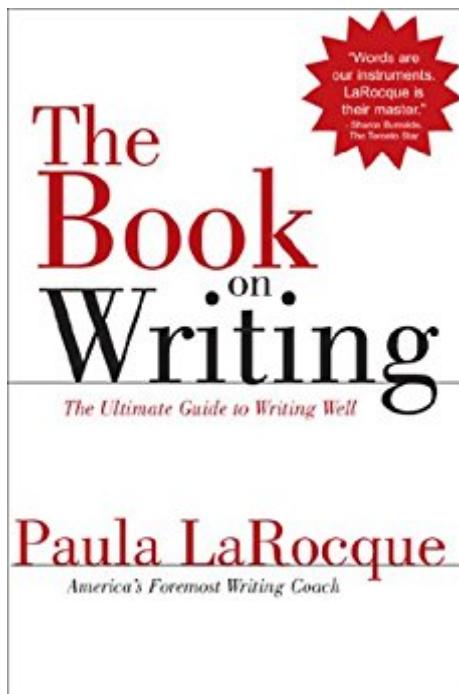


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The Book On Writing



Synopsis

You're going to love the way Paula LaRocque teaches in *The Book on Writing*. A celebrated writing coach with a sense of humor and a gentle touch, she's also a master writer herself with a long and distinguished career in both teaching and practicing the art of writing. *The Book on Writing* contains 25 chapters in three sections: A dozen essential but easy-to-apply guidelines to good writing, from the importance of clarity to the value of a conversational tone. Paula LaRocque believes learning is easier and more successful when we are not only told but also shown. So her *Book on Writing* is chockfull of actual writing examples that supplement and illustrate principles that apply as naturally to fiction as they do to nonfiction. How to tell a story "from building suspense, to effective description, to the uses of metaphor and literary devices. Paula LaRocque also deals with the narrative engine • and the value of the archetype in plotting and characterization "as well as with pace and speed and leveling what she terms writing's speedbumps. • A clear and concise handbook that deals with common problems in grammar, usage, punctuation, and style "the kind of problems that often trouble even wordsmiths. The handbook also debunks pesky language rules that are actually myths. *The Book on Writing* is one-stop shopping for writers. Read it once, and you'll be a better writer. Read it often, and you'll be among the best.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Over the years, I have relied on various works to instruct and guide my efforts to write more effectively. For example, Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style*, Zinnser's *On Writing Well*, and Hacker's *Rules for Writers*. To them I now add this book. *The Book on Writing* is widely adopted (or recommended) by school, college, and university instructors. I think it will also be of great value to just about anyone else who needs to improve reasoning and reading as well as writing skills.

LaRocque divides her 22 chapters within two parts, "A Dozen Guidelines to Good Writing" and "Language and Mechanics." The chapter titles suggest several key points, all of which are evident in the non-fiction of masters such as George Orwell and E.B. White. For example: Chapter 1: Keep Sentences Short, and Keep to One Main Idea Per Sentence Chapter 5: Use the Right Word Chapter 7: Prefer Active Verbs and the Active Voice Chapter 8: Cut Wordiness Chapter 12: Get Right to the Point. And Stay There Although these and other of LaRocque's guidelines may seem obvious, my own experience as a classroom teacher suggests that few students seem to be aware of them...and even fewer follow them. (FYI, I taught English for 13 years in two New England boarding schools -- Kent and St. George's -- and for the past 10 years have been an adjunct professor of English at a local community college in the Dallas area.) What sets LaRocque's book apart from almost all others which cover much of the same material is that her personal, indeed conversational style establishes and then sustains a tutorial relationship with her reader; also, throughout her book, she includes hundreds of real-world examples of writing which is correct or incorrect, appropriate or inappropriate, effective or ineffective.

This author has impeccable credentials, having worked in journalism all her professional life. She has been a newspaper editor, corporate seminar leader (in writing and communication), college professor, and author of many books. She puts a lifetime of writing, editing, and the teaching of writing into this book. No wonder it is so good. She divides it into three parts: Part I - a dozen guidelines in 80 pages: Keep sentences short, and keep to one main idea per sentence; avoid pretensions, gobbledegook, and euphemisms; change long and difficult words to short and simple words; be wary of jargon, fad, and cliche; use the right word; avoid beginning with long dependent phrases; prefer active verbs and the active voice; cut wordiness; avoid vague qualifiers; prune prepositions; limit number and symbol; get right to the point. And stay there. Part II - Chapters 13 -

22, 10 points in 80 pages: This part is the meat, is the hardest to achieve, and is about telling your story. She fills it with examples from famous and not-so-famous authors, good writing and bad: LaRocque: Creative writers can strengthen their work with allusions or quotations without explaining or attributing them. This is especially true of quotations, if they're well known. Sometimes both writer and characters can have fun with allusions or quotations, or otherwise find them useful in clarifying the action. In Ruth Rendel's "Shake Hands Forever," her sleuth Inspector Wexford says on the phone to one of his investigators: "Howard, you are my only ally." Howard responds: "Well, you know what Chesterton said about that. I'll be at that bus stop from five-thirty onwards tonight and then we'll see.

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