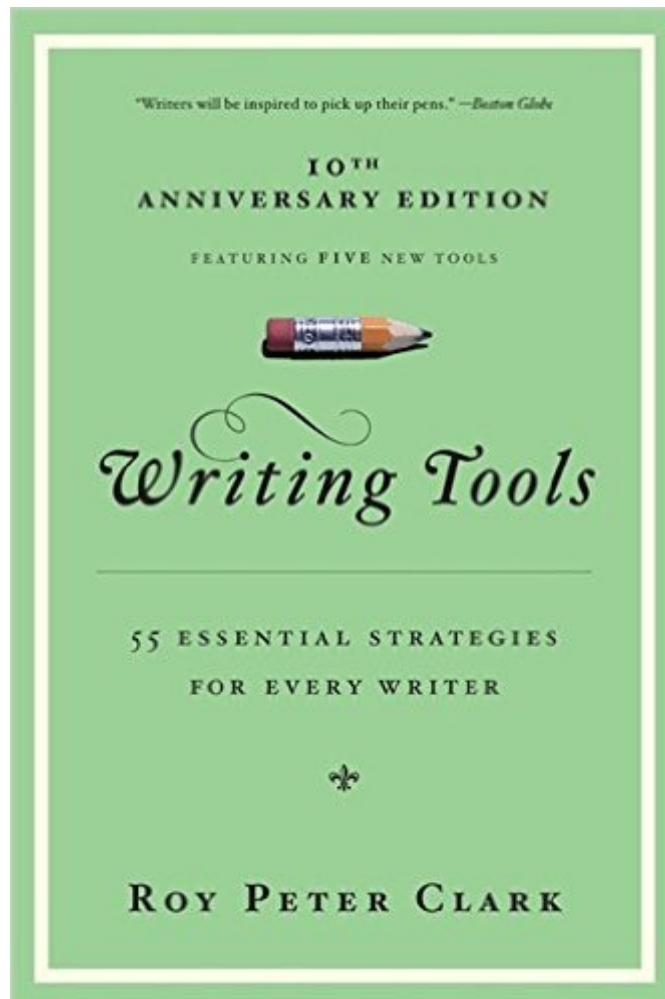


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# Writing Tools: 55 Essential Strategies For Every Writer



## Synopsis

A special 10th anniversary edition of Roy Peter Clark's bestselling guide to writing, featuring five bonus tools. Ten years ago, Roy Peter Clark, America's most influential writing teacher, whittled down almost thirty years of experience in journalism, writing, and teaching into a series of fifty short essays on different aspects of writing. In the past decade, *Writing Tools* has become a classic guidebook for novices and experts alike and remains one of the best loved books on writing available. Organized into four sections, "Nuts and Bolts," "Special Effects," "Blueprints for Stories," and "Useful Habits," *Writing Tools* is infused with more than 200 examples from journalism and literature. This new edition includes five brand new, never-before-shared tools. Accessible, entertaining, inspiring, and above all, useful for every type of writer, from high school student to novelist, *Writing Tools* is essential reading.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Roy Peter Clark invites aspiring writers "to imagine the act of writing less as a special talent and more as a purposeful craft." In his *Writing Tools: 50 Essential Strategies for Every Writer*, Clark urges the reader to "think of writing as carpentry, and consider this book your toolbox." The goal is to take away the fright and nausea that accompanies writer's block, and to make every writer more proficient at expressing himself. Clark divides his book into four sections: "Nuts and Bolts," "Special Effects," "Blueprints," and "Useful Habits." Within these divisions, the author clearly and concisely presents his tools; he also includes excerpts from the works of outstanding writers to illustrate each

point. For instance, Tool 22 is "Climb up and down the ladder of abstraction." The writer should know when to use concrete examples and when to reach for "higher meaning." Avoid the treacherous middle rungs of the ladder where "bureaucracy and technocracy lurk," and where euphemisms and meaningless phrases abound. Clark cites Updike and a baseball writer named Thomas Boswell to show the reader how it's done. Tool 38 exhorts us to "Prefer archetypes to stereotypes." We should beware of heavy-handed symbols and strive for subtlety. Although it is tempting to fall back on familiar phrases and well-worn ideas, a writer should aspire to cultivate his own distinctive voice. To get his message across, Clark cites a passage from James Joyce's tale "The Dead." Each tool is followed by a "workshop," with several practice exercises. Some of the tools mentioned in this book are far from unique--most writing handbooks encourage us to make every word count and vary sentence length--but there are a few noteworthy tips that stand out. For example, Clark discusses how to "establish a pattern, then give it a twist," and how to "mix narrative modes" using the broken line technique. A clever writer knows when to move his lens back to broaden his perspective and when to zoom in for a close-up on his subject. There is no shortage of excellent books on the art of writing. Along with "On Writing Well," by William Zinsser, and Strunk and White's "The Elements of Style," I recommend "Spunk and Bite," by Arthur Plotnik, "How Not to Write," by William Safire, and "A Dash of Style," by Noah Lukeman. All of these guides, as well as Roy Peter Clark's "Writing Tools," take some of the mystery out of writing and make it a craft accessible to all.

Maybe the best way for me to describe Roy Clark's *Writing Tools 50 Essential Strategies for Every Writer* is to use the following analogy: I can bake good brownies. Not the world's best brownies, but they get the job done - brownie-wise, that is. I'd like to make better brownies, but I'm not sure what I should do differently. Better cocoa? Smaller pan? More butter? I never know what to change, so I just keep making the same mediocre brownies. The same applies to my writing. I know it could be better - I just can't figure out how to change it. Enter Mr. Clark's wise and wonderful book, *Writing Tools 50 Essential Strategies for Every Writer*, and suddenly I've got a myriad of new ideas! Clark gives struggling and aspiring writers a neatly organized "toolbox" full of models, practices, examples, and "what-not-to-dos." Conveniently arranged into four sections, each portion of the book addresses different spheres of writing. The first, "Nuts and Bolts" concentrates on the building blocks of writing - the words, sentences and paragraphs. I found there to be an arithmetic quality to this first section, almost as if Clark was imparting the equations and theorems of good writing. Toolbox number two, "Special Effects," delves into the less concrete world of how we use language.

He identifies it as "tools of economy, clarity, originality and persuasion." In this section he explores all of the tools, or devices a writer can use to help the writer shape his or her authentic voice.

"Blueprints," the title of the third toolbox discusses the structure of stories and reports. If a writer intends to take his readers on a path of discovery, enlightenment and wonder then the writer must be able to construct a trail that is enticing, engaging and well-lit. The tools of this third section discuss different kinds of narratives, foreshadowing and the dreaded "outline." The final section, "Useful Habits" is generous and supportive therapy for the would-be writer. With sage and gentle advice, Clarke reassures us that we are not alone in our bad habits, urges us to learn from our critics and challenges us to "own the tools of our craft." A special note: Don't miss either the afterword or the dedication. And if you don't know who Donald Murray was, find out. It can only help your writing.

I am both a newspaperman and an author. I have followed Roy Peter Clark's teachings for many years, so when this book came along -- comprising many of Clark's extraordinary Poynter essays -- I snapped it up, and am glad I did. Clark is a clear writer who doesn't clutter your thinking with 50-cent words and two-dollar concepts. He's plain-spoken and real, and his advice can be lifted off his page and immediately applied to yours. He gives you the tools. This is a must-read for anyone who wants to tell a story better. Not just a newspaper article -- any kind of story. And not just young, wannabe writers-in-training. There's plenty in this book with which veteran storytellers can hone their skills.

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