

Writing with a Full Deck

52 cards to help you write faster, stronger, better



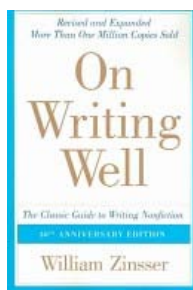
Association for Creative Business Writing

Your mentor for business writing that rocks!

Imitate to Innovate!

That headline may have you wondering, "What in the world is she talking about? She's always going on about innovation and creativity!"

At first, the idea of imitation sounds all wrong, like plagiarism or stealing. But imitation is not about flagrant filching or even sincere flattery. It's a way to discover your own voice and style.



Even William Zinsser, author of *On Writing Well*, agrees: "*Don't ever hesitate to imitate another writer--every artist learning his craft needs some models.*"

Pick great models

Choose your models carefully. Some of mine include Jonah Lehrer and Malcolm Gladwell. Whom do you admire? Whom do you want to write like? Don't worry about imitating them--you'll never totally sound like them, no matter how hard you try.

I recall with great embarrassment (20 years later!) how I tried to sound like Reynolds Price. His soaring, lyrical style stole my common sense and before I knew it, I was spewing forth as though I were the poet he is. I am not. Oh well, I learned that one the hard way and came to terms with the kind of writer I *am*. I can't quite describe that to you, it's just *me*: sometimes serious, other times humorous, but mostly conversational.

Imitate consciously

Eventually, I realized where I went wrong with that exercise in imitation: I was unconscious about what I was doing. I just longed to be a grand writer and got lost in the Sirens' song of Price's prose.

But you don't have to go that route. Instead, *consciously* know that you are studying and even borrowing. Then, as Zinsser beautifully adds, "*Eventually you'll find your own voice and shed the skin of the writer you imitated.*"

Writing is a process. Your voice and style take time to mature. (And with any luck, they'll never stop evolving.)

This week, find a report or blog, Web page or proposal that speaks to you. "I want to write like that!" you say to yourself. Then tear it apart. Examine style, question content, even change it for the better! Do it consciously and understand that imitation is like training wheels--pretty soon you'll be zipping along on your own.

Have a great week,



Lynda McDaniel
Director

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