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For the past twenty years, since quitting the Department of Foreign Affairs, Mike has lived and worked in Asia running his own research consultancy, first in Taiwan and then in the Philippines. He has now returned to enjoy Australia with his family while continuing with his writing and editing.

Mike now makes his living as a full-time freelance writer and editor as well as mentor, encouraging young people especially to develop their writing and communication skills.

Mike is an experienced economic and political analyst and specialises in the development editing of complex reports. He is also now into training and has developed his own course in effective writing - combining creativity with productivity. It is offered both in face to face classes as well as by remote learning. The manual is freely available to readers of this newsletter. Check it out at [www.workingwithwords.com.au](http://www.workingwithwords.com.au)

Subscribe to this monthly newsletter direct from the website or by emailing Mike at [thecreativegenie@gmail.com](mailto:thecreativegenie@gmail.com)



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# Working with words

A newsletter for writers

## Welcome to “working with words”

Having a regular newsletter to keep in touch with friends and colleagues has been a plan for some time but only recently have I had time to focus on producing it.

In recent years I have edited more than 40 reports and books, the vast majority of them for writer’s living and working in Asia. One thing that has become evident in this age of “point and click” is that many of us miss the

subtleties and the tools available that can make writing so much more productive and enjoyable.

As a result I have written a guide book on effective writing that provides useful advice to authors both on the use of “international English” as well as providing tips for more productive writing by unlocking the power of your word processor. You can download a free copy for your personal use from the working

with words website (details elsewhere in this newsletter) or by simply emailing me requesting a copy.

Of course, I do not want to clutter your mailbox unnecessarily and if you would prefer to be removed from my mailing list, please drop me a line and you will be taken off straight away.

Michael (Mike) Clancy

## Five questions that lead to effective writing

Communication is both an art and a science. It involves the ability of the author to relate essential facts and ideas to the reading audience in a manner that the audience is able to understand and then, as needed, act upon. Writing style should convey this ability to communicate; indeed it is the hallmark of anyone in the teaching, research or knowledge management professions.

A good practice when starting out on a writing project, no matter how simple, is to ask five basic questions:

### What am I writing?

Obviously the effort you put into a doctoral dissertation will be quite different to a one-page inter-office memo; yet the processes are remarkably similar.

### Why am I writing?

This defines the opening, the closure and also governs what needs to be included; the answer to this question defines the template.

### For whom am I writing

defining the recipient audience will inform the writing style.

### Why should anybody read it?

this will inform the end result; what will your readers know (or what insight will they have) that they did not know at the outset and what difference will this make to them (for example: as a result of reading your report will the reader know how to implement a project or who to ask if they wish to find out more?) Or is it more in the nature of a “compliance document” which is required for an “up-line” as a way

of signifying project completion? The writing styles and the information content will be quite different in each case.

### What reaction do I want from my reader?

Does your piece lead your reader down the path you wish them to take and lead to clear conclusions that your reader can identify and agree with?

If you can answer these question before you begin to write, you are well on your way to writing effectively.

You can read more on this topic in the Working with Words book or online. at [www.workingwithwords.com.au](http://www.workingwithwords.com.au)

## Recent blogs from Mike

Before returning to Australia, Mike spent more than 20 years living and working in Asia and is well-known for his insightful analysis. His recent commentaries on developments in Taiwan and the Philippines—both countries in which he has lived and worked can be found on his writing blog: <http://mike-clancy.blogspot.com/>

- The marginalization of Taiwan [click here to read](#)
- The long road back (Philippines) [click here to read](#)

## Common writing errors

It is often a good idea to keep your own list of words that cause difficulties (sometimes they can be simple words) because of spelling differences or confusion with similar sounding words of different meaning. This writer, in his role as an editor, has begun to compile a list of common writing errors both as a guide to good writing practice as well as a reminder of common mistakes to keep on the lookout for. This newsletter will provide a means of sharing such tips.

A second point to make is to distinguish clearly between grammar and style. While Australian, British and American English have some grammatical differences in terms of spelling and punctuation, style by contrast depends on the audience. In journalist writing, AP (Associated Press) style is commonly used and provides the style book for many newspapers and newsstand publications but this style would

probably not be appropriate if your goal is to write a Ph.D. dissertation. The Chicago Manual of Style is referred to several times throughout my book and is considered to be one of the most authoritative sources in the world—in part due to its sheer comprehensive coverage and constant revision to reflect changing standards. It is often the norm for academic writing.

For Australia, the Style Manual is the standard for Australian government and many other publications and has also been consulted in the preparation of this material.

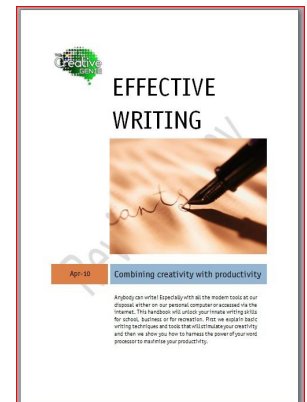


The appendixes to the Macquarie Dictionary (as well as other reference dictionaries) contain a summary guide to grammar and punctuation as well as other useful material

While *Effective Writing* does not seek to provide a complete guide to writing and grammar styles, the appendix does provide a list of common mistakes made by writers as noted by this editor.

This is just a quick guide that will be published progressively in this newsletter and one that this author, in his role as editor will add to from time to time. If you wish, you can consider it a first point of reference but it is no substitute for keeping a good dictionary and a style manual by your side while you are writing.

Above all remember that English as a language continues to evolve and the most important thing to keep in mind is consistency. After all, within limits imposed by those for whom you are writing (and I include here your readers) you are captain of your own ship.



If you would like a copy of the book from which these tips are taken then please contact Mike by e-mail at

[thecreativegenie@gmail.com](mailto:thecreativegenie@gmail.com)

176 pages; pdf format is free-of-charge.

## “If you cannot say what you mean, you will never mean what you say”

The origins of the above quote are obscure but it proved to be one of the most memorable lines from the movie epic, *The Last Emperor*. In writing for any audience, it is a good maxim to keep in mind.

Communication involves the ability of the author to relate essential facts and ideas to the reading audience in a manner that the reader is able to understand and then, if needed, act upon. Writing style should convey this ability to communicate; indeed it is the hallmark of anyone in the teaching, research or knowledge management professions.

Dr. Michael Clancy is a published author, freelance writer, researcher and editor who has lived and worked in Asia for more than 30 years. He has now returned to Australia and has his home on the Queensland Gold Coast. He travels between Australia, the Middle East and Asia undertaking research and editing assignments for the ILO, various UN bodies and the Asian Development Bank.

As an editor, Mike believes that the best output can be obtained when writers, researchers and editors work closely together in the development and delivery of the final product. Mike firmly believes that an important role for the editor to play is that of “author’s advocate” who, while staying true to the author’s intent, looks at any piece as would a general reader. His suggestions to author’s are often made with this role in mind.

Mike is always available to assist writers and researchers with any queries they may have. Prices are reasonable, professionalism is assured.

- Volume, manuscript and copy editing
- Manuscript development
- Assistance with theses and dissertations
- Corporate presentations, manuals and reports
- Tutoring and course presentations —effective writing
- Staff creativity and productivity training

For a no-obligation discussion and quotation please e-mail Mike at [thecreativegenie@gmail.com](mailto:thecreativegenie@gmail.com) or skype: MikeClancy2

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