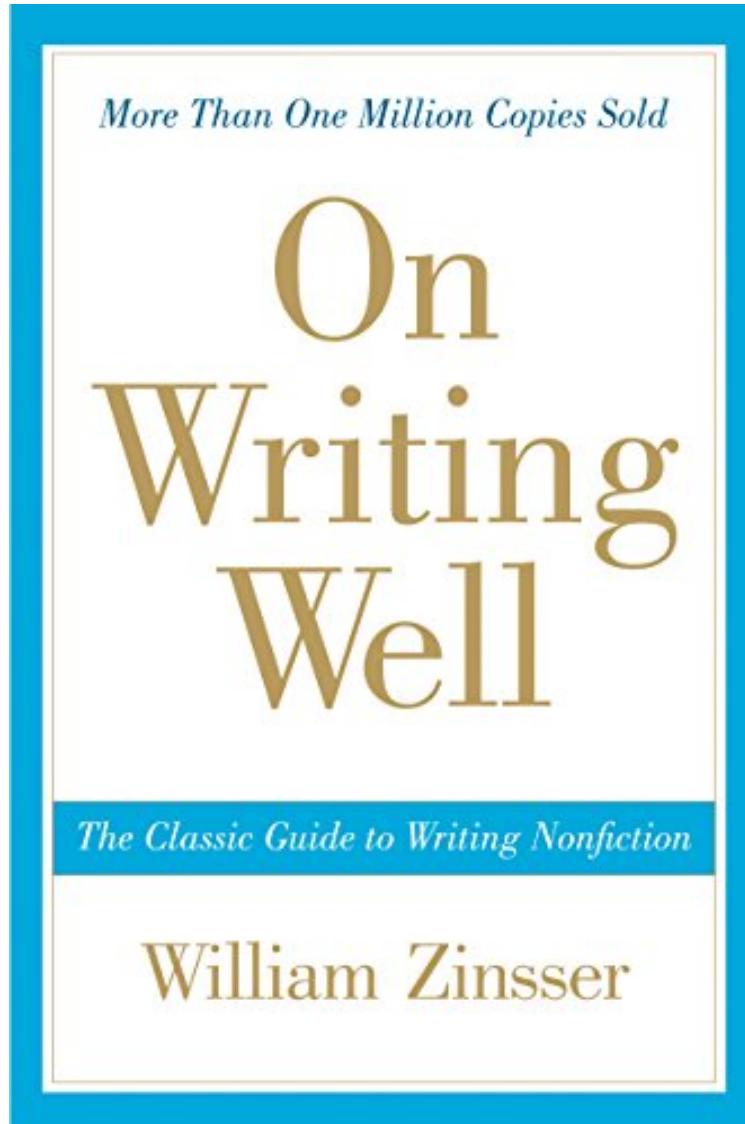


(Download) On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction

## On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction

*William Zinsser*

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**William Zinsser : On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction:

607 of 620 people found the following review helpful. In response to the criticism that Zinsser "generalizes egregiously about topics that are enormous"By A fellow with a keyboardThe most damaging (but fair) criticism I've

heard of this book came from reviewer D. Fineman who said, "He generalizes egregiously about topics that are enormous. ... He feels free to judge -- for instance scientists -- outside his field." I agree that Zinsser does these things, but I disagree that it is a problem. In fact, if I have one criticism of the book it is exactly the opposite: that the lessons are even more generalizable and broadly applicable than Zinsser gives them credit for. For instance, if you skip the travel writing chapter, or if you read it thinking that it only applies to travel writing, then you will miss two golden and persuasive arguments that ought to apply to *any* writer: 1) The things that come to the writer easiest -- cliché, excessive detail, syrupy and vague language -- are the things that keep the reader bored/detached/passive. 2) Your main task as a writer is to distill the essence of whatever you're writing about--to find its central idea, to describe its distinctive qualities using precise images. In other words, your main task is to work excruciatingly hard. The goal of any writer (yes, any) ought to be to transform the reader from a passive observer into an ally. It's excruciatingly hard to do, but once you realize that that's the goal, and once you realize that the parts that come easiest are what's getting in the way of that goal, then you can start writing well. Zinsser knows these things, and he articulates them beautifully. It is one of the most persuasive books I have read, on any subject. But I hate that the lessons are hidden within topic-specific chapters. Please read with that in mind. 121 of 124 people found the following review helpful. I became a better writer because of this book. By Jeff Wignall This book is one of the finest books ever written on the subject of nonfiction writing. I've written about 30 books that have sold more than five million copies and I can tell you that those books would never have been written, or written as well, had I not stumbled upon this book some 20 years ago. From this book I learned the value of brevity. I learned the value of simplicity. And more than anything else, I learned to trust myself and the concept that, in the end, people don't love a book because they are in love with the subject, they love a book (and stick with it regardless of topic) because they like the author. I also learned, very importantly, that your teachers were all wrong when they told you not to write in the first person: Mr. Zinsser convinced me that writing in the first person is the best--often the only--way to write. If you don't trust yourself and don't trust your ideas, why on Earth are you writing anything? I also learned from this book that humor and surprise are necessary elements of most nonfiction writing. Be yourself, talk directly to the reader, be funny, be human, be a tiny bit clever--and you may even surprise yourself with what a good writer you are. Trust yourself, and trust simplicity. 6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Stands the test of time. Essential for every writer. By sqwirk I have so many sticky flags in so many places in this book. I can't believe it took me so long to purchase it! I should have read this years ago! Great advice and to-the-point dictation of how to write well. It sounds as though Zinsser is speaking directly to you. Some of the sections (such as sports writing) didn't apply to me, but I read them anyway. There are some nuggets of helpful information in each section even if that section isn't the kind of writing you find yourself doing. Nonfiction is nonfiction, you can apply rules to other areas. This is essential for every writer, from the casual blogger to the journalist to the biographer.

On Writing Well has been praised for its sound advice, its clarity and the warmth of its style. It is a book for everybody who wants to learn how to write or who needs to do some writing to get through the day, as almost everybody does in the age of e-mail and the Internet. Whether you want to write about people or places, science and technology, business, sports, the arts or about yourself in the increasingly popular memoir genre, On Writing Well offers you fundamental principles as well as the insights of a distinguished writer and teacher. With more than a million copies sold, this volume has stood the test of time and remains a valuable resource for writers and would-be writers.

About the Author William Zinsser is a writer, editor and teacher. He began his career on the New York Herald Tribune and has since written regularly for leading magazines. During the 1970s he was master of Branford College at Yale. His 17 books, ranging from baseball to music to American travel, include the influential Writing to Learn and Writing About Your Life. He teaches at the New School in New York.