



Writing Tools: 50 Essential Strategies for Every Writer

Roy Peter Clark

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A special 10th anniversary edition of Roy Peter Clark's bestselling guide to writing, featuring five bonus tools.

Ten years ago, Roy Peter Clark, America's most influential writing teacher, whittled down almost thirty years of experience in journalism, writing, and teaching into a series of fifty short essays on different aspects of writing. In the past decade, *Writing Tools* has become a classic guidebook for novices and experts alike and remains one of the best loved books on writing available.

Organized into four sections, "Nuts and Bolts," "Special Effects," "Blueprints for Stories," and "Useful Habits," *Writing Tools* is infused with more than 200 examples from journalism and literature. This new edition includes five brand new, never-before-shared tools.

Accessible, entertaining, inspiring, and above all, useful for every type of writer, from high school student to novelist, *Writing Tools* is essential reading.

Writing Tools: 50 Essential Strategies for Every Writer Details

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Jay Cruz says

Before *Writing Tools: 50 Essential Strategies for Every Writer* became an actual book, the tools were a series of blog posts Roy Peter Clark wrote over at Poynter.org. The version I've read were those original 50 blog posts collected in PDF form. You can find all the original collected posts here and if you want to you can download the PDF from my Dropbox folder [here](#).

From what you can see on the actual book's table of contents there are some differences from the the names of the tools and how it's divided by parts, but it's still the same basic 50 tips. It takes you from the basics of grammar, to the more advance story telling techniques like "saving string" and "foreshadowing". It's a writing exercise book. Every tool ends with a "Workbench" section which are a series of suggestions to practice what you just learned.

I highly recommend it if you want to improve your writing. Here's a great review from Snarkmarket if you still need more convincing.

Mashael Alamri says

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Michelle says

Highly recommend for anyone who wants inspiration & splendidly helpful tools for polishing your writing!

It even has sections for dealing with that nagging critic in our heads and how to handle negative criticism from others.

"The receptive writer must convert debate into conversation. A debate ends with a winner and a loser. A conversation can conclude with both sides learning, and a promise of more good talk to come."

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Heba Ajamieh says

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Marwa Eletraby says

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Brian says

What is the book about?

"Think of writing as carpentry, and consider this book your toolbox. You can borrow a writing tool at any time"

Cool. How should I use these tools?

"Do not try to apply these tools all at once"

What's the best tool of them all?

"The most powerful tool on your workbench is oral reading"

So these tools will make me sound smarter?

"The writer cannot make something clear until the difficult subject is clear in the writer's head. Then, and only then, does she reach into the writer's toolbox"

All these tools. They feel like rules. Every time I write I'm afraid of doing something wrong?

"It's easy to write. You just shouldn't have standards that inhibit your writing"

But isn't this book about rules?

"Remember, these are tools, not rules. They work outside the territory of right and wrong"

OK. I want to write, where do I begin?

"The writer conceives an idea, collects things to support it, discovers what the work is really about, attempts a first draft, and revises in the quest for greater clarity" "Sniff. Explore. Collect. Focus. Select. Order. Draft. Revise."

Where do I get my ideas from?

"Good questions drive good stories"

What is the difference writing and revising?

"Writing is rewriting" "Quality comes from revision, not from speed writing" "The purpose is not to create a draft, but to build momentum"

"So there you have them: a shiny new set of writing tools and a workbench on which to store them. Use them well"

As the title states, in this book you will find 50 writing tools. They are divided into four sections: Nuts and Bolts (word, sentence, and paragraph)... Special Effects (economy, clarity, originality, and persuasion)... Blueprints (organization, story building, and reports)... and Useful Habits (productive writing).

I'm curious about writing. About the magic of it. How do they make their words sound so smooth? I want to know the inner mechanics. Is it a science or an art? Can I actually learn to write like the authors I love? I've always struggled with writing. My words always seem so boring, technical. Can I become a better writer?

Yes. Life has taught us that to improve any learned skill we need the right information and enough practice. Reading this book felt like I was reading a book of secrets. Why didn't they teach us this in college? I recently read *The Book on Writing: The Ultimate Guide to Writing Well*. Combined with this book, I really feel like my writing has improved. Granted, I need ample more practice, but writing feels easier. This book was well worth my time and money. Great author. Great tools. Highly recommended.

morning Os says

I am an international student who had never been surrounded by native English speakers until the age of 22. I ended up studying humanities in an American phd program. Imagine how stressful writing is for someone like me. I have been struggling to acquire the instinct and intuition you guys have when you judge "good" and "bad" writings. This book is helping me a lot understand, step by step, what constitutes good English sentences, paragraphs and chapters. The examples are brilliant. They not only show what good sentences look like, but also let you experience the thinking process of editors.

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Douglas Wilson says

This was a very fine book on writing. Some really shrewd wisdom in this thing. One of my favorites is this: Choose words the average writer avoids but the average reader understands. Rarely used words are not the same thing as unknown words.

Jim says

An outstanding book for anyone who writes or wants to be a writer. I attended two seminars put on by the author at the Tucson Festival of Books, and new immediately I had to have this book.

It's broken down into four parts...Nuts and Bolts; Special Effects; Blueprints; and Useful Habits. From the 4 subtitles, you can see it goes beyond just good grammar and proper usage. It is designed to not only help your writing, but improve your writing habits and give you new ways to think about your writing.

I found I was doing some things right, some things wrong, and somethings right that I didn't know I was doing right. As a writer who also edits for other people, this book is invaluable.

I recommend it highly, along with William Zinzer's "Writing Well," and NAtalie Goldberg's "Writing Down the Bones."

Karsten says

Clark's book is about more about style than content or correctness. And the 50 strategies are so practical, readable, entertaining, and genuinely helpful that writing with "style" becomes just as substantial and reachable a goal as writing good content with correctness.

That's fantastic. The book gets the fifth star, though, for its outstanding structure/organization. Clark has built this book like a fractal image: Its pattern and value is the same from far as from near, and it'll make you a better writer in 50 ways, no matter how closely you examine it:

It takes *5 minutes* to read the table of contents—each item of which is a complete piece of instruction. ("Begin sentences with subjects and verbs"..."Cut big, then small"..."Seek original images"..."Build your work around a key question"..."Turn procrastination into rehearsal")

Double the value by flipping through and reading each chapter's subtitle, too (*15 minutes*). ("Watch those adverbs: Use them to change the meaning of the verb"..."Let punctuation control pace and space: Learn the rules, but realize you have more options than you think"..."Learn the difference between reports and stories: Use one to render information, the other to render experience")

If you have *a couple of hours*, read through the first few paragraphs of each chapter. Clark explains each strategy and includes one or two examples right up front.

If you have *a couple of weeks*, read the entire book, three or four chapters a day. Each chapter builds from explanation and example to a fuller discussion of the importance and effects that using each strategy has.

And if you have *several months*, dive into the workshop ideas at the end of each chapter. These are tremendously balanced—between prompts to reflect and to act, between analysis of others' writing and my own, between my past writing, and my present and future writing; between simple/brief activities and complex/time-consuming ones. Not every workshop activity seems equally fruitful to me (how could they?), but there will be something productive here for any writer at any time.

This is the kind of writing book I'd buy to send off to college with my kids, regardless of their majors.

J.L. says

This book is essential reading for every beginning writer. Roy Clark provides the writer fifty tools with which to improve her craft. The chapters are short, informative, and funny and written in a style to illustrate a particular tool. He also provides brief exercises at the end of each chapter—not just writing, but cool exercises like observing people—to spur your thinking or to help increase your understanding.

The passage that resonated with me was his advice to not implement everything in this book all at once; he used the analogy of a golfer trying to incorporate all the advice he receives into a single swing. It will drive you crazy.

I recommend this book for every writer's tool box (I would have added "highly" before "recommend," but I no longer use adverbs).
