

Compelling motivational guide for non-fiction writers of any age. Helps writers find their Inner Editor.

**WRITING AS A PERFORMING ART:
on taking it to the house ...**
By THOMAS E. CRONIN

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Thomas E. Cronin

Writing As A Performing Art



*on taking it
to the house...*

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"The art of writing has for backbone some fierce attachment to an idea."

Virginia Woolf

"I have always felt that the first duty of a writer was to ascend — to make flights, carrying others along if he could manage it. To do this takes courage, even a certain conceit."

E.B. White

"There is nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at the typewriter, open a vein, and bleed."

Red Smith

"A writer is someone who has taught his mind to misbehave."

Oscar Wilde

"Writing a book is a horrible, exhausting struggle, like a long bout of some painful illness. One would never undertake such a thing if one were not driven on by some demon whom one can neither resist nor understand."

George Orwell

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This book was written to encourage nonfiction writers to consider counsel that might improve their writing.

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- Book can be underlined, highlighted or marked up in any way
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- Send suggestions, corrections and contrarian opinions to the author at tcronin@coloradocollege.edu

Thanks for your understanding. Enjoy.

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Writing to Convince and Persuade

A writer's job is both to pull your readers along and to educate them. Even better: to persuade your readers into rethinking their positions.

“Convince” and “persuade” are often used interchangeably, but technically, they are different. You persuade someone to *do* something and convince someone *of* something.

The first job of a writer, especially an opinion writer, is to know your audience. And to listen and understand their opinions and biases, hopes and fears. Readers want writers to understand them — an obvious challenge for the writer who, in most instances, has never met them.

Here are tips from a veteran New York Times editor whose job was to accept, reject and edit guest opinion columns in the Times.

- Know what has already been written and find a different angle.
- Address a problem and offer a solution.
- Get to your main idea quickly.
- Clichés and jargon will doom you.
- Avoid the obvious.

- Avoid being self-promotional.
- Target your audience by connecting to its values and aspirations.
- Share something memorable, adding surprising or unappreciated facts.
- Readers like to be informed of the socially accepted consensus, but may be open to contrarian ideas if presented in a honest and humble way.
- The use of graphs, tables and charts can help readers overcome misperceptions.
- Readers love stories. Stories draw people in and engage them.
- When in doubt, keep it short.

“There’s one big problem,” adds editor Trish Hall, “with saying how long or how short articles should be: It just depends. You know how long you can keep readers? Until they’re bored. Sometimes they’re bored before the end of the first sentence. Sometimes they read 3,000 words and wish there were more. It’s all about pulling along your readers. If you’re not telling a story with all the classic ingredients that hold people — love, war, sex, conflict, tragedy — then keep it short.”¹⁸

Let's Hear it for Everyday Words

It's hard to see any advantage in long or fancy words when a simple, everyday word will do. Thus, choose "she said" rather than "she opined," "he read" rather than "he perused," "she lives at ..." rather than "she resides at ..." Choose "he ranked states" rather than "he enumerated states." Use "before," not "prior to." Avoid writing "in order to." As a general rule, use the Anglo-Saxon word rather than its Latinate cousin.

An Associated Press handbook suggests replacing the longer words on the left with the shorter words on the right:²⁷

Ameliorate → improve

Approximately → about

Commence → begin

Deactivate → close, shut off

Endeavor → try

Implement → carry out

In consequence of → because

Initiate → begin

Methodology → method

Objective → aim, goal

Proliferation → spread

Purchase → buy

Remuneration → pay

Replicate → repeat

Socialize → mingle, meet

Underprivileged → poor

Utilize → use

Writing and rewriting are a constant and never-ending search for what you want to say, and saying it as clearly and persuasively as you can. One sees adverbs and redundant words that can be deleted. Better transition sentences may be needed. Polish introductory sentences to make them telegraph where you are headed. Remember there are few ideas in any discipline that cannot, with effort, be expressed in clear writing. Understand, too, that it is impossible to conclude everything as you wrap up your final draft.

About the Author

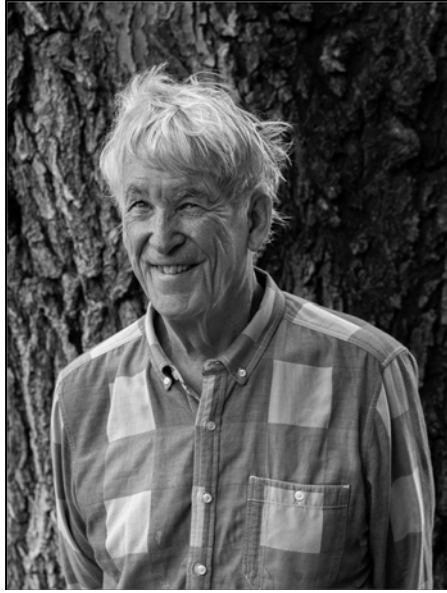
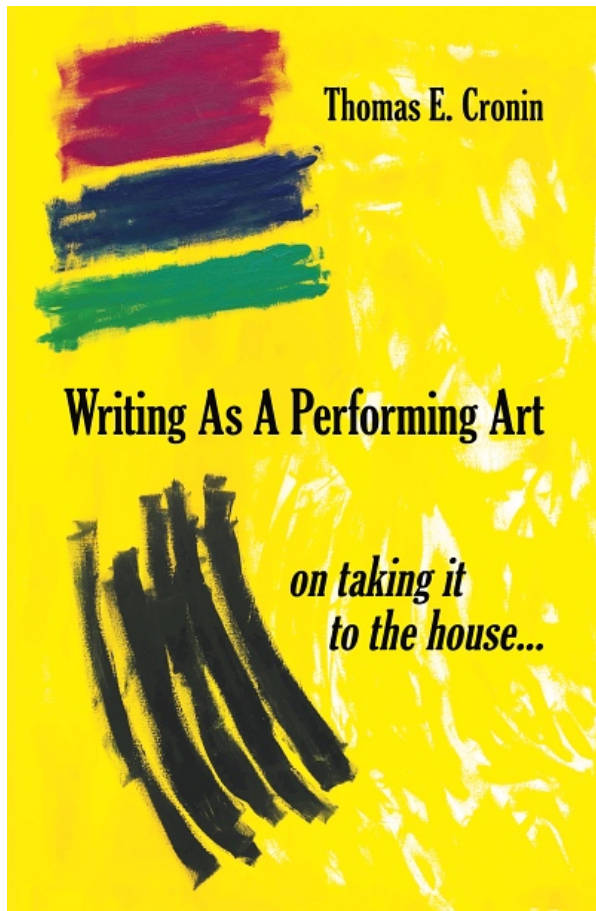


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Tom Cronin is an award-winning political scientist and author of many books including "Imagining a Great Republic," "The State of the Presidency," "Direct Democracy." and "On the Presidency." He is co-author of "Leadership Matters," "The Paradoxes of the American Presidency," "Colorado Politics" and textbooks on American and state politics.

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