now you must write a complete sentence. So in your diary you might write, "Today I went to the supermarket and bought a quart of milk, a pound of halibut, and a big box of raisins."

You learn to write as if to someone else because *next year you will be "someone else."* Schools teach English composition, not how to write grocery lists. The latter is easy once the former is mastered. Yet when it comes to computer programming, many programmers seem to think that a mastery of "grocery list" writing is adequate preparation for composing large programs. This is not so.

The essence of what we are trying to convey is summed up in the elusive word "style." It is not a list of rules so much as an approach and an attitude. "Good programmers" are those who already have learned a set of rules that ensures good style; many of them will read this book and see no reason to change. If you are still learning to be a "good programmer," however, then perhaps some of what we consider good style will have rubbed off in the reading.