Write like a pro: how I learned from my mistakes

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It is smart to learn from your own mistakes. It is genius to learn from other people's mistakes.

Here are 5 key points to remember when you write anything from journals and fiction to research papers and Facebook status updates. These have helped me tremendously whether I created a write-up or edited someone else's work.

Keep in mind we are not talking about grammar. That requires discussions all on its own because for creative purposes, the wrong grammar can sound right.

Our **5 key points** are about improving your writing style.

1. Be specific

"The people attended a zoom workshop."

Or, how about this?

"The aspiring writers attended a zoom meeting where a man talked about writing and making a fool of himself."

See the difference?

Leave out the vague. Add specifics.

Last one:

"Police stopped the car."

You can make it better by saying "Police stopped the rusty, blue Toyota."

2. Choose simple, easy words

Use simple words instead of verbiage.

Wait, what?

Verbiage are complicated, lengthy words. These should be avoided even in your academic journals where difficult words can be considered trendy. Longer words are to be used only if you must. Difficult words aimed at the general reader will only confuse and distract them.

3. Leave out the fluff

Fluff are words that reduce the impact of your lines. They are extra baggage.

Qualifying words like basically, very, little, quite, pretty should be avoided.

They often weaken a thought.

"She was *basically quite* ready to take on the job. "

Alternatively, "She was enthusiastic about tackling the job."

Put directness into your writing.

4. **Don't repeat. Don't say the same thing over and over again. Don't retell or echo the same thought. And don't repeat.**

Oh. Right!

Something we see in newspaper reports where 345 words have to be filled but you only have 50 words to say. Repetition kills the interest. It instantly causes people to skim and move on.

Smart editors opt for photo stories when there is a lack of words. Then they move on. But repetition is doom.

5. **Edit mercilessly**

Chop, chop, chop. You should always read through and reduce the words once you've finished. And the best way to do this is to leave it aside and look at it the next day.

Give yourself one day, if you have the time, and you can spot many more areas of improvement.

Bonus tip: The best ways to develop and improve your style

Read widely. Read outside your comfort zone. Reading your Facebook news feed isn't reading.

Growing up, I've seen my father read all the time, all kinds of things. He would read out loud as well. And I'm sure he does it still. He is currently Professor of Economics at George Brown college in Canada. He has read so much he managed to help me pass a chemistry exam in University. And support my math during O Levels. Very difficult to live up to his skill level.

Explore different genres and media. Try fiction of different types. Read technical material. Read comics to get examples of informal conversational styles.

Read. Pause. Think.

See if you can write a similar version.

To summarize:

A writer needs to have all the information and then write. Write concisely, leave it for a while and edit to chop out unnecessary bits and pieces.

To develop styles, read everything. Even the label on a soap packet while you're sitting in the toilet.