers?" (1990), Andrea Lunsford and Patricia A. Sullivan conclude that "the population of basic writers continues to resist our best attempts at description and definition."

Observations

"Mina Shaughnessy had much to do with encouraging the acceptance of basic writing as a distinct area of teaching and research. She named the field and founded in 1975 the Journal of Basic Writing, which continues as one of the most important vehicles for the dissemination of research articles. In 1977, she published one of the most important scholarly books on the subject, Errors and Expectations, a book that remains the most important single study of basic writers and their prose... [O]ne of the values of her book is that she showed teachers how they could, by viewing errors as linguistic misconceptions, determine the causes of writing problems that on the surface might appear confusing and unconnected."

(Michael G. Moran and Martin J. Jacobi, "Introduction." Research in Basic Writing: A Bibliographic Sourcebook. Greenwood Press, 1990)

Speaking (and Writing) the Language of the University

"Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion--invent the university, that is, or a branch of it, like History or Anthropology or Economics or English. He has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that defines the discourse of our community...

"One response to the problems of basic writers, then, would be to determine just what the community's conventions are, so that those conventions can be written out, 'demystified,' and taught in our classrooms, Teachers, as a result, could be more precise and helpful when they ask students to 'think,' 'argue,' 'describe,' or 'define.' Another response would be to examine the essays written by basic writers--their approximations of academic discourse--to determine more clearly where the problems lie. If we look at their writing, and if we look at it in the context of other student writing, we can better see the points of discord when students try to write their way into the university."

(David Bartholmae, "Inventing the University." When a Writer Can't Write: Studies in Writer's Block and Other Composing-Process Problems, ed. by Mike Rose. Guilford Press, 1985)

"[T]he real challenge for us as teachers of basic writing lies in helping our students become more proficient at abstracting and conceptualizing and hence at producing acceptable academic discourse, without losing the directness many of them now possess."

(Andrea Lunsford, quoted by Patricia Bizzell in Academic Discourse and Critical Consciousness. University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992)

Where Do Basic Writers Come From?

"[T]he research does not support the view that basic writers come from any single social class or discourse community... Their backgrounds are too complex and rich to support simple generalizations about class and psychology to be particularly useful in helping to understand these students."

(Michael G. Moran and Martin J. Jacobi, Research in Basic Writing. Greenwood, 1990)

The Problem With the Growth Metaphor

"Many early studies of basic writing in the 1970s and 80s drew on the metaphor of growth in order to talk about the difficulties faced by basic writers, encouraging teachers to view such students as inexperienced or immature users of language and defining their task as one of helping students develop their nascent skills in writing... The growth model pulled

attention away from the forms of academic discourse and towards what students could or could not do with language. It also encouraged teachers to respect and work with the skills students brought to the classroom. Implicit in this view, though, was the notion that many students, and especially less successful or 'basic' writers, were somehow stuck in an early stage of language development, their growth as language users stalled...

"Yet this conclusion, pretty much forced by the metaphor of growth, ran counter to what many teachers felt they knew about their students--many of whom were returning to school after years of work, most of whom were voluble and bright in conversation, and almost all of whom seemed at least as adept as their teachers in dealing with the ordinary vicissitudes of life...

What if the trouble that they were having with writing at college was less a sign of some general failing in their thought or language than evidence of their unfamiliarity with the workings of a specific sort of (academic) discourse?"

(Joseph Harris, "Negotiating the Contact Zone." Journal of Basic Writing, 1995. Reprinted in Landmark Essays on Basic Writing, ed. by Kay Halasek and Nels P. Highberg. Lawrence Erlbaum, 2001)

https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-basic-writing-1689022

Basic Concepts to Help You Improve Your Writing Skills

By: Mike Lawson

This article is directed at writers seeking publication in magazines, e-zines, newsletters and various other forums. Topics such as vocabulary, grammar and style as well as content, research and editing will be discussed. But before we get that far along, we want to touch on some of the basic skills and characteristics that good writers have and editors seek.

Writers can be classified into four basic categories:

1. Bad writers

2. Competent writers

3. Good writers

4. Great writers

Bad writers: These are the hacks that either can not or will not use the fundamental skills of the written language. Their misspelled efforts are grammatically inconsistent, eaten alive with adverbs and lack continuity in content. Albeit poor examples to emulate, they too have a purpose we will discuss later.

Competent writers: These are writers that possess the fundamental skills of language, can put together a cohesive work and convey the intended message. But their abilities end there. They simply lack luster. If they do get published, it will probably be in the middle of mediocrity.

Good writers: This is the kill zone! This is where you desire to position yourself as a writer. These writers produce excellent content that is fundamentally sound, stylish, entertaining and informational. They have mastered fundamental skills and have a collection of specialized skills that allow them to tweak every word and phase to their advantage. These are writers that readers hate to put down as opposed to pick up. While it is impossible to

turn a bad writer into a competent one, it is possible with hard work, for a competent writer to become a good one.

Great writers: The Grand Masters, the literary legends: Shakespeare, Hugo, Steinbeck, etc. The rules here are simple enough. You either are one or you are not. It is not a learned skill or acquired trait. You cannot make a master out of a really good writer any more than you can make a bass fiddle out of a drum.

Keep this hierarchy in mind. Do an honest assessment of yourself. Where are you on the writer's scale?

If you are a bad writer, then I am sorry. There is not much help to offer that will bring you along.

Are you a competent writer? Are you content with that? If you are, then you may as well go on your way, too. You will be able to find a niche writing somewhere that will afford you a level of mediocre success.

Are you a competent writer that is motivated to put forth the effort to become a good writer? Or the good writer that has a desire to be even better? Good then! You are the target audience of this series of articles.

Writing is a complex system comprised of many simple parts. The stronger the foundation of the fundamental elements, the more stability in the structure that rests on it. The cornerstone to success in anything that you do is to have a set of obtainable goals laid out before you with an end in sight; a road map, if you will. If you don't know where you are going, how will you know when you get there?

You have already assessed where you are now and where you want be. Once you know this, you can make a plan that takes you there. Develop a mission statement of what kind of writer you will be.

A mission statement forms the constitution that governs the implementation of your plan. Shy away from weak words and phrases: "I will try to, as best I can," etc. They predict failure. Instead use powerful words and phrases! Your mission statement should be full of will statements. "I will master the grammatical aspect of the craft," or "I will continuously improve my editing skills." Make these commitments to yourself and stick to them!

Before you ever pick up a pen or type the first word of a project, you should have a mission statement committed to making you a better writer. It doesn't have to be a long, drawn out, complicated matter. Maybe just a paragraph or so that lays out your personal creed as a writer.

https://www.streetdirectory.com/travel_guide/104921/writing/basic_concepts_to_help_you_improve_your_writing_skills.html

WRITING SKILLS

Writing skills are an important part of communication. Good writing skills allow you to communicate your message with clarity and ease to a far larger audience than through face-to-face or telephone conversations.

You might be called upon to write a report, plan or strategy at work; write a grant application or press release within a volunteering role; or you may fancy communicating your ideas online via a blog. And, of course, a well written CV or résumé with no spelling or grammatical mistakes is essential if you want a new job.

Today, when anyone can be their own publisher, we see more and more examples of poor writing skills both in print and on the web. Poor writing skills create poor first impressions and many readers will have an immediate negative reaction if they spot a spelling or grammatical mistake. As just one example, a spelling mistake on a commercial web page may cause potential customers to doubt the credibility of the website and the organisation.

For many of us it will have been a long time since we were taught any writing skills and a refresher may be needed.

This section of SkillsYouNeed aims to make you think about your writing - from grammar, spelling and punctuation, how to plan your writing, and the various processes and checks to go through before pressing print or broadcasting your message online. It also provides guides for specific pieces of writing that you may need to produce, whether at school, university, or in the workplace.

Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation

Correct grammar, punctuation and spelling are key in written communications. The reader will form an opinion of you, the author, based on both the content and presentation, and errors are likely to lead them to form a negative impression.

If you are unconvinced about the importance of accurate writing, think of the clues we use to identify spam emails, "phishing" websites, and counterfeit products: poor grammar and spelling.

Similarly, some employers state publicly that any CV or résumé containing spelling or grammatical mistakes will be rejected immediately, whilst a BBC news article quotes research that calculates spelling mistakes cost online businesses "millions" in lost sales.

Checking for poor writing and spelling mistakes should be seen as a courtesy to your readers since it can take them much longer to understand the messages in your writing if they have to think and re-read text to decipher these.

All written communications should therefore be re-read before sending to print, or hitting the send button in the case of emails, as it is likely that there will be errors. Do not assume that spelling and grammar checkers will identify all mistakes as many incorrect words can indeed be spelt correctly (for example, when "their" is used instead of "there" or "principle" instead of "principal") or entire words may be missing. If at all possible, take a break before re-reading and checking your writing, as you are more likely to notice problems when you read it fresh.

Even if you know spelling and grammar rules, you should still double-check your work or, even better, have it proof-read by somebody else. Our brains work faster than our fingers can type and accidental typographical errors (typos) inevitably creep in.

Improving Your Writing Skills

The good news is that writing is a skill which can be learned like any other. One trick for checking and improving your work is to read it aloud. Reading text forces you to slow down and you may pick up problems with the flow that your eye would otherwise skip over.

Reading

Another way to improve your writing skills is to read - as you read you pick up new vocabulary and engage with different writing styles.

See our pages: Effective Reading and Writing Styles for more information.

There are a number of areas to bear in mind as you write.

As well as grammar, spelling and punctuation, it's important to remember your audience. Always write with your audience in mind, and it can also help to bear in mind the medium in which you plan to publish. This knowledge will help you to decide whether you need to

write in a formal style or a more informal one, and will also help you to decide on a suitable structure.

Finally, have a look at our page on Common Mistakes in Writing and Gender Neutral Language to help you avoid falling into some easy traps.

WARNING!

There is a time and a place for clichés. They exist because they explain exactly what we want to say in easy-to-understand terms. But some people find them very annoying, and you need to use them with care. See our page on What is a Cliché? for more information.

Writing under Specific Circumstances

There are many times in your life when you will be asked to write something very specific. Whether this is to take notes of a conversation, write the minutes of a formal meeting, or prepare a report, all these types of writing require specific skills, and usually a particular style.

Writing at Home

Many people would say that the art of letter-writing is dying out. However, there are still many times when you need to put pen (or word processor) to paper. See our page on How to Write a Letter for more.

Writing in the Workplace

Being able to write well is a skill which will get you a long way in the workplace, partly because it is fairly rare in many places.

One skill that many people lack, especially in management and other professional environments is the ability to write in plain English. That is avoiding unnecessary jargon, industry specific buzzwords and clichés and keeping sentences short and concise. See our page Writing in Plain English for more.

Taking the time to polish your writing skills is likely to pay off in the longer term, and learning how to write specific types of documents will also be useful.

See our pages on How to write a report, a business case, an executive summary and a press release for some specific examples that may also have wider applications. For example, being able to prepare a strong summary is a skill that is extremely useful for briefing senior managers.

You may also find our pages on note taking for reading, note taking for verbal exchanges and taking minutes: the role of the secretary useful if your job or a voluntary role includes recording formal meetings.

Writing Job Applications

At one time or another, most of us need to write a job application.

Nowadays, job applications usually require a CV or résumé, together with a really strong covering letter. A good LinkedIn profile will also help your application to stand out from the rest, as will managing your online presence effectively.

Writing for Study

Apart from the workplace, you are most likely to need writing skills as part of a course of study, whether at college or university.

You may, for example, need to write essays, a report, a research proposal or even a dissertation or thesis. These pieces of work are often very long, and need careful structuring and writing.

Read more at: https://www.skillsyouneed.com/writing-skills.html