

How to Write Good



Two classic sets of rules.

Frank L. Visco (June 1986 issue of *Writers' Digest*)

1. Avoid alliteration. Always.
2. Prepositions are not words to end sentences with.
3. Avoid cliches like the plague. (They're old hat.)
4. Employ the vernacular.
5. Eschew ampersands & abbreviations, etc.
6. Parenthetical remarks (however relevant) are unnecessary.
7. It is wrong to ever split an infinitive.
8. Contractions aren't necessary.
9. Foreign words and phrases are not apropos.
10. One should never generalize.
11. Eliminate quotations. As Ralph Waldo Emerson once said: "I hate quotations. Tell me what you know."
12. Comparisons are as bad as cliches.
13. Don't be redundant; don't use more words than necessary; it's highly superfluous.
14. Profanity sucks.
15. Be more or less specific.
16. Understatement is always best.
17. Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.
18. One-word sentences? Eliminate.
19. Analogies in writing are like feathers on a snake.
20. The passive voice is to be avoided.
21. Go around the barn at high noon to avoid colloquialisms.
22. Even if a mixed metaphor sings, it should be derailed.
23. Who needs rhetorical questions?

William Safire's *Rules for Writers*

1. Parenthetical words however must be enclosed in commas.
2. It behooves you to avoid archaic expressions.
3. Avoid archaic spellings too.
4. Don't repeat yourself, or say again what you have said before.
5. Don't use commas, that, are not, necessary.
6. Do not use hyperbole; not one in a million can do it effectively.
7. Never use a big word when a diminutive alternative would suffice.
8. Subject and verb always has to agree.
9. Placing a comma between subject and predicate, is not correct.
10. Use your spell checker to avoid misspelling and to catch typographical errors.
11. Don't repeat yourself, or say again what you have said before.
12. Use the apostrophe in its proper place and omit it when it's not needed.
13. Don't never use no double negatives.
14. Proofread carefully to see if you any words out.
15. Hopefully, you will use words correctly, irregardless of how others use them.
16. Eschew obfuscation.
17. No sentence fragments.
18. Don't indulge in sesquipedalian lexicological constructions.
19. A writer must not shift your point of view.
20. Don't overuse exclamation marks!!
21. Place pronouns as close as possible, especially in long sentences, as of 10 or more words, to their antecedents.
22. Writing carefully, dangling participles must be avoided.
23. If any word is improper at the end of a sentence, a linking verb is.
24. Avoid trendy locutions that sound flaky.
25. Everyone should be careful to use a singular pronoun with singular nouns in their writing.
26. Always pick on the correct idiom.
27. The adverb always follows the verb.
28. Take the bull by the hand and avoid mixing metaphors.
29. If you reread your work, you can find on rereading a great deal of repetition can be by rereading and editing.
30. And always be sure to finish what