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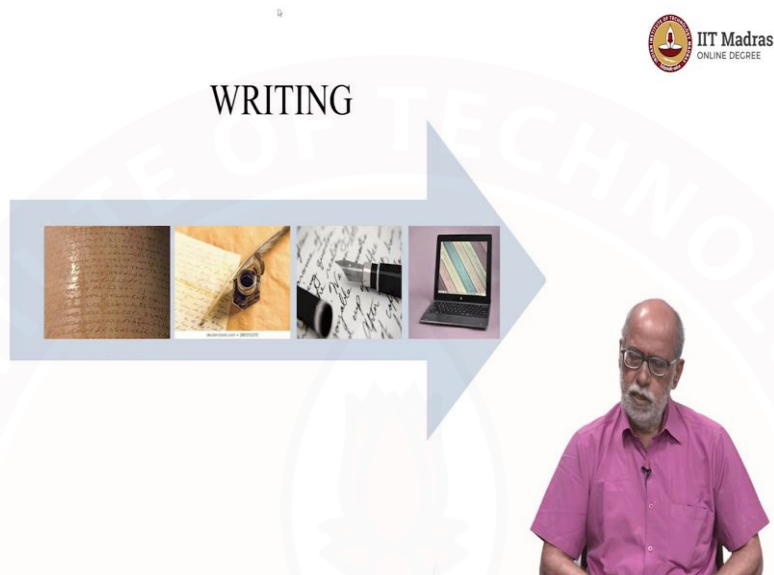
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English - 1 (Basic English)
Professor Shreesh Chaudhary
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
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Lecture 65
Basics of Writing

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Welcome to this session on an overview of a part of the module, part of the course called writing module. In this session today, we will look at what constitutes a good piece of writing and then in the rest of the course, we will strive and learn those ways that make for good writing. Look at the way, the tools for writing have changed. Writing has a relatively small history; short it has been with human beings as a technology for a relatively short period of time.

Many people say that until about 3000 years ago, until about 1000 years before Christ, mankind did not write and did not need to write, and it had no technology using which it could write. But about 1000 years before Christ, it is said some Phoenician sailors invented the technology of writing. They discovered that they could make or they could mark; they could engrave science on a stone slab, on a slate or on any hard surface. They could scratch, and they could assign value to the particular sign.

So, a straight line meant one thing, a straight horizontal line mean meant one thing, a straight vertical line mean another, a circle meant one thing, a semicircle meant another, a semicircle with an opening on the right meant one thing, a semicircle opening on the left or on the top meant another thing. Like that it seems this Phoenician sailors assigned values to the science they etched or they scratched with pointed stone implements on hard surfaces and they remembered how much they had given to whom, how much they had to collect from whom, how much was the till there in their go down or store, how much they had already sold, what they had invested and what they should expect by way of profit.

Like many other pieces of technology, this was also invented by the felt in needs of merchants. But over a period of time tools changed, hard surface gave place to leaves, barks, clothes, metal plates. Stone gave place to other sorts of pointed elements with which you could etch or draw the line. Then about 2000 years ago, it is said Chinese created papers out of a certain kind of grass grown in the river Nile. It seems the grass was called papyrus, and what came out of this is called paper.

But there may be opinions there are more guesses than hard evidence for this kind of thing. Down the years, down the centuries this holder pen and inkpot gave place to fountain pen. You could fill the fountain pen with ink which would flow through the nib at every line. People like Shakespeare etcetera wrote with a holder pen where they had to dip their in the inkpot after every line. But writers like Eliot, Bernard Shaw and more modern writes wrote with a fountain pen where they filled the pen once, and they could write for an hour or 2 or even 3 or 4.

And today we write on our laptops we can go on writing we no longer need paper, we no longer need ink, we do normalate pen or of any description we can write change edit much more easily at out human fancy, but it must be noted that the basic technology still remains for writing you still need a surface you still need symbols and you still need tools that can create those symbols on that surface and off course, then there are software's that is there are rules which says in what order these symbols should occur, who are the main coming next to each other all that makes another body of knowledge which we can call software of reading and writing.

Today in this session we are going to talk about what makes for good writing so that in the rest of this course we will strive to pick up those habits and those skills using which we can become good writes. And of course, with practice we can become great writers let us go on.

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BASIC POINTS

1. Writing lasts long and goes far.

- A written text is easy to read, re-read, revise, and re-write, etc.
- Writing has, therefore, been the medium of communication in business, sciences and technology, art and literature for centuries.



Why did writing become so popular in such a short time a starting 3000 years ago? Today writing is considered an essential skill; perhaps the most essential skill is writing. Nobody

takes pity about others if they do not know cooking. Many men do not know cooking or nobody says that they are handicapped. Many people do not know driving, many people do not know x or y, but nobody says, come on pity the do a special class for them. But if you do not know writing people say well you should have a special class, your illiterate, UNESCO, the government of the country the state they are all worried that you should know how to write, how to read you should no longer remain illiterate.

Why because writing last long and goes far. Writing touches the entire world you have all knowledge of the world put together in the form of writing in books in terms and archives and libraries which will not open to, which will not be available to you if you did not know writing. Actually, you will have to exist all by yourself if you did not know writing. So, a written text lasts for long that is what documents, public or private or made in it so that you know in times of need you can see what was said, what was agreed upon.

A written text is also popular because it is easy to read, not so for a spoken text. If you speak and record a language, then you know re-winding reading it is possible even not as easily as reading or re-reading a written text a book or a notebook. You can read, re-read, revise and re-revise, rewrite as many times as you like relatively easily. Writing as therefore been the medium not only of communication, not only of sciences and technology but also of art and literature all those grate and mortal stories it is true that many of them were composed before the technology of writing was invented, but many more have been written since writing was invented and they go on they show no sign of abetting.

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2. Most important thing for writing well is its content.

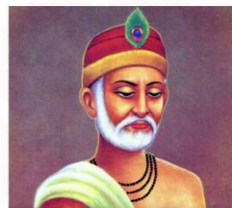
- Do you have something to say? Lots of people are good at languages, but they have nothing to say.
- On the other hand, there are those who may not be good at languages, but have things to say. They are read and heard by all.
- Great poets, saints and scientists in all languages are of this kind.



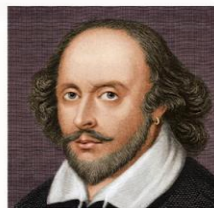
What makes for good writing? That is the most important question. What kind of writing can be called good and what kind of writing can be called not so good? The first and most important feature of a piece of good writing is not the shape and size of its letters, not the rules of its grammar, not the variety of vocabulary, but the content. Do you have something to say?

There have been writers whose languages were not too good at the language we were not learnt. In India, we have the example of Kabirdas, Kalidas. In India, in Britain, we have the example of Shakespeare and many other poets in many other countries, many other cultures who were not great scholars but who wrote great stuff. Because they had something to say that is original, that was interesting, that was relevant, and they said those great things that they wrote those great things that are read even today just look at the Holy Quran of Prophet Mohammed composed long ago heard from and transmitted. Geeta, Mahabharata, Ramayana, Upanishads, Homer, great content generations after generations have read them.

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Kabir Das (1398-1518)



William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

- It is said that Kabir Das, the 15th century Indian poet, was illiterate.
- Shakespeare, the British poet, had hardly been to a primary school.



I told you about Kabir Das, Kabir Das was a weaver, not even a literate, he could not write what he composed. Shakespeare was barely a primary school graduate. Just about 3-4 years he knew how to put words and sentence together in English not Latin, not French which were the language of the elite in his time but because he had things to say, but because Kabir had things to say they became great writers. They are read and enjoyed and appreciated even today.

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- Gather as much information about your topic as you can before you begin writing.
- A good piece of writing is not mechanical. When you research and write, you do a better job.



If you want to write anything, no matter what it may be an ordinary mail, it may be a mail to a librarian; please send me the novel, send me the autobiography of Jean-Paul Sartre. Then you still have to know three things. Number 1 that you want the autobiography whatever its name of the writer called Jean-Paul Sartre and that it is there in the library. So, be sure any longer essays, books, papers, articles you cannot compromise perhaps on a few other things but not on the body of knowledge that your writing will communicate.

So, content is most important followed by in the fact that content can be gathered you may not know everything when you begin when you are given the topic or when you decide to write on a certain topic, you may not know at the outs and everything, nobody does. But as we write, as we progress, we research, we ask, we gather, we obtain, and we know we learn and then we write. So, an open mind is a great tool for a writer.

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3. Small words and simple sentences.

- All great works, that have been read for centuries, in any discipline, is written in the simplest possible language.
- King's Bible, written in English at the instance of King James I of England in 1612, is read by masses even today.

See the following, for instance:




Next. What kind of sentences do you write? Some people say long sentences; bombastic words make a better writing. They prefer words like can you visualize a contour of the design of this project; you can also see, can you see the outlines of this house? You are still saying the same thing, but you are saying them in small words, you are saying them in simple sentences so that all understand you, chances of you making mistakes will be considerably minimized, considerably reduced.

It is hardly likely that you make a mistake when you write simple sentences and when you write small words, monosyllabic, bisyllabic. Rather than say visualize, you can say see. Rather than say designs and contours, you can say outlines, simple words. So, all great words, be the Bible, be the Homer, be the anyone else they have written in the simplest possible language. The best example in English is that of the Bible, which is called King's Bible.

It was composed in 1612 by a committee of 40 people, and they unanimously decided or almost unanimously decided that we will use hardly any jargon, no cliché, we will keep the language simple so that all scholar or laypeople, learned or laypeople, adult or children, men or women, priest or a layman, all should understand.

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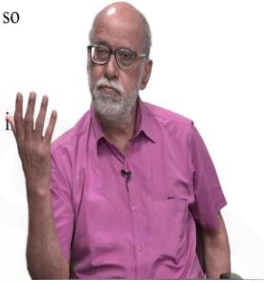
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- a. The project site was in great disarray and all manners of tools were strewn all over. The project director came for an unannounced visit on a particularly rainy day, took photographs and issued a memo to the project manager ordering action on the illumination front without delay, and the order was promptly complied with.



b. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, let there be light: and there was light.

- Both a. and b. describe the same situation, but b. is so much easier to understand.

- With some regular practice, you can also learn to write in this manner.



Look at the following examples. Read this. This highlighted piece of writing describes the same thing as the other. Go to the next as this does. Look at the earlier thing ones again. Can you go back? How many words? More than 50 words. Come back. This? Under 30 words or 25, 26, 27 words. Half of, and it stills the same thing much more clearly, much more powerfully. So, good writing, many people have their notion that unless you wrote long sentences, unless you wrote unusual words, people would not take your writing seriously.

In my opinion, and in the opinion of many people, many teachers and writers, good writing is a product of simple, appropriate words and sentences. As far as possible, small, monosyllabic, bisyllabic words that is what makes for good writing, and that is what makes for good speaking. Though both a and b, the short text, long text describe the same thing, you can ask yourself what is easier to understand? Next.

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4. **Writing is a skill**, just as walking, eating, shaving, cycling, driving, swimming, typing or any other skill is.

- Regular practice is important.

- PLEASE, REMEMBER ONLY YOU CAN TEACH YOURSELF HOW TO WRITE.



Finally, we have said three things so far. We have said content is important, no matter how good your English or Hindi, Sanskrit or Latin unless you have something to say, nobody will read you. And if you have something to say, people will read you in spite of weaknesses of language in you. I have no doubt about that. And all of us can know more through research, through learning, through perseverance, through pursuit as if for Lewis said “excellence is a product of constant pursuit” constant pursuit. All of us can become great writers.

So, writing is also a skill like cycling is a skill, like cooking is a skill, like swimming is a skill, like dancing is also a skill. So, writing can be learned if you practice like any other skill. Imagine you watch a lot of videos, a lot of documentaries on swimming, on cycling. You see a lot of very good actors, actresses, handsome men and women riding on their bicycles, could that teach you riding a bicycle? No, that would not.

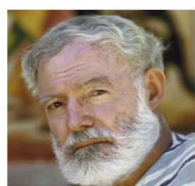
The only way you can learn how to ride a bicycle is by getting on to it, somebody may push you, somebody may run with you for some time, but eventually, you have to gather courage, and you have to start doing it on your own. It is the same thing with writing. In the beginning, you might take the help of your teachers, your friends, your family, but eventually, you have to be on your own, which means regular practice is important. Write something every day, revise, check, write, revise, check.

Only you can teach you, so please remember writing is a skill nobody else can teach you, nobody else can teach you swimming, nobody else can teach you cycling, only you can teach it to yourself. How can you do that? By doing it regularly even if it is a little bit, only half an hour, only 15 minutes, but daily and write, revise, write, revise, what you wrote yesterday should be revised today, what you have written today should be revised tomorrow, and you will find that everything you revise, your writing becomes better and you learn something new about how to write? Go next.

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5. Good script comes after several drafts.

Some writers, such as Ernest Hemingway, an American novelist and short story writer, or R K Narayan, an Indian English novelist and short story writer, are said to have made up to a dozen drafts of books they wrote.



Ernest Hemingway (1899–1961)



R K Narayan (1906-2001)



All of the great writers you and I know of, on my left is the photograph of Ernest Hemingway, Nobel Prize winner. Great writer, began as a newspaper reporter in the First World War ended up writing one of the great novels of American literature. R. K Narayan, an English might not have been his mother tongue, but he wrote so well and for such a lot humble people, typical to India and its community that it became popular worldwide for the simplicity of his language, simplicity of his thought and his sensitivity, as his sensibilities how children suffered under oppressive rules, how poor suffer under oppressive rules, what joy you can have, and we do not get all of these in simple language.

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6. Formats of writing:

- Literary works, like poems, plays, stories and novels: Free Style
- Essays and short paragraphs: Have their own formats.
- You can some of the samples in the below box.

Business Letter	Report	Essay	Short Paragraph	Mail	Memo	PPT
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They also revised, it is said Hemingway revised 13 times, 12 times. R. K. Narayan revised as many times. There has been a professor of economics at Harvard who was also President Kennedy's Ambassador to New Delhi during 1960-64 when Nehru was the Prime Minister, and he has written a wonderful book for writers he calls it Cobblers Glue. He says all you need to do is, in order to write well, all you need to do is, to sit down on a chair which has a cobblers glue that means you cannot get up you have written your target of four pages or five pages or so much.

And as you sit as you try as you write, you will find that you have begun writing, your writing improves. No matter what you write, there are all kinds of writings, and they take different forms. We are not talking of forms just now; we will talk on them later. There may be literary works, stories, poems, plays, novels; they are different kinds of rules about form. But there are other business communications, emails, essays, telegram, Instagrams, WhatsApp messages or essays, reports, graphs, charts.

They are done in different; they have their own set formats. So, as we go into writing, we will also look at their formats, but these are basic. No matter what you write, content is important. No matter what you write, simple sentences will help you. No matter what you write, you must revise and rewrite, you must practise daily, use simple words, and you will become a great writer.

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7. This course will teach **how to write correct** and easy to write and understand language.
- No matter what you write, you will need to write in these manners.



On this course, we are going to try to help you learn how to write better. No matter what you write, you will need to write well; you will need to write such that people understand you and your business is done.

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ACTIVITY



- At the beginning of this unit, four photographs have been shown in a row.
- Using your own ideas, arguments and evidence, write an essay in about 250 words, i.e. in about one and a half pages, on "Future of Writing".
- Write the essay in your own words.



We had some photographs at the beginning of this series of slides, look at them and can you write an essay in about 250 words on the story of writing and mainly towards or check with a friend or an advisor and see if you have written as well as we said you can, as we said you could. Next.

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You can also look up the following sites for more on this topic.

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_writing
2. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_languages_by_first_written_accounts



You can also if you want more contents on the history of writing, you can use these links and acquire some more knowledge, some greater knowledge on the subject. But remember, you have only 250 words to write, that is another constraint on writing. You do not have unlimited space. Just as in speaking, you do not have unlimited time, similarly you do not have unlimited space. Thank you we will continue this series.