

9 tips for better writing.

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Canonical

What this talk is really about

- Beginning to write



It's a little like having a new car or bike. Your thoughts are pristine. Your writing untested. Driving your thoughts is going to break this - you'll get dents / scratches and may even crash. But, you must take your writing from the theoretical to the practical. You adapt and shape your skills through experience. Your car may no longer be perfect, but you'll be a much better driver.

1. Give yourself time to think

Good writing requires both action and introspection.

The right balance is personal.

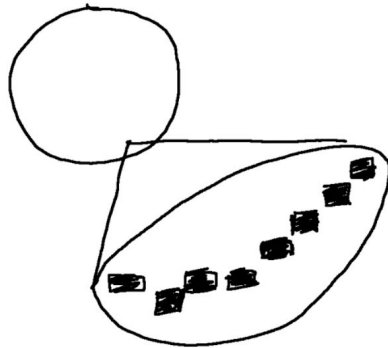
- ① Give yourself time to think and understand
 - ↳ Go for a run. Put a weekend between the idea and the writing task.
 - ↳ Think about an approach away from the keyboard / screen. Good writing requires "introspection", even before you begin.
 - ↳ Set a deadline. Daily word targets?
Timers: Distraction free environment.
Limit^{web} sites to^{only} those that can help

2. Your writing will never be finished

Iteration and refinement.

Vectors to rasters.

- ② Procrastination: ~~Your writing will never be finished~~
You will never attain the ideal. The task is one of iteration and refinement: like ~~converting the algorithm for a circle into pixels~~. Plus anti-aliasing.



3. Simplicity is key, but it's difficult

Ambiguity hides complexity and misunderstanding.

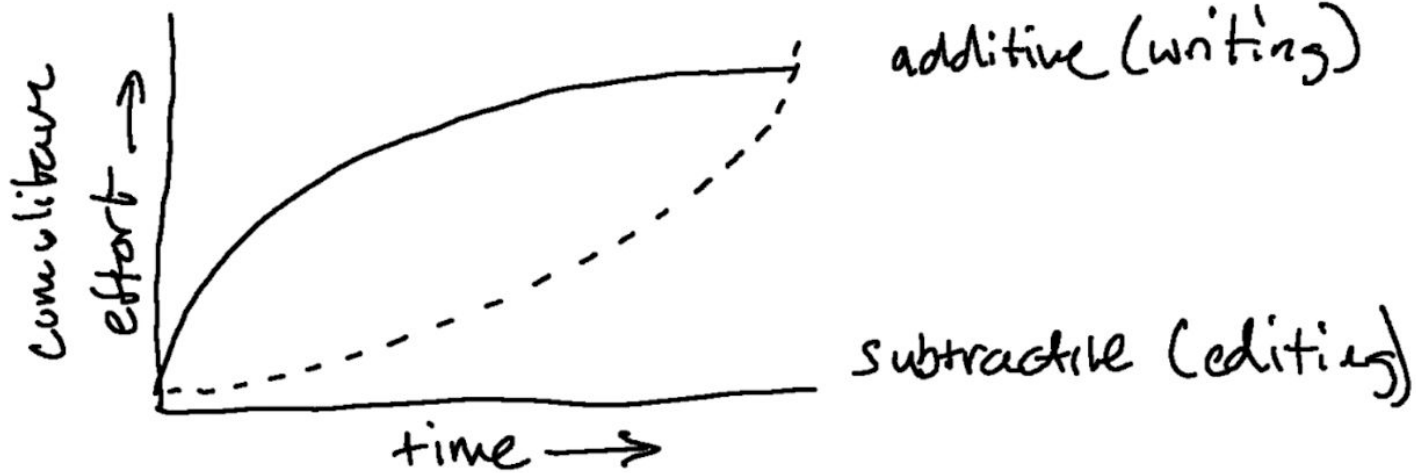
③ Glenn Gould's Goldberg Variations
1955 vs. 1981 (26 years)
22 vs. 48

Say something once,
Why say it again?
DAVID
BYRNE

Linguistic virtuosity == Nolan's Tenet

4. Writing is both additive & subtractive

④ Additive & subtractive



5. Be forgetful

The curse of knowledge.
Take a step back

⑤ Be forgetful, "The curse of knowledge." and
PERSPECTIVE. Take a step back.

6. Variety is key

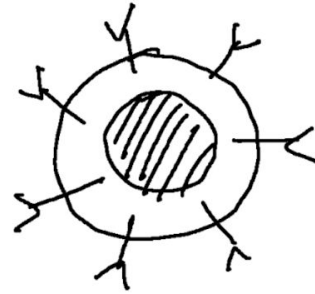
Writing is creative, either in what you write about, or in the way you write it.

⑥ Variety is key - don't repeat the same old copy. Writing is creative
↙ Either in what you write about
↘ Or in how you write it.

7. Ideas need a hook

This works best if the hook also motivates you to write.

⑦ Ideas need a hook to be memorable



Like a virus.
Or a meme
Or a sketch

8. Docs as code

It can be easy to write something functional.

It's a lot harder to write something optimal.

- ⑧ Writing docs can be a lot like writing code - you have something to communicate and while it's quite easy to construct something functional - it takes careful thought to develop and iterate on an optimal solution.

9. Writing is a position of privilege

You are answerable only to the reader.

⑨ Being the writer puts you in a **privileged position**.

$\infty:1$ ← the writer is the colon.

You are the **voice of your reader** in a **one-way conversation**.

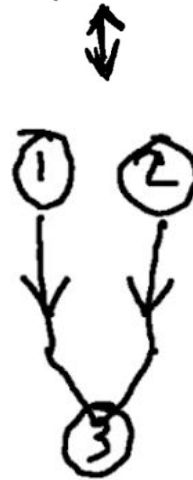
You have an **obligation** to your reader to **ask and answer the questions** they are

? Unable to ask, or...
don't know what to ask

10. Words are a serial interface

You may sometimes need to build an idea from two different viewpoints because first impressions count.

⑩ Words are a serial interface
thoughts are parallel.



11. Open Documentation Academy

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Thank you. Questions?