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### 1. **Simplicity & Clutter**

简洁与繁琐

Clutter is the disease of American writing. We are a society strangling in unnecessary words, circular constructions, pompous frills and meaningless jargon.

繁琐是英文写作的通病。在我们生活中,多余的文字,拐弯抹角的句子,华而不实的修饰,和无意义的套话,随处可见。

Fighting clutter is like fighting weeds—the writer is always slightly behind. New varieties sprout overnight, and by noon they are part of American speech. Consider what President Nixon's aide John Dean accomplished in just one day of testimony on television during the Watergate hearings. The next day everyone in America was saying "at this point in time" instead of "now."

去掉语言中的繁琐,就像除草一样——繁琐,就像杂草,总是隐藏着的,会在一夜之间发芽,第二天变成全国的口头禅。就像,水门事件的听证会上,美国尼克松总统的助手,使用的语言。第二天,全美国,都在说,“at this point in time”而不是“now”。

Take the adjective “personal,” as in “a personal friend of mine,” “his personal feeling.” It's typical of hundreds of words that can be eliminated. The personal friend has come into the language to distinguish him or her from the business friend, thereby debasing both language and friendship. Someone's feeling is that person's personal feeling—that's what “his” means. Friends are friends, the rest is clutter.

再如,“a personal friend of mine”中的“personal”,“his personal feeling”中的“personal”,很多类似这样的词,都可以去掉。“personal friend”,这种说法,可以用来区别商业伙伴,表示友谊的深浅。有些人感觉,“his personal feeling”里,“personal”和“his”重复了。还有,朋友就是朋友,其他的修饰,都是多余。

Clutter is the ponderous euphemism that turns a slum into a depressed socioeconomic area, garbage collectors into waste disposal personnel and the town dump into the volume reduction unit.

繁琐,就是指冗长委婉的说法。例如,把贫民窟,说成经济落后地区;把收垃圾的,说成废物处理人员;把垃圾倾倒处,说成废物分解中心。

Clutter is the official language used by corporations to hide their mistakes. When General

Motors had a plant shutdown, that was a “volume-related production-schedule adjustment.” When an Air Force missile crashed, it “impacted with the ground prematurely.” Companies that go belly-up have “a negative cash-flow position.”

繁琐，是一种官方语言，商业上，可以用来掩盖错误，当通用公司关闭其工厂时，会说“生产规模方面，有计划的调整”；当空军导弹坠毁时，会说“提前着陆”；当公司破产时，会说“面临负面现金流”

“Experiencing” is one of the worst clutters. Instead of “it is raining”, there is no way to say “At the present time we are experiencing precipitation.” Even your dentist will ask if you are experiencing any pain. If he had his own kid in the chair he would say, “Does it hurt?”

“experiencing”是一种用法最繁琐的词。例如，“在下雨”，会说成“在此时此刻，我们正在经历一场降水”；你的牙医会问，“是否经历过疼痛的体验”。如果他问自己的孩子，他会说“疼不疼”。

The point of raising these examples is to serve notice that clutter is the enemy. Beware, then, of the long word that's no better than the short word: "assistance"(help), "numerous" (many), "facilitate" (ease), "individual"(man or woman), "remainder" (rest), "initial" (first), "implement"(do), "sufficient" (enough), "attempt" (try), "referred to as"(called) and hundreds more. Beware of all the slippery new fad words: paradigm and parameter, prioritize and potentialize. They are all weeds that will smother what you write.

举这些例子，是让大家注意，繁琐是写作的大敌。然后注意，简单简短的词，比复杂冗长的词好，比如：“assistance”(help), "numerous" (many), "facilitate" (ease), "individual"(man or woman), "remainder" (rest), "initial" (first), "implement"(do), "sufficient" (enough), "attempt" (try), "referred to as"(called) and hundreds more.

注意那些时尚的词，他们都是杂草，对你的写作不利

How can the rest of us achieve such enviable freedom from clutter? The answer is to clear our heads of clutter. Clear thinking becomes clear writing; one can't exist without the other.

It's impossible for a muddy thinker to write good English. He may get away with it for a paragraph or two, but soon the reader will be lost, and there's no sin so grave, for the reader will not easily be lured back.

如何做到写作不繁琐呢？方法是去掉繁琐的词。思路清晰，才能写作清晰；两者相辅相成。一个脑子里乱糟糟的人，不可能写出好文章。他的文章，会偶尔清晰，但是，读者很快会迷失，没有比这更糟的了，因为读者会误入歧途。

作者的一个 tip,“括号剔除法”。经我的 PS 测试,发现非常好用。

Is there any way to recognize clutter at a glance? Here's a device my students at Yale found helpful. I would put brackets around every component in a piece of writing that wasn't doing useful work. Often just one word got bracketed: the unnecessary preposition appended to a verb ("order up"), or the adverb that carries the same meaning as the verb ("smile happily"), or

the adjective that states a known fact ("tall skyscraper"). Often my brackets surrounded the little qualifiers that weaken any sentence they inhabit ("a bit," "sort of), or phrases like "in a sense," which don't mean anything. Sometimes my brackets surrounded an entire sentence—the one that essentially repeats what the previous sentence said, or that says something readers don't need to know or can figure out for themselves. Most first drafts can be cut by 50 percent without losing any information or losing the authors voice.

有没有办法，找出繁琐的地方呢？有一个方法，是我在耶鲁教学时用的。就是用括号，把文章中繁琐的地方括起来。一般是：多余的介词（如 **order up**），意思重复的副词（如 **smile happily**），意思重复的形容词（如 **tall skyscraper**）。还有些限定词（如 **a bit, sort of**），或者没有意义的短语（**in a sense**）。有时候，是整个句子（例如，意思和以前重复的，内容无关的，或是读者可以自己了解的）。多数情况，一篇文章，可以删掉一半，但内容不变。

My reason for bracketing the students' superfluous words, instead of crossing them out, was to avoid violating their sacred prose. I wanted to leave the sentence intact for them to analyze. I was saying, "I may be wrong, but I think this can be deleted and the meaning won't be affected. But you decide. Read the sentence without the bracketed material and see if it works." In the early weeks of the term I handed back papers that were festooned with brackets. Entire paragraphs were bracketed. But soon the students learned to put mental brackets around their own clutter, and by the end of the term their papers were almost clean. Today many of those students are professional writers, and they tell me, "I still see your brackets—they're following me through life."

把繁琐的地方，用括号括起来，而不是删掉，是为了尊重作者。我想让作者自己来判断。我的想法是，“也许我是错的，但是，我认为，这个地方可以删掉，并不影响原意。由你来决定，是否去掉括号里的内容”。在开学后的前几周，我会把画满括号的卷子，发给学生，有时，整段被括起来。很快，他们就学会了这种方法，期末，他们文章变得非常简洁。现在，他们很多成为职业作家，他们告诉我“我一直在用您教的括号法”

You can develop the same eye. Look for the clutter in your writing and prune it ruthlessly. Be grateful for everything you can throw away. Reexamine each sentence you put on paper. Is every word doing new work? Can any thought be expressed with more economy? Is anything pompous or pretentious or faddish? Are you hanging on to something useless just because you think it's beautiful?

你也能有同样的能力。找到你的文章里，繁琐的地方，去掉它们。庆幸自己能去掉它们。检查每个句子。每个词都是必要的吗？能用更简单的语言，表达更深刻的意义吗？还有华而不实，做作，赶时髦的地方吗？还喜欢那些漂亮的，毫无意义的句子吗？

**Simplify, simplify.**

简洁，再简洁。

## **2. Style**

风格

Few people realize how badly they write. Nobody has shown them how much excess or murkiness has crept into their style and how it obstructs what they are trying to say. If you give me an eight-page article and I tell you to cut it to four pages, you'll howl and say it can't be done. Then you'll go home and do it, and it will be much better. After that comes the hard part: cutting it to three.

很少有人意识到,自己写得差。没人会说,自己的文章里,有很多多余,阴暗,影响表达的地方。但是,如果你给我一篇 8 页的文章,我会让你减到 4 页,你会说,这不可能。如果你回去修改,文章会变得简洁。然后进一步,减少到 3 页。

The point is that you have to strip your writing down before you can build it back up. You must know what the essential tools are and what job they were designed to do. Extending the metaphor of carpentry, it's first necessary to be able to saw wood neatly and to drive nails. Later you can bevel the edges or add elegant finials, if that's your taste. But you can never forget that you are practicing a craft that's based on certain principles. If the nails are weak, your house will collapse. If your verbs are weak and your syntax is rickety, your sentences will fall apart.

问题是,你必须知道,哪些工具是必须的,和它们的作用。就像木工,首先,需要整洁的木料,再钉钉子,最后,才能按你喜欢的风格,做装饰。所以,在练习写作时,不要忘了基本原则。如果钉子不结实,房子就会倒塌。如果动词和语法用得不好,句子就会有问题。

I'll admit that certain nonfiction writers, like Tom Wolfe and Norman Mailer, have built some remarkable houses. But these are writers who spent years learning their craft, and when at last they raised their fanciful turrets and hanging gardens, to the surprise of all of us who never dreamed of such ornamentation, they knew what they were doing. Nobody becomes Tom Wolfe overnight, not even Tom Wolfe.

我很羡慕某些作家,如 Tom Wolfe 和 Norman Mailer, 他们的作品极为出色。他们花费了很多年,练习写作,所以,他们的文章,会让人惊叹,他们知道自己想表达什么。这不是一日之功,即使是 Tom Wolfe。

First, then, learn to hammer the nails, and if what you build is sturdy and serviceable, take satisfaction in its plain strength. But you will be impatient to find a "style"—to embellish the plain words so that readers will recognize you as someone special. You will reach for gaudy similes and tinsel adjectives, as if "style" were something you could buy at the style store and drape onto your

words in bright decorator colors. (Decorator colors are the colors that decorators come in.) There is no style store; style is organic to the person doing the writing, as much a part of him as his hair, or, if he is bald, his lack of it. Trying to add style is like adding a toupee. At first glance the formerly bald man looks young and even handsome. But at second glance—and

with a toupee there's always a second glance—he doesn't look quite right. The problem is not that he doesn't look well groomed; he does, and we can only admire the wigmaker's skill. The point is that he doesn't look like himself. This is the problem of writers who set out deliberately to garnish their prose. You lose whatever it is that makes you unique. The reader will notice if you are putting on airs. Readers want the person who is talking to them to sound genuine. Therefore a fundamental rule is: be yourself.

写作就像建房屋，首先，要学会钉钉子，如果你要结实的房子，就别嫌它样式简单。但是，你总会迫不及待地想有自己的风格——使用修饰语言，好让读者觉得，你的作品，与众不同。你会用华而不实的比喻和形容词，好像“风格”是装饰品，可以从“风格”商店买到，然后用到自己的家里。实际上，世界上没有“风格”商店；“风格”是作者自身的东西，好像他身体的一部分，如头发。如果你是秃子，试图添加“风格”，就像是戴假发。乍一看，也许很年轻，甚至英俊。但是，细看，就觉得不太对劲。问题不是，你没有戴好，而是，我们喜欢的是假发，你不是你自己了。这是写作常犯的错误——想要故意修饰。结果，失去了自己独特的东西。读者会发现，你是否在装腔作势。读者希望作者能真诚。

所以，基本原则是：做你自己。

Assume that you are the writer sitting down to write. You think your article must be of a certain length or it won't seem important. You think how august it will look in print. You think of all the people who will read it. You think that it must have the solid weight of authority. You think that its style must dazzle. No wonder you tighten; you are so busy thinking of your awesome responsibility to the finished article that you can't even start. Yet you vow to be worthy of the task, and, casting about for grand phrases that wouldn't occur to you if you weren't trying so hard to make an impression, you plunge in. Paragraph 1 is a disaster—a tissue of generalities that seem to have come out of a machine. No person could have written them. Paragraph 2 isn't much better. But Paragraph 3 begins to have a somewhat human quality, and by Paragraph 4 you begin to sound like yourself. You've started to relax. It's amazing how often an editor can throw away the first three or four paragraphs of an article, or even the first few pages, and start with the paragraph where the writer begins to sound like himself or herself. Not only are those first paragraphs impersonal and ornate; they don't say anything—they are a self-conscious attempt at a fancy introduction. What I'm always looking for as an editor is a sentence that says something like "I'll never forget the day when I . . ."

I think, "Aha! A person!"

想象，你是一个作家，准备开始写作。开始，你会考虑很多，文章必须长，否则显得没分量；出版后的样子；所有的人，会读到它；必须有权威性；风格必须独特。如此，你会变得紧张；你会觉得责任重大，以至难以下笔。然而，你发誓要写好它，尽力去寻找华丽的词藻，你深陷其中。第一段通常是败笔——好像是机器写出来的，平淡无奇，没人写得那么差。第二段，也好不到哪去。第三段，有点像人写的。第四段，开始像你自己的风格。你开始放松。你也许会觉得吃惊，很多作家，会删掉前三，四段，甚至前几页，才能开始自己的风格。最开始的段落，不但写得

像话或者太矫情,而且,它们什么也没说,只是在自我幻想罢了。作为一个作家,我总是寻找这样的句子,例如“我永远也忘不了那一天。。。”

### 3. The audience

读者

"Who am I writing for?"

“我在为谁而写?”

It is a fundamental question, and it has a fundamental answer: You are writing for yourself. Don't try to visualize the great mass audience. There is no such audience—every reader is a different person. Don't try to guess what sort of thing editors want to publish or what you think the country is in a mood to read. Editors and readers don't know what they want to read until they read it. Besides, they're always looking for something new.

这是个基本问题,也有个基本的回答:你在为自己而写。不要希望,你会有个读者群。这是不可能的,因为每个读者都是不同的。不要猜想编辑的喜好,或者现在流行什么。编辑和读者,通常不知道想看什么,直到看到它。而且,他们总是想看新鲜的东西。

Don't worry about whether the reader will "get it" if you indulge a sudden impulse for humor. If it amuses you in the act of writing, put it in. (It can always be taken out, but only you can put it in.) You are writing primarily to please yourself, and if you go about it with enjoyment you will also entertain the readers who are worth writing for. If you lose the dullards back in the dust, you don't want them anyway.

不要担心读者是否能领会,你写作时的喜悦。如果写作使你愉快,就写下来。(实际上,读者总是能感受到的,但是,首先你要写下来)。写作,主要是让自己开心,如果写作中,你能感到快乐,读者也会产生共鸣。

Whatever your age, be yourself when you write. Many old men still write with the zest they had in their twenties or thirties; obviously their ideas are still young. Other old writers ramble and repeat themselves; their style is the tip-off that they have turned into garrulous bores. Many college students write as if they were desiccated alumni 30 years out. Never say anything in writing that you wouldn't comfortably say in conversation. If you're not a person who says "indeed" or "moreover," or who calls someone an individual ("he's a fine individual"), please don't write it.

别考虑你的年龄,做你自己。许多老人,在写作时,充满热情,就像年轻人;因为他们心态年轻。另一些作家,一直在原地徘徊,这表明,他们已经变得无聊乏味。很多大学生,写作时,总想表现得历经风雨。你平时怎么说话,就怎么写。如果你平时说话,不是文绉绉的,写作的时候,也不要之乎者也。



#### 4. Words

##### 措辞

What is "journalese"? It's a quilt of instant words patched together out of other parts of speech. Adjectives are used as nouns ("greats," "notables"). Nouns are used as verbs ("to host"), or they are chopped off to form verbs ("enthuse," "emote"), or they are padded to form verbs ("beef up," "put teeth into"). This is a world where eminent people are "famed" and their associates are "staffers," where the future is always "upcoming" and someone is forever "firing off" a note. Nobody in America has sent a note or a memo or a telegram in years. Famed diplomat Henry Kissinger, who hosted foreign notables to beef up the morale of top State Department staffers, sat down and fired off a lot of notes. Notes that are fired off are always fired in anger and from a sitting position. (囧) What the weapon is I've never found out.

什么是新闻体? 新闻体, 就像是满是补丁的花被。形容词被用作名词("greats," "notables"), 名词被用作动词("to host"), 或者加加减减, 变成动词("enthuse," "emote", "beef up," "put teeth into")。现在, 名人被叫做"famed", 同事叫"staffers", 未来叫 "upcoming", 发稿叫"firing off", 没人用"send"。写成文章, 就成了这样, Famed diplomat Henry Kissinger, who hosted foreign notables to beef up the morale of top State Department staffers, sat down and fired off a lot of notes. Notes that are fired off are always fired in anger and from a sitting position. (囧) What the weapon is I've never found out.

Here's an article from a famed newsmagazine that is hard to match for fatigue:

这是一篇经典的新闻体

Last February, Plainclothes Patrolman Frank Serpico knocked at the door of a suspected Brooklyn heroin pusher. When the door opened a crack, Serpico shouldered his way in only to be met by a .22-cal. pistol slug crashing into his face. Somehow he survived, although there are still buzzing fragments in his head, causing dizziness and permanent deafness in his left ear. Almost as painful is the suspicion that he may well have been set up for the shooting by other policemen. For Serpico, 35, has been waging a lonely, four-year war against the routine and endemic corruption that he and others claim is rife in the New York City police department. His efforts are now sending shock waves through the ranks of New York's finest... Though the impact of the commissions upcoming report has yet to be felt, Serpico has little hope that...

The upcoming report has yet to be felt because it's still upcoming, and as for the permanent deafness, it's a little early to tell. And what makes those buzzing fragments buzz? By now only Serpico's head should be buzzing. But apart from these lazinesses of logic, what makes the story so tired is the failure of the writer to reach for anything but the nearest cliché.

"Shouldered his way," "only to be met," "crashing into his face," "waging a lonely war,"

"corruption that is rife," "sending shock waves," "New York's finest"—these dreary phrases constitute writing at its most banal. We know just what to expect. No surprise awaits us in the form of an unusual word, an oblique look. We are in the hands of a hack, and we know it right away. We stop reading.

里面的语言，全是陈词滥调。例如，"Shouldered his way," "only to be met," "crashing into his face," "waging a lonely war," "corruption that is rife," "sending shock waves," "New York's finest"。我们知道它要表达什么，装腔作势，拐弯抹角，因此，没人愿意读下去。

Make a habit of reading what is being written today and what has been written by earlier masters. Writing is learned by imitation. If anyone asked me how I learned to write, I'd say I learned by reading the men and women who were doing the kind of writing I wanted to do and trying to figure out how they did it. But cultivate the best models. Don't assume that because an article is in a newspaper or a magazine it must be good. Sloppy editing is common in newspapers, often for lack of time, and writers who use clichés often work for editors who have seen so many clichés that they no longer even recognize them.

养成阅读的习惯，既要读现在的文章，也要读前人的文章。学习写作，就是要模仿。如果有人问我，如何学习写作，我会回答，通过阅读，找到作者的思路。要模仿最好的。不要认为，报纸和杂志的文章，就是最好的。报纸的文章，通常是空洞的，因为要赶时间和迎合编辑的口味，编辑已经习惯了陈词滥调，而且乐此不疲。

Also get in the habit of using dictionaries. My favorite for handy use is Webster's New World Dictionary, Second College Edition, although, like all word freaks, I own bigger dictionaries that will reward me when I'm on some more specialized search. If you have any doubt of what a word means, look it up. Learn its etymology and notice what curious branches its original root has put forth. See if it has any meanings you didn't know it had. Master the small gradations between words that seem to be synonyms. What's the difference between "cajole," "wheedle," "blandish" and "coax"? Get yourself a dictionary of synonyms.

还要养成查字典的习惯，我喜欢用 Webster's New World 字典, Second College Edition，和很多人一样，我还有更大块头的字典，用来查找专业词汇。如果你对某个词不确定，就去查字典。看看它的词源和发展演变，是否有你不知道的意思。通过同义词，可以掌握词汇的程度。去买一本同义词词典，看看这几个词，有什么不同， "cajole," "wheedle," "blandish" and "coax"?

And don't scorn that bulging grab bag Roget's Thesaurus. It's easy to regard the book as hilarious. Look up "villain," for instance, and you'll be awash in such rascality as only a lexicographer could conjure back from centuries of iniquity, obliquity, depravity, knavery, profligacy, frailty, flagrancy, infamy, immorality, corruption, wickedness, wrongdoing, backsliding and sin. You'll find ruffians and ruffraff, miscreants and malefactors, reprobates and rascalions, hooligans and hoodlums, scamps and scapegraces, scoundrels and scalawags, Jezebels and jades. You'll find adjectives to fit them all (foul and fiendish, devilish and diabolical), and adverbs and verbs to describe how the (foul and fiendish, devilish and diabolical) do their wrong, and cross-references leading to still other thickets of venality and vice. Still, there's no better friend to have around to nudge the memory than Roget. It saves



you the time of rummaging in your brain—that network of overloaded grooves—to find the word that's right on the tip of your tongue, where it doesn't do you any good. The Thesaurus is to the writer what a rhyming dictionary is to the songwriter—a reminder of all the choices—and you should use it with gratitude. If, having found the scalawag and the scapegrace, you want to know how they differ, then go to the dictionary.

不要小看罗热的《同义词词典》，认为它太花哨。查一下"villain",你会发现，作者把几个世纪的同义词，都罗列出来：iniquity, obliquity, depravity, knavery, rofligacy, frailty, flagrancy, infamy, immorality, corruption, wickedness, wrongdoing, backsliding 和 sin。还有，ruffians 和 ruffraff, miscreants 和 malefactors, reprobates 和 rapsallions, hooligans 和 hoodlums, scamps 和 scapegraces, scoundrels 和 scalawags, Jezebels 和 jades。给出了相应的形容词(foul 和 fiendish, devilish 和 diabolical)。还解释了例如 wrongdoer 的意思，并对照解释了一些近义词，如 venality 和 vice。所以，Roget 词典是最好的同义词词典。可以帮你节省时间，找到最合适的词。对与作家，或是歌词作家，可以帮你找到压韵的词。如果你想知道 scalawag 和 scapegrace 的区别，就去查这本字典吧。

E. B. White makes the case cogently in *The Elements of Style*, a book every writer should read once a year, when he suggests trying to rearrange any phrase that has survived for a century or two, such as Thomas Paine's "These are the times that try men's souls":

E. B. White 的《风格的要素》，每个作家都应该拜读。他建议改写每个句子，例如 Thomas Paine 的 "These are the times that try men's souls"，改写了 4 次：

- 1 Times like these try men's souls.
- 2 How trying it is to live in these times!
- 3 These are trying times for men's souls.
- 4 Soulwise, these are trying times.

Paine's phrase is like poetry and the other four are like oatmeal—which is the divine mystery of the creative process. Good writers of prose must be part poet, always listening to what they write. E. B. White is one of my favorite stylists because I'm conscious of being with a man who cares about the cadences and sonorities of the language. I relish (in my ear) the pattern his words make as they fall into a sentence. I try to surmise how in rewriting the sentence he reassembled it to end with a phrase that will momentarily linger, or how he chose one word over another because he was after a certain emotional weight. It's the difference between, say, "serene" and "tranquil"—one so soft, the other strangely disturbing because of the unusual n and q.

Paine 的语言，像诗歌一样，而改写的句子，更富有创造性。好的作家，也是诗人，总是倾听自己的作品。E. B. White 是我最喜爱的作家，我被他抑扬顿挫的语言所感染，为其风格而着迷。我总是猜想，他如何改写句子，使其回味无穷；如何根据感觉，选择合适的词汇。比如，"serene" 和 "tranquil"，第一个，很柔和，第二个，让人感觉不安，因为里面的 n 和 q。

Such considerations of sound and rhythm should be woven through everything you write. If all your sentences move at the same plodding gait, which even you recognize as deadly but don't know how to cure, read them aloud. (I write entirely by ear and read everything aloud before letting it go out into the world.) You'll begin to hear where the trouble lies. See if you can gain variety by reversing the order of a sentence, or by substituting a word that has freshness or oddity, or by altering the length of your sentences so they don't all sound as if they came out of the same mold. An occasional short sentence can carry a tremendous punch. It stays in the reader's ear.

所以,写作时,应考虑语言的声音和节奏。如果你的句子单调乏味,或者不知道如何修改,那么大声读出来。(我总是先大声朗读,用耳朵判断,然后再下笔),你会听出有问题的地方,修改一下,或者换一个词,或者改变句子的长度,看看有什么不同。有时,一个短句会非常有力,给读者印象深刻。

Remember that words are the only tools you've got. Learn to use them with originality and care. And also remember: somebody out there is listening.

记住,词汇是你唯一的工具,仔细地,创造性地使用它们,每个人都在倾听。

#### . Unity

整体

Nobody can write a book or an article "about" something. Tolstoy couldn't write a book about war and peace, or Melville a book about whaling. They made certain reductive decisions about time and place and about individual characters in that time and place—one man pursuing one whale. Every writing project must be reduced before you start to write.

没人能把所有的事,都写进一本书,或一篇文章。例如,托尔斯泰的《战争与和平》,赫尔曼的《白鲸》,他们只是提炼某个时间,某个场景和某些人物——一个人追赶一只白鲸。每个主题,在动笔前,都要提炼。

Therefore think small. Decide what corner of your subject you're going to bite off, and be content to cover it well and stop. Often you'll find that along the way you've managed to say almost everything you wanted to say about the entire subject. This is also a matter of energy and morale. An unwieldy writing task is a drain on your enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is the force that keeps you going and keeps the reader in your grip. When your zest begins to ebb, the reader is the first person to know it.

所以,要学会以小见大。给你的主题,选定一个小范围。你会发现,这个小范围里,几乎能涵盖所有的内容。这也关系到,你的精力和热情。一个大的范围,会消耗你的热情。而热情是你唯一的动力。当你兴致减退时,你的读者会马上感觉到。

As for what point you want to make, every successful piece of nonfiction should leave the reader with one provocative thought that he or she didn't have before. Not two thoughts, or five—just one. So decide what single point you want to leave in the reader's mind. It will not only give you a better idea of what route you should follow and what destination you hope to reach; it will affect your decision about tone and attitude. Some points are best made by earnestness, some by dry understatement, some by humor.

至于你要表达的观点，每个成功作品，都应该给读者一个全新的观点。不需要太多观点，一个就够了。所以，要想好，你要带给读者的观点。这不但会给你带来思路，写作路线和目标。还会影响你的风格和态度。要表达你的观点，有时需要真诚，有时需要轻描淡写，有时则需要幽默。

### The Lead and the Ending

开头和结尾

The most important sentence in any article is the first one. If it doesn't induce the reader to proceed to the second sentence, your article is dead. And if the second sentence doesn't induce him to continue to the third sentence, it's equally dead. Of such a progression of sentences, each tugging the reader forward until he is hooked, a writer constructs that fateful unit, the "lead."

文章的第一句，是最重要的。如果第一句，不能引导读者读第二句，文章就失败了。同理，第二句，第三句也是。所以，要写好“开头”，用一系列句子，牵着读者，直到读者被深深吸引。

How long should the lead be? One or two paragraphs? Four or five? There's no pat answer. Some leads hook the reader with just a few well-baited sentences; others amble on for several pages, exerting a slow but steady pull. Every article poses a different problem, and the only valid test is: does it work? Your lead may not be the best of all possible leads, but if it does the job it's supposed to do, be thankful and proceed. Sometimes the length may depend on the audience you're writing for. Readers of a literary review expect its writers to start somewhat discursively, and they will stick with those writers for the pleasure of wondering where they will emerge as they move in leisurely circles toward the eventual point. But I urge you not to count on the reader to stick around. Readers want to know—very soon—what's in it for them.

开头应该多长呢？一段或两段？四段或五段？没有确定的答案。一些开头，只用几句话，就能吸引读者；另一些，要写好几页，慢慢地让读者沉浸其中。每一篇文章都不同，所以开头也不同。你的开头，也许不是最精彩的，但是，能吸引读者就足够了。有时，开头的长度取决于读者的不同。有时读者，喜欢看作者东拉西扯，慢慢地展开情节。但是，我劝你，不让读者等得不耐烦，读者总是希望尽快得到答案。

Therefore your lead must capture the reader immediately and force him to keep reading. It

must cajole him with freshness, or novelty, or paradox, or humor, or surprise, or with an unusual idea, or an interesting fact, or a question. Anything will do, as long as it nudges his curiosity and tugs at his sleeve.

所以, 你的开头, 必须抓住读者, 让他们读下去。你可以用新鲜的东西, 或矛盾的东西, 或幽默, 或惊喜, 或不寻常的想法, 或一个有趣的故事, 或一个问题, 什么都行, 只要能勾起他的好奇心。

Next the lead must do some real work. It must provide hard details that tell the reader why the piece was written and why he ought to read it. But don't dwell on the reason. Coax the reader a little more; keep him inquisitive.

另外, 开头还要注意, 必须说明, 写作目的和读者为什么应该阅读。但是, 不要说得过多, 要让读者保持好奇。

Continue to build. Every paragraph should amplify the one that preceded it. Give more thought to adding solid detail and less to entertaining the reader. But take special care with the last sentence of each paragraph—it's the crucial springboard to the next paragraph. Try to give that sentence an extra twist of humor or surprise, like the periodic "snapper" in the routine of a standup comic. Make the reader smile and you've got him for at least one more paragraph.

然后, 继续往下写。每一段, 应该比上一段更深入。多写些实在的东西, 少一些哗众取宠。注意每段的最后一句, 要承上启下。用一些幽默, 或惊喜的东西, 就好像喜剧里的穿插的场景, 让读者开心, 然后, 他会接着读下一段。

Speaking of everybody else's lead, there are many categories I'd be glad never to see again. One is the future archaeologist: "When some future archaeologist stumbles on the remains of our civilization, what will he make of the jukebox?" I'm tired of him already and he's not even here. I'm also tired of the visitor from Mars: "If a creature from Mars landed on our planet he would be amazed to see hordes of scantily clad earthlings lying on the sand barbecuing their skins." I'm tired of the cute event that just happened to happen "one day not long ago" or on a conveniently recent Saturday afternoon: "One day not long ago a small button-nosed boy was walking with his dog, Terry, in a field outside Paramus, N.J., when he saw something that looked strangely like a balloon rising out of the ground." And I'm very tired of the have-in-common lead: "What did Joseph Stalin, Douglas MacArthur, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Sherwood Anderson, Jorge Luis Borges and Akira Kurosawa have in common? They all loved Westerns." Let's retire the future archaeologist and the man from Mars and the button-nosed boy. Try to give your lead a freshness of perception or detail.

举几种糟糕的开头:

- 1 未来的考古学家: “当未来的考古学家, 偶然发现现在文明的遗迹——投币式唱机, 他们会做何感想”
- 2 来自火星的客人: “如果一个火星星人来到地球, 他会吃惊地发现, 人们在沙滩上晒太阳”

3 故意碰巧发生的事, 如在不久前的一天, 或周六的下午: “不久前的一天, 一个小男孩, 在遛狗.....突然发现, 有个类似气球的东西, 从地面升起”

4 共同点开头: “Joseph Stalin, Douglas MacArthur, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Sherwood Anderson, Jorge Luis Borges and Akira Kurosawa, 这些名人, 有什么共同点? 他们都喜欢西部。”

以后, 别再这么写了, 在你的开头, 写些新鲜的东西, 或者感悟, 或者细节。

One moral is that you should always collect more material than you will use. Every article is strong in proportion to the surplus of details from which you can choose the few that will serve you best—if you don't go on gathering facts forever. At some point you must stop researching and start writing.

一条原则是, 你要尽可能多地搜集素材。如果你不这么做, 你的素材, 就会不够用。到一定时候, 你要停下来, 开始写作。

Another moral is to look for your material everywhere, not just by reading the obvious sources and interviewing the obvious people. Look at signs and at billboards and at all the junk written along the American roadside. Read the labels on our packages and the instructions on our toys, the claims on our medicines and the graffiti on our walls. Read the fillers, so rich in self-esteem, that come spilling out of your monthly statement from the electric company and the telephone company and the bank. Read menus and catalogues and second-class mail. Nose about in obscure crannies of the newspaper, like the Sunday real estate section—you can tell the temper of a society by what patio accessories it wants. Our daily landscape is thick with absurd messages and portents. Notice them. They not only have social significance; they are often just quirky enough to make a lead that's different from everybody else's.

另一条原则是, 你要随处寻找素材, 不只是那些明显的人和事, 例如:

- 1 街道两旁的招牌, 公告栏, 垃圾广告
- 2 包裹上标签, 玩具上的说明, 药品上的声明, 墙上的涂鸦。
- 3 电业局, 电话局和银行每月寄来的账单和宣传活页
- 4 菜单, 各种分类目录, 垃圾邮件
- 5 报纸上, 不起眼的版面, 例如周日的房产板块

通过它们, 你可以了解社会的走向, 公众的口味。我们每天, 都被大量的信息包围。关注这些东西, 不仅帮我们了解社会, 而且可以作为素材, 让你的开头与众不同。

The positive reason for ending well is that a good last sentence—or last paragraph—is a joy in itself. It gives the reader a lift, and it lingers when the article is over. The perfect ending should take your readers slightly by surprise and yet seem exactly right. They didn't expect the article to end so soon,

or so abruptly, or to say what it said. But they know it when they see it. Like a good lead, it works. It's like the curtain line in a theatrical comedy. We are in the middle of a scene (we think), when suddenly one of the actors says something funny, or outrageous, or epigrammatic, and the lights go out. We are startled to find the scene over, and then delighted by the aptness of how it ended. What delights us is the playwrights perfect control.

为什么要写好结尾——好的结尾, 或最后一段, 可以让读者受到鼓舞, 回味无穷。完美的结尾,

应该让读者有点意外，但又在情理之中。他们没想到会这么快结束，有点突然，或者和预料的不一樣，但最终，他们会理解。就像好的开头一样。就像我们在看戏，突然，里面的角色说了句风趣的话，或是粗话，或是格言，灯光就熄灭了，戏结束了。我们起初会感到奇怪，但过后，会感到愉快，赞叹作家的手笔。

For the nonfiction writer, the simplest way of putting this into a rule is: when you're ready to stop, stop. If you have presented all the facts and made the point you want to make, look for the nearest exit.

对于作家，最简单的方法是：当你该结束时，就结束。当你把所有的事情，都交代了，就该考虑尽快结束了。

Something I often do in my own work is to bring the story full circle—to strike at the end an echo of a note that was sounded at the beginning. It gratifies my sense of symmetry, and it also pleases the reader, completing with its resonance the journey we set out on together.

我在写作中，经常注意把故事写圆满——即首尾呼应。这样做让我感到满足，让读者开心，就好像我和读者一起经历了旅程。

But what usually works best is a quotation. Go back through your notes to find some rema that has a sense of finality, or that's funny, or that adds an unexpected closing detail. Sometimes it will jump out at you during the interview—I've often thought, "That's my ending!"—or during the process of writing.

通常，最好的办法是标记。查看你的笔记，找出标记，这样会感觉完整，有趣，或者加入一个意外的结尾。有时，在采访时，它会跳出来——我经常遇到，“就是这样的结尾”，或者在写作的过程中。

In the mid-1960s, when Woody Allen was just becoming established as Americas resident neurotic, doing nightclub monologues, I wrote the first long magazine piece that took note of his arrival. It ended like this:

60年代中期，当伍迪艾伦刚刚成名，做舞台剧时，我写了第一篇长篇文章，描述他的到来，结尾是这样的：

"If people come away relating to me as a person," Allen says, "rather than just enjoying my jokes; if they come away wanting to hear me again, no matter what I might talk about, then I'm succeeding." Judging by the returns, he is. Woody Allen is Mr. Related-To, and he seems a good bet to hold the franchise for many years.

艾伦说，如果人们不只喜欢我的作品，而是喜欢我这个人，不论我谈论什么，都喜欢我，那么说明我成功了。的确是这样，很多年，他一直保持成功。

Yet he does have a problem all his own, unshared by, unrelated to, the rest of America. "I'm obsessed," he says, "by the fact that my mother genuinely resembles Groucho Marx."

然而，他始终有一个麻烦，和美国人无关。“我很纠结”他说“因为我老妈真的很像格鲁乔马克思”



There's a remark from so far out in left field that nobody could see it coming. The surprise it carries is tremendous. How could it not be a perfect ending? Surprise is one of the most refreshing elements in nonfiction writing. If something surprises you it will also surprise—and delight—the people you are writing for, especially as you conclude your story and send them on their way.

这是一个风马牛不相及的评价，没人能预料到。却带来了巨大的惊喜。这不是个完美的结尾吗？惊喜是写作中最让人振奋的元素。如果什么事情，能给你带来惊喜，那么同样也能给读者带来惊喜，尤其是以你自己的方式。

## 6. Bits & Pieces 细节才是王道

This is a chapter of scraps and morsels—small admonitions on many points that I have collected under one, as they say, umbrella.

这一章，是我搜集的各种小技巧

### VERBS.

不到万不得已，不要用被动动词

Use active verbs unless there is no comfortable way to get around using a passive verb. The difference between an active verb style and a passive-verb style—in clarity and vigor—is the difference between life and death for a writer.

尽量使用主动动词，除非万不得已，才可以使用被动。对于作家来说，两者的区别，和生死一样。

"Joe saw him" is strong. "He was seen by Joe" is weak. The first is short and precise; it leaves no doubt about who did what. The second is necessarily longer and it has an insipid quality: something was done by somebody to someone else. It's also ambiguous. How often was he seen by Joe? Once? Every day? Once a week? A style that consists of passive constructions will sap the readers energy. Nobody ever quite knows what is being perpetrated by whom and on whom.

例如，“Joe 看见他”和“他被 Joe 看见”，前者简短准确，表述毫无疑问。后者冗长无味。而且会引起歧义。读者会猜想，他经常被 Joe 看见吗？一次？每天？每周？被动的句型会浪费读者的热情，没人能猜出，这种句子到底要表达什么。

用词要精确

Verbs are the most important of all your tools. They push the sentence forward and give it momentum. Active verbs push hard; passive verbs tug fitfully. Active verbs also enable us to

visualize an activity because they require a pronoun ("he"), or a noun ("the boy"), or a person ("Mrs. Scott") to put them in motion. Many verbs also carry in their imagery or in their sound a suggestion of what they mean: glitter, dazzle, twirl, beguile, scatter, swagger, poke, pamper, vex. Probably no other language has such a vast supply of verbs so bright with color. Don't choose one that is dull or merely serviceable. Make active verbs activate your sentences, and try to avoid the kind that need an appended preposition to complete their work. Don't set up a business that you can start or launch. Don't say that the president of the company stepped down. Did he resign? Did he retire? Did he get fired? Be precise. Use precise verbs.

动词是最重要的词语。他们的作用是推进句子，给予动力。主动词，作用是推；被动词，作用是拉。主动词能让读者展开想象，因为他们使用代词，或名称，或人名，给予他们动作。很多动词能带来联想，或者他们的发音给予含义：例如 **glitter, dazzle, twirl, beguile, scatter, swagger, poke, pamper, vex**。也许只有英语，才有这么丰富的内涵。不要选择枯燥的动词。让动词带给句子活力，或者避免前置介词。还要注意，表达要准确，不要用类似 **start ,lanch** 描述开始做生意，或者公司的主管 **stepped down**，因为读者不知道，公司主管是辞职了，还是退休了，还是被解雇了。

If you want to see how active verbs give vitality to the written word, don't just go back to Hemingway or Thurber or Thoreau. I commend the King James Bible and William Shakespeare.

如果你想知道，主动词如何给写作带来活力，不要只是去看海明威，或梭罗的作品，我推荐圣经和莎士比亚。

## ADVERBS

大多数副词是可以被省略的

Most adverbs are unnecessary. You will clutter your sentence and annoy the reader if you choose a verb that has a specific meaning and then add an adverb that carries the same meaning. Don't tell us that the radio blared loudly; "blare" connotes loudness. Don't write that someone clenched his teeth tightly; there's no other way to clench teeth. Again and again in careless writing, strong verbs are weakened by redundant adverbs. So are adjectives and other parts of speech: "effortlessly easy," "slightly spartan," "totally flabbergasted." The beauty of "flabbergasted" is that it implies an astonishment that is total; I can't picture someone being partly flabbergasted. If an action is so easy as to be effortless, use "effortless." And what is "slightly spartan"? Perhaps a monk's cell with wall-to-wall carpeting. Don't use adverbs unless they do necessary work. Spare us the news that the winning athlete grinned widely.

大多数副词是可以省略的。如果你使用一个动词，再加一个同样意义的副词，会把句子搞乱，妨碍阅读。例如，收音机发出刺耳的声音 **loudly**，因为刺耳的声音，本身就是 **loud**；或者，有人咬紧牙 **tightly**，咬紧本身就是 **tightly**。如果特别粗心，副词还会破坏动词的意义，形容词也是一样。例如：**"effortlessly easy," "slightly spartan," "totally flabbergasted."** "flabbergasted"的含义就是完全大吃一惊，没人会有点大吃一惊。如果一个动作很容易，可以使用**"effortless."**。什么是**"slightly**

spartan"? 也是让人摸不着头脑。不要使用副词, 除非有必要。不要写类似, 获胜的选手呲牙笑 widely。

## ADJECTIVES

大多数形容词也是可以省略的

Most adjectives are also unnecessary. Like adverbs, they are sprinkled into sentences by writers who don't stop to think that the concept is already in the noun. This kind of prose is littered with precipitous cliffs and lacy spiderwebs, or with adjectives denoting the color of an object whose color is well known: yellow daffodils and brownish dirt. If you want to make a value judgment about daffodils, choose an adjective like "garish." If you're in a part of the country where the dirt is red, feel free to mention the red dirt. Those adjectives would do a job that the noun alone wouldn't be doing.

大多数形容词也是可以省略的。像副词一样, 他们被粗心的作家, 写在句子里, 忘记了已经用了同样意义的名词。例如, 陡峭的峭壁, 网状的蜘蛛网, 或者重复描述物品的颜色。例如, 黄色的黄水仙, 土色的泥土。如果你想描述黄水仙的话, 可以选择用鲜艳。如果当地的泥土是红的, 你可以用红色的泥土。形容词的作用是, 修饰名词, 而不是重复。

Again, the rule is simple: make your adjectives do work that needs to be done. "He looked at the gray sky and the black clouds and decided to sail back to the harbor." The darkness of the sky and the clouds is the reason for the decision. If it's important to tell the reader that a house was drab or a girl was beautiful, by all means use "drab" and "beautiful." They will have their proper power because you have learned to use adjectives sparsely.

规则非常简单: 必要时, 才使用形容词。例如“他看着灰色的天空, 和黑色的乌云, 决定驶回港口”, 灰色的天空和乌云, 是他决定的原因。如果有必要告诉读者, 房屋是褐色的, 女孩是漂亮的, 那么就使用褐色和漂亮。这些形容词会发挥它们的作用, 因为你已经学会使用。

## LITTLE QUALIFIERS.

删掉那些让你的文章看上去不靠谱的口水词

Prune out the small words that qualify how you feel and how you think and what you saw: "a bit," "a little," "sort of," "kind of," "rather," "quite," "very," "too," "pretty much," "in a sense" and dozens more. They dilute your style and your persuasiveness.

删掉那些限制你的感觉, 想象和视觉的小词语。例如"a bit," "a little," "sort of," "kind of," "rather," "quite," "very," "too," "pretty much," "in a sense", 它们会影响你作品的风格和说服力。

Don't say you were a bit confused and sort of tired and a little depressed and somewhat annoyed. Be confused. Be tired. Be depressed. Be annoyed. Don't hedge your prose with little timidities. Good writing is lean and confident.

不要说, a bit confused, sort of tired, a little depressed, somewhat annoyed。应该说 Be confused. Be tired. Be depressed. Be annoyed. 这些词语会让人感觉胆怯, 好的作品应该是简练而自信。

Don't say you weren't too happy because the hotel was pretty expensive. Say you weren't happy because the hotel was expensive. Don't tell us you were quite fortunate. How fortunate is that? Don't describe an event as rather spectacular or very awesome. Words like "spectacular" and "awesome" don't submit to measurement. "Very" is a useful word to achieve emphasis, but far more often it's clutter. There's no need to call someone very methodical. Either he is methodical or he isn't.

不要说, 你“太”(too)开心, 因为旅店“有点”(pretty)贵。要说, 你不开心, 因为旅店贵。不要说, 你“很”(quite)幸运, 幸运还有程度吗? 不要用“相当”(rather)惊人和“非常”(very)了不起, 来描述一个事件。惊人和了不起, 是不能用“相当”(rather)和“非常”(very)来修饰的。“非常”(very)是一个有用的词, 用来加强语气, 但是不能用得太多。同样, 没有必要说某人做事“非常”(very)有方法, 不论他是否做事有方法。

The larger point is one of authority. Every little qualifier whittles away some fraction of the reader's trust. Readers want a writer who believes in himself and in what he is saying. Don't diminish that belief. Don't be kind of bold. Be bold.

重要的一点, 是要确立权威。任何小的限定词, 都会降低读者的信任。读者想看到一个相信自己, 相信自己作品的作家。不要辜负这种信任。写作, 不是要大胆“一些”。而是, 要大胆。

#### The Dash 破折号的用法

The dash is used in two ways. One is to amplify or justify in the second part of the sentence a thought you stated in the first part. "We decided to keep going—it was only 100 miles more and we could get there in time for dinner." By its very shape the dash pushes the sentence ahead and explains why they decided to keep going. The other use involves two dashes, which set apart a parenthetical thought within a longer sentence. "She told me to get in the car—she had been after me all summer to have a haircut—and we drove silently into town." An explanatory detail that might otherwise have required a separate sentence is dispatched along the way.

破折号有两种用法。一种是描述或解释先前的想法。例如“我们决定继续前行——因为只剩 100 里, 我们就能及时赶到赴宴。”通过这样一个符号, 推进句子, 解释为什么我们要继续前行。另一种用法包括两个破折号, 加入一段附加说明, 把长句子分成两部分。例如“她让我到车里去——整个夏天, 她都要我去剪头——然后我们静静地驶进城里”。在句子中, 插入一个附加的说明。

#### MOOD CHANGERS

谁说 but 不能用来开头了?

Many of us were taught that no sentence should begin with "but." If that's what you learned, unlearn it—there's no stronger word at the start. It announces total contrast with what has

gone before, and the reader is thereby primed for the change. If you need relief from too many sentences beginning with "but," switch to "however." It is, however, a weaker word and needs careful placement. Don't start a sentence with "however"—it hangs there like a wet dishrag. And don't end with "however"—by that time it has lost its howeverness. Put it as early as you reasonably can, as I did three sentences ago. Its abruptness then becomes a virtue.

很多人认为, 句子不应该用"but"开头。如果是这样的话, 不要相信。But 的作用是, 声明与前面相反, 让读者有心理准备。如果你用了太多的 but, 可以用 however。这是一个相对弱些的词, 需要小心。不要用 however 开头, 好像一个湿抹布, 也不要 use however 结尾, 因为失去了它的作用, 尽量把它放在中间, 这样才能真正起作用。

## CONTRACTIONS.

用 I'll 会比 I will 显得更有爱

Your style will be warmer and truer to your personality if you use contractions like "I'll" and "won't" and "can't" when they fit comfortably into what you're writing. "I'll be glad to see them if they don't get mad" is less stiff than "I will be glad to see them if they do not get mad." (Read that aloud and hear how stilted it sounds.) There's no rule against such informality—trust your ear and your instincts. I only suggest avoiding one form—"I'd," "he'd," "we'd," etc.—because "I'd" can mean both "I had" and "I would," and readers can get well into a sentence before learning which meaning it is. Often it's not the one they thought it was. Also, don't invent contractions, like "could've." They cheapen your style. Stick with the ones you can find in the dictionary.

如果"I'll", "won't", "can't"这些缩略词, 使用得当, 会使你的风格变得温暖和真实。"I'll be glad to see them if they don't get mad" 比 "I will be glad to see them if they do not get mad.", 更加柔和些, (你可以大声的读一下, 体会一下) 这样并不违反写作规则——相信你的耳朵和直觉。但是, 我建议避免 "I'd," "he'd," "we'd,", 因为 "I'd" 有两个含义 "I had" 和 "I would,", 有时候, 会让读者理解错误。还有, 不要发明缩略词, 例如 "could've.", 会有损你的风格。应该使用规范的缩略词。

## THAT AND WHICH.

能用 that 就不要用 which

Anyone who tries to explain "that" and "which" in less than an hour is asking for trouble. Fowler, in his *Modern English Usage*, takes 25 columns of type. I'm going for two minutes, perhaps the world record. Here (I hope) is much of what you need to bear in mind:

如果你想在 1 小时内, 说明白 "that" 和 "which" 的区别, 就是自找麻烦。Fowler, 在他的现代英语用法中, 花了 25 章。我将用两分钟, 也许这是世界纪录。希望你会弄明白。

Always use "that" unless it makes your meaning ambiguous. Notice that in carefully edited magazines, such as *The New Yorker*, "that" is by far the predominant usage. I mention this because it is still widely believed—a residue from school and college—that "which" is more

correct, more acceptable, more literary. It's not. In most situations, "that" is what you would naturally say and therefore what you should write.

如果不会使意思模糊不清,总是可以使用 **that**。你可以在杂志中,比如 **Newyorker**, 经常看到 **that**。我这么说是因为,现在仍有很多人认为, **which** 是更好,更准确的词,实际不是。在大多数场合里, **that** 是你需要说和需要写的。

If your sentence needs a comma to achieve its precise meaning, it probably needs "which."  
"Which" serves a particular identifying function, different from "that." (A) "Take the shoes that are in the closet." This means: take the shoes that are in the closet, not the ones under the bed.  
(B) "Take the shoes, which are in the closet." Only one pair of shoes is under discussion; the "which" usage tells you where they are. Note that the comma is necessary in B, but not in A.

如果你的句子需要一个停顿,来表面确切的含义,那么就用 **which**。**Which** 是用来表明特定含义的,区别于 **that**。**A** "Take the shoes that are in the closet.", 取出柜子里的鞋子,而不是床下的。  
**B** "Take the shoes, which are in the closet."句子里,只有一双鞋在柜子里;**which** 告诉你鞋在哪。注意,在 **B** 中,停顿是必要的,在 **A** 中,停顿不是必要的。

A high proportion of "which" usages narrowly describe, or identify, or locate, or explain, or otherwise qualify the phrase that preceded the comma:

总得来说, **Which** 只是用来描述,定义,定位,解释或者限制短语,例如

The house, which has a red roof,

那个红 **ding** 的房子

The store, which is called Bob s Hardware,

那个叫 Bob s Hardware 的商店

The Rhine, which is in Germany,

那个在德国的 Rhine

The monsoon, which is a seasonal wind,

Monsoon 是指季风

The moon, which I saw from the porch,

那个我从走廊看到的月亮

That's all I'm going to say that I think you initially need to know to write good nonfiction, which is a form that requires exact marshaling of information.

以上是我认为,你在写作之初需要知道的技巧,需要确切信息时,才使用 **which**。

## CONCEPT NOUNS.

尽量少用抽象的概念词,因为里头没有“人”

Nouns that express a concept are commonly used in bad writing instead of verbs that tell what somebody did. Here are three typical dead sentences:

下面是三种典型的败笔,错误地使用名词(表达概念),而没有使用动词(表达行为)。



The common reaction is incredulous laughter.

通常的反应是怀疑的笑容

Bemused cynicism isn't the only response to the old system.

让人茫然的玩世不恭，不是对旧体制的唯一反应

The current campus hostility is a symptom of the change.

最近的校园战争是改变的征兆

What is so eerie about these sentences is that they have no people in them. They also have no working verbs—only "is" or "isn't." The reader can't visualize anybody performing some activity; all the meaning lies in impersonal nouns that embody a vague concept: "reaction," "cynicism," "response," "hostility." Turn these cold sentences around. Get people doing things:

这几句很怪异，因为里面没有人，也没有动词，只有"is" 或 "isn't." 读者无法想象出谁在发出行为；所有的名词的含义，都非常含糊："reaction," "cynicism," "response," "hostility."把这几句改一下，让人发挥作用：

Most people just laugh with disbelief.

多数人都笑，因为不相信

Some people respond to the old system by turning cynical; others say. . .

一些人对旧体制的反应是，变得玩世不恭；另一些人会。。。

It's easy to notice the change—you can see how angry all the students are.

很容易注意到改变——你可以看到学生的愤怒

My revised sentences aren't jumping with vigor, partly because the material I'm trying to knead into shape is shapeless dough. But at least they have real people and real verbs. Don't get caught holding a bag full of abstract nouns. You'll sink to the bottom of the lake and never be seen again.

改写后的句子，虽然也缺乏生气，部分是因为我加入的词语，本来就没有意义。但是，他们至少有人和动词。不要过多地使用抽象名词，否则，你会陷入湖底，无法自拔。

**REEPING NOUNISM.**

用人类的语言交流

This is a new American disease that strings two or three nouns together where one noun—or, better yet, one verb—will do. Nobody goes broke now; we have money problem areas. It no longer rains; we have precipitation activity or a thunderstorm probability situation. Please, let it rain.

这是现在美国人爱犯的毛病，本来一个名词，或动词就够用，偏爱用两个或三个名词串在一起。例如，没人要破产，我们有一些财务问题（money problem areas）。雨停了，会开始沉降或者

雷暴 (precipitation activity or a thunderstorm probability situation)。

Today as many as four or five concept nouns will attach themselves to each other, like a molecule chain. Here's a brilliant specimen I recently found: "Communication facilitation skills development intervention." Not a person in sight, or a working verb. I think it's a program to help students write better.

现在, 有时候, 4, 5 个名词连在一起, 就好像分子链。这有个例子: Communication facilitation skills development intervention。里面没有人, 也没有动词, 我想应该是一个帮助学生写作的项目。

## THE SUBCONSCIOUS MIND.

写不出东西来怎么办? 也许睡一觉就好了

Your subconscious mind does more writing than you think. Often you'll spend a whole day trying to fight your way out of some verbal thicket in which you seem to be tangled beyond salvation. Frequently a solution will occur to you the next morning when you plunge back in. While you slept, your writers mind didn't. A writer is always working. Stay alert to the currents around you. Much of what you see and hear will come back, having percolated for days or months or even years through your subconscious mind, just when your conscious mind, laboring to write, needs it.

写作中, 你的下意识, 比你想的更给力。你经常会花一整天, 试图在语言的丛林中, 找到一条出路。但是解决的方法, 经常会在第二天早上突然闪现。睡觉的时候, 意识没有工作, 工作的是潜意识。一个作家会一直在工作, 对周围事物保持敏感, 很多所见所闻, 会在将来用到, 也许几天, 几个月, 甚至几年, 当你的潜意识参与写作时, 会用到这些信息。

## REWRITING.

好文章很少一遍促成, 不要吝惜使用 Delete 键。

Rewriting is the essence of writing well: it's where the game is won or lost. That idea is hard to accept. We all have an emotional equity in our first draft; we can't believe that it wasn't born perfect. But the odds are close to 100 percent that it wasn't. Most writers don't initially say what they want to say, or say it as well as they could. The newly hatched sentence almost always has something wrong with it. It's not clear. It's not logical. It's verbose. It's klunky. It's pretentious. It's boring. It's full of clutter. It's full of clichés. It lacks rhythm. It can be read in several different ways. It doesn't lead out of the previous sentence. It doesn't... The point is that clear writing is the result of a lot of tinkering.

修改是写好文章的精髓: 是文章成败的关键。也许你很难接受这个说法。我们都对初稿有感情; 不相信会改得更好。但是 100%不是这样的。大多数作家不会一开始就说出他们想表达的话, 或者发挥他们最好的水平。最开始写的几乎都存在问题: 不清晰, 不符合逻辑, 罗嗦, 做作, 无聊, 杂乱, 陈词滥调, 缺乏节奏, 意思容易被误解, 和上句不达意等等。所以, 好的文章是修改出来的。

Many people assume that professional writers don't need to rewrite; the words just fall into place. On the contrary, careful writers can't stop fiddling. I've never thought of rewriting as an unfair burden; I'm grateful for every chance to keep improving my work. Writing is like a good watch—it should run smoothly and have no extra parts. Students, I realize, don't share my love of rewriting. They think of it as punishment: extra homework or extra infield practice. Please—if you're such a student—think of it as a gift. You won't write well until you understand that writing is an evolving process, not a product. Nobody expects you to get it right the first time, or even the second time.

很多人认为专业作家不需要修改；他们可以一气呵成。相反，细心的作家从未停止修改。我从来不认为修改是件麻烦事；我会感激每一个提高作品的机会。写作就象一只手表——需要平稳运行不能有多余的零件。我想，初学者不会象我一样，喜欢修改。他们觉得那是浪费时间：象多余的作业或练习一样。如果你是这样，请把修改看成一件礼物。你不会写好，直到你明白写作是一个过程，而不是一个产品。没人指望你一，两次，就把文章写好。

What do I mean by "rewriting"? I don't mean writing one draft and then writing a different second version, and then a third. Most rewriting consists of reshaping and tightening and refining the raw material you wrote on your first try. Much of it consists of making sure you've given the reader a narrative flow he can follow with no trouble from beginning to end. Keep putting yourself in the reader's place. Is there something he should have been told early in the sentence that you put near the end? Does he know when he starts sentence B that you've made a shift—of subject, tense, tone, emphasis—from sentence A?

我说的修改是什么意思呢？不是指完全重写一遍，然后再写第三遍。修改是指，在原来的基础上，进行加工润色。目的是使读者能够按照你的思路，毫不费力地，从开头读到结尾。要站在读者的角度。要问问自己，文章是否前后呼应？如果从句子 A 到句子 B 有转折，是否读者能够清楚知道怎么过渡的

When you read your writing aloud with these connecting links in mind you'll hear a dismaying number of places where you lost the reader, or confused the reader, or failed to tell him the one fact he needed to know, or told him the same thing twice: the inevitable loose ends of every early draft. What you must do is make an arrangement—one that holds together from start to finish and that moves with economy and warmth.

当你在心里大声默读这些转折的时候，你就会发现很多问题，这些问题让读者困惑不解，或者重复描述，使文章草草结尾。你必须重新修改这些地方——使文章首尾呼应，情节连贯。

Learn to enjoy this tidying process. I don't like to write (I like to have written). But I love to rewrite. I especially like to cut: to press the DELETE key and see an unnecessary word or phrase or sentence vanish into the electricity. I like to replace a humdrum word with one that has more precision or color. I like to strengthen the transition between one sentence and another. I like to rephrase a drab sentence to give it a more pleasing rhythm or a more graceful musical line. With every small refinement I feel that I'm coming nearer to where I would like to arrive, and when I finally get there I know it was the rewriting, not the writing, that won the game.

## Go WITH YOUR INTERESTS.

爱啥写啥，只要你有兴趣，再邪门的东西你都能写好。

There's no subject you don't have permission to write about. Students often avoid subjects close to their heart—skateboarding, cheerleading, rock music, cars—because they assume that their teachers will regard those topics as "stupid." No area of life is stupid to someone who takes it seriously. If you follow your affections you will write well and will engage your readers.

你写什么都可以，无须得到批准。学生们不愿写喜欢的运动——滑板，拉拉队，摇滚，汽车——他们以为老师会不喜欢。如果你认真写，没有什么题材是愚蠢的。只要你有真情实感，你就会写好，就会打动读者。

I've read elegant books on fishing and poker, billiards and rodeos, mountain climbing and giant sea turtles and many other subjects I didn't think I was interested in. Write about your hobbies: cooking, gardening, photography, knitting, antiques, jogging, sailing, scuba diving, tropical birds, tropical fish. Write about your work: teaching, nursing, running a business, running a store. Write about a field you enjoyed in college and always meant to get back to: history, biography, art, archeology. No subject is too specialized or too quirky if you make an honest connection with it when you write about it.

我读过优美的文章，内容包括钓鱼，扑克，台球，竞技，爬山，海龟等，还有其他我曾经不太感兴趣的题材。可以写你的爱好：厨艺，园艺，摄影，编制，古玩，慢跑，航海，潜水，热带鸟类，热带鱼等。写你的工作：教师，护士，商业，商店。写你在大学擅长的领域：历史，生物，艺术，考古。只要你认真地写，任何主题都不会过于专业，或者过于离奇的。

【太长了？ 一个简化版的 DOs & DON'Ts, 来自 The Spinozanator, Amazon.com】

1. Do - prune out every word that does not perform a necessary function. Strip each sentence to its cleanest components. A clear sentence is no accident.

删除不必要的词语，使句子保持最简洁。

2. Do - use the thesaurus liberally. Learn the small gradations between words that seem to be synonyms.

充分利用词典，了解同义词的区别。

3. Do - try to improve the rhythm by reversing the order of a sentence, substituting a word that has freshness or oddity, and by varying the lengths of sentences.

通过改变语序，使用新词或生僻词，或改变句子的长度，提高文章的节奏感。

4. Do - make your first sentence the best one - your lead must capture the reader.

写好第一句，必须吸引读者。

5. Do - make each sentence lead into the next. Readers think linearly.

使句子承上启下，引导读者阅读理解。

6. Do - Take special care with the last sentence in your paragraph - its the springboard to the next paragraph.

写好每一段的最后一句，用来引起下文。

7. Do - make your paragraphs short. Readers think in segments.

使段落简洁，便于阅读。

8. Do - pay special attention to the last sentence. The perfect ending should take your reader slightly by surprise and yet seem exactly right.

注意最后一句。完美的结尾出人意料，又在情理之中。

9. Do - Read it aloud to see how it sounds and re-edit - then do it again. Clear writing is the result of lots of tinkering.

大声朗读文章，检查声音效果，然后修改，然后再朗读。好文章需要大量的修改。

On the other hand:

另一方面

1. Don't - use passive verbs unless there is no comfortable way to use an active verb.

尽量不要用被动词，除非无法用主动词。

2. Don't - use adverbs that convey the same meaning as your strong active verb - prune it out.

如果有合适的动词，就不要再同样意义的副词

3. Don't - use adjectives when the concept is already in your carefully chosen noun - prune it out.

如果有合适的名词，就不要再同样意义的形容词

4. Don't - use small words that qualify how you feel: "a bit," "a little," "sort of," and dozens more. Good writing is lean and confident.

不要用小词，例如"a bit," "a little," "sort of,"等，好的文章应该是简洁自信的。

5. Don't - use concept nouns:

Instead of - "The common reaction is incredulous laughter."

Write - "Most people just laugh with disbelief."

不要用概念名词

不要这样写“通常的反应是不相信的大笑”

应该这样写“多数人不会不相信地大笑”

6. Don't - use the exclamation point unless you must, do use the period more frequently, don't forget the versatile dash, and cut down on the use of semi-colons and colons. If you don't know how to punctuate, get a grammar book.

不要轻易用感叹号，要多用句号，不要忘了破折号，少用引号。如果不会加标点，就去查语法书。

On Writing Well 的第三、四章分门别类描述了怎么写 Nonfiction as Literature, People, Place, yourself, Science and Technology, Business, Sports, Arts and Humor. 每一节都自成一体, 无需引用。总之, 这本书基本可以应付日常英文写作的各个环节。是居家旅行模仿必备良品。为什么说模仿呢?

Zinsser 写道, "Never hesitate to imitate another writer. Imitation is part of the creative process for anyone learning an art or a craft. Bach and Picasso didn't spring full-blown as Bach and Picasso; they needed models. This is especially true of writing. Find the best writers in the fields that interest and read their work aloud. Get their voice and their taste into your ear—their attitude toward language. Don't worry that imitating them you'll lose your own voice and your own identity. Soon enough you will shed those skins and become who you are supposed to become."

Zinsser 写道, 不要害怕模仿其他作家。对于初学者, 模仿是创造的开始。Bach 和 Picasso 不是一开始就成为他们自己; 他们也需要模仿。这是非常真实的。找到你最喜欢的作家, 大声朗读他们的作品。熟悉他们的声音, 他们的品味, 他们对语言的把握。不要担心模仿, 会丧失你自己的风格 and 特点。很快你会脱离他们的影子, 成为你自己的风格。

insser 在书中不断地表达对 E.B.White, Norman Mailer 等人的葱白。其实在我看来, 他本人就是一个被模仿的对象嘛。至少看了他的书, 我再也不会去看那些所谓醍醐灌 ding 的 GRE 写作 5.5、北美高分范文。这种感觉就像你吃了惠元面庄的姜鸭面, 再去吃楼下食堂师傅煮出来的大锅面; 或者是住惯了 Hakkahomes, 再去住那些所谓的如家, 7 天, 甚至是 77 块钱一个月北京的房子。