

The Self-Made Copywriter

**Steal the syllabus that produced
the greatest copywriters in the world.**

Disclaimer

This guide is based on techniques used by the greatest copywriters in the world. I have expanded on their methods and made them more user-friendly, so that anyone can pick it up and have everything they need to become a world-class copywriter. All credit for the core of this syllabus goes to [Gary Halbert](#), and credit for my finding out about it goes to [John McIntyre](#).

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Why Copywriting Is So Damn Valuable

World-class copywriting has the power to turn a struggling business into a thriving one.

BUT

World-class copywriting is extremely difficult to learn, and very rare.

The “Value of Skill” Calculation

Value of a skill = (How rare it is) x (How hard it is to master)

This equation holds true with skills that are not valuable on their own. For example: kicking a football into a net. To apply a huge amount of power to a sphere at just the right angle and arc to make it sail past a professional goal-keeper and into the net, all while under massive pressure from defenders and other players, *with your foot*, must be one of the hardest things in the world to do. *It’s also one of the most highly paid.*

This isn’t the same with every physical skill, of course. There’s a commercial machine behind football that generates the dough. But the relationship is there.

So what if you had a skill just as difficult and rare as the professional striker *but that generates money itself*? You wouldn’t need large institutions and systems behind you to get paid for it. The skill could create the system itself.

In *How to Write a Good Advertisement*, Victor Schwab said:

“Many advertisers do not realize the tremendous potential power of copy. They don’t demand enough from it, don’t make it work hard enough. They say, “Well, that’s as far as copy can go.” Yet that is often the point where it is just beginning to sell.”

The “Write Your Own Cheque” Superpower

“If you can out-copywrite your competitors... you will find, literally, you can sit down and write yourself a swimming pool anytime you want.”

– [Dan Kennedy](#)

There is no ceiling to your earnings as a copywriter. Your earnings depend only on your level of skill.

However, it’s incredibly difficult to get world-class at copywriting. It’s not easy to write words that grab people by the lapels, hoist them up, and shove them into action.

Becoming truly world-class at copywriting is a 10,000 hour deal. However, becoming *better than your competition* might be a mere 30-day to 300-day deal (depending on your competition).

This syllabus is for the long-haul. Consider it a year-long training regime that ought to be repeated year in, year out, by anyone who wants to get seriously excellent at copywriting.

The Method

Below is the basic formula for making yourself a world-class copywriter:

1) Read the world's [best books on copywriting](#)

(1 hour a day)

- Then read them all again, this time making notes.
- Do not read any others.
- Continue to read the same books over and over again, for the length of your career.

2) Study the world's [best sales letters](#).

(1 hour a day)

- Seek and collect high-performing sales letters in a personal swipe file.
- Write them out *by hand*.
- Make notes on every sentence or paragraph, every ploy or technique you can spot.
- Deconstruct them into bullet points.

Extra Curricular: Study Copywriting Used on You

- Collect any sales page you find yourself persuaded by. Screenshot all the Upsells, emails, and webinar if they used one.
- Map out the email structure used on you in launches, and copy out the emails and pages, and transcribe the scripts.

Study Routine

For many people, studying in the morning produces the best results. Your mind is fresh and not yet ravaged by the day.

Drink your morning coffee while you read a few pages of the day's book from your copywriter's library. Then, once you're fully woken up, do an hour of sales letter study. It's a lot to squeeze in, but you're serious about this, aren't you? If you don't have time, then make it. This study is more important to your earning power than virtually anything else you do in the day.

Fit in a few more pages of the book here and there throughout the day, until you reach an hour of reading. If you'd rather read your hour all at once, go for it.

Track Your Progress: [Spreadsheet Tracker Template](#)

The Copywriter's Library

First – Gary Halbert's *must-reads*:

- [*How to Write a Good Advertisement*](#) by Victor Schwab
- [*Scientific Advertising*](#) by Claude Hopkins
- [*7 Steps to Freedom*](#) by Ben Suarez
- [*Breakthrough Advertising*](#) by Eugene Schwartz
- [*The Lazy Man's Way to Riches*](#) by Joe Karbo
- [*Tested Advertising Methods*](#) by John Caples
- [*The Robert Collier Letter Book*](#) by Robert Collier
- [*The Gary Halbert Newsletter*](#) (back issues)
- [*The Boron Letters*](#) by Gary Halbert

Do not read any other books on advertising, Gary Halbert stressed, because the industry is full of hot-air theories that will lead you astray.

However, that was a long time ago. CopyHour [recently added a few more “must reads”](#):

- [*Influence*](#) by Robert Cialdini
- [*The Adweek Copywriting Handbook*](#) by Joseph Sugarman
- [*My Life in Advertising*](#) by Claude Hopkins
- [*Ogilvy On Advertising*](#) by David Ogilvy
- [*Great Leads*](#) by Michael Masterson & John Forde

Luckily for us, copywriting advice doesn't change much over time. Human nature 100 years ago is human nature today. In fact, if you read *Meditations* by Marcus Aurelius, it seems that people haven't changed at all in 2,000 years!

Install These Books into Your Mental Software

Step 1: *Tear through* Gary's must-reads first. (Breakthrough Advertising is a pricey book, so you have my permission to skip that one for now if funds are tight.)

Step 2: Read them again, this time making notes, mindmaps, and highlights.

Step 3: Re-read them over and over for the length of your career. Add stand-out quotes to your [commonplace book](#) so you'll never forget them.

Step 4: Do the same for the other books and any other world-class marketing books you find. Be warned, however, that the vast majority are utter tripe. Be *sure*.

The Copywriter's Swipe File

Program Your Subconscious With The Best Sales Letters Ever Written

This is probably **the most powerful technique** in the self-made copywriter syllabus. In short, it's writing out the world's best sales letters by hand.

If you do only that – just copy out sales letters by hand on lined paper for an hour every day – you'll be able to write a profitable sales page in a few months at most.

If you want to make progress even faster, carry out these steps:

1. **Prepare your space.** Play calming instrumental music that puts you in a good zone. No open computers or devices (except to play music). Have your *printed out* sales letter ready and lined paper and pen at hand.
2. **Read the sales letter aloud.** This will give you the gist of the piece. Connect with how these words would move someone into action. Imagine that person.
3. **Write out the sales letter by hand.** Go slow and bring mental *presence* to the task. The more patient and present you are on what you are doing, the deeper the words will imbed themselves into your nervous system.
4. **Make notes.** Circle phrases, underline benefits, draw arrows between connected points. Scribble all over the printed copy of the sales letter to better understand what's happening under the surface.
5. **Break it down.** Create bullet points that outline the flow and key points of the sales letter. Imagine that you would have to recreate the sales letter from these bullets.

I've prepared for you a swipe file of 20 highly successful sales letters and sales pages.

>> [Download the .zip file here](#) <<

20 is more than enough to get good, but it won't end there if you want to get world-class. John McIntyre copied about 85 sales letters. Dan Kennedy hand-wrote more than 500.

Finding More Sales Letters

- [InfoMarketingBlog](#) is a great resource for sales letter swipes.
- Go on [ClickBank](#) and look for the sales pages that are selling the most.
- Swipe any copy that works on you and study it.

Grading

In copywriting, there are no exams, and no coursework. No one can accurately grade an ad or a sales letter, no matter how expert they may be in the subject.

The only person who can grade an ad is someone who is persuaded by it to pull out his wallet.

Your pass or fail marks come from the sales you do (or don't) produce.

Testing Your Skills

Despite there being no grades, you'll still want some way to test your ability before you, your boss, or a client puts a bunch of money behind your work.

You can do this quite easily, because as a copywriter you're *always* testing.

The biggest mistake I made in my career was not recording the results of my early work. I didn't know which emails brought in the most money, and which flopped. Even if I saw the results at the time, I didn't record the pieces of copy or their results. Therefore, I couldn't compare pieces of my own work in the future.

I just kept getting distracted by the next job.

The biggest lesson I can impart to anyone just starting out, then, is to track the results of everything you produce. It'll slow you down a little, but proper measurement is *essential* to getting exceedingly good at what you do.

How To Test Your Skills

- Offer to write a sales letter/page for free. Do it for a charity to get extra brownie points when future prospects see it in your portfolio.
- Use drop shipping or affiliate marketing to get a product you can sell immediately. You can then set up a sales funnel and a few Facebook ads and try to move the product.
- Re-write a few magazine ads for local businesses and offer it to them for free. Make sure they're able to track business make through your ad (with a coupon code or similar).

Once your copy is covering its own cost, you can call yourself an official copywriter.

Bio: James Mathison

I hope this booklet brings tremendous value to your career and/or your business.

I'm James Mathison. I gave up a career in biotechnology in 2012 to pursue my talents in copywriting. Since then I've applied my talents to blossoming startups in the tech-hub of Cracow, Poland. As of 2017 I'm back in the UK, looking to return to biotechnology, this time bringing my copywriting skills to help grow companies and technologies that I believe in.

Whatever your product, see if I'm available to add my talents to its success.

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