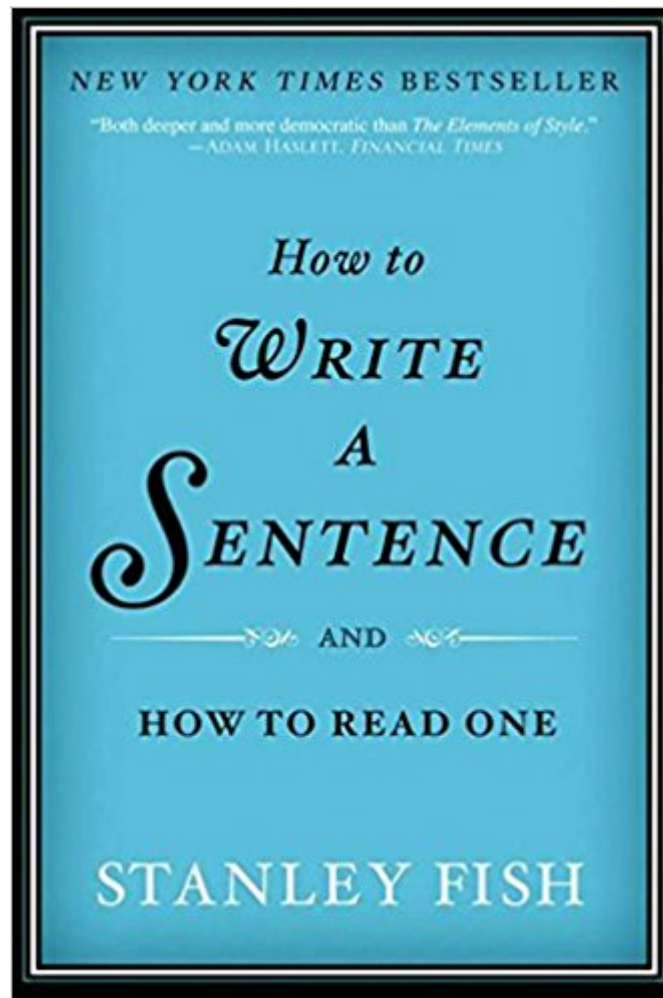




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How To Write A Sentence: And How To Read One



Synopsis

New York Times *Bestseller* – “Both deeper and more democratic than *The Elements of Style*” – Adam Haslett, *Financial Times* – “A guided tour through some of the most beautiful, arresting sentences in the English language.”

“Like a long periodic sentence, this book rumbles along, gathers steam, shifts gears, and packs a wallop.” – Roy Blount Jr. In this entertaining and erudite New York Times bestseller, beloved professor Stanley Fish offers both sentence craft and sentence pleasure. Drawing on a wide range of great writers, from Philip Roth to Antonin Scalia to Jane Austen, *How to Write a Sentence* is much more than a writing manual – it is a spirited love letter to the written word, and a key to understanding how great writing works.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A whole book on the lowly sentence? Stanley Fish, America's English Professor, confides that he belongs "to the tribe of sentence watchers," and shares his passion and learning through an array of examples from sentence-making masters, among them Milton, James, Dr. King, Sterne, Swift, Salinger, Elmore Leonard, Conrad, and Gertrude Stein. For Fish, language is logic. He stresses how the sentence, regardless of length-whether declarative or embroidered with qualifiers-is a structure of logical relationships. He discusses the all-important opening sentence and closing sentence, especially as the latter can be isolated from its dramatic context to convey full rhetorical effect. The reader is advised to begin with form; with practice, writers can develop three basics of

style (subordinating, additive, satiric) that will allow them to make an emotional impact with their words. In the end, the craft of sentence writing is elevated to the very center of our inner lives. Fish plays the opinion card well, though a piling on of example after example, particularly of long sentences drawn from literature or theology, might leave more experienced sentence-makers to cry, "Enough already!" (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

New York Times columnist and college professor Fish appreciates fine sentences the way some people appreciate fine wine. In 10 short chapters, Fish takes readers through a cogent analysis of how to craft a sentence. He talks about form, content, and style, always taking care to illustrate his points with an ample selection of judiciously chosen quotations from virtuoso writers, from Milton and Shakespeare to Anton Scalia and Elmore Leonard. He then proceeds to drill down into the quotations, zeroing in on the tense, parts of speech, or precise phrasing that make the sentences sing. He also discusses famous first and last lines, always keeping in the forefront the extraordinary power of language to shape reality. And, befitting his subject matter, he does all this in the most luminous prose. He fluidly conveys the nitty-gritty details of crafting sentences, but, even more impressive, he communicates and instills in readers a deep appreciation for beautiful sentences that

“do things the language you use every day would not have seemed capable of doing.”

• Language lovers will flock to this homage to great writing. --Joanne Wilkinson --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

I have to be honest, I can't stand "How to" books. It is mostly because "How to" books almost always purport to teach you something that cannot be written down in a single book. However, sometimes they do get the job done. In my experience the best books of this genre are the ones that mix of practical advice with a general overview of a number of abstract concepts that will be helpful in digging deeper into the subject. I'm not sure this book accomplishes that. Based on the title I was expecting a book that teaches primarily how to write sentences while also learning how to read them. Fish seems to suggest exercises but I don't really see any concrete explanations or examples on how to do them. It would have been a lot easier to understand if he formatted the sections differently. Perhaps adding a exercise section at the end of each chapter or labeling different concepts would have been helpful. It was difficult for me to follow the organization of the book. His choice of topics for each chapter seemed arbitrary; I couldn't figure out how they fit into me learning how to write and read more effectively. I wasn't sure why I should follow his concepts

and not someone else's. The chapters are portrayed as something you need to know in order to write and read effectively, but they come off as one person's preferences. There are some good nuggets in this book, but I think if you're looking for what the main title suggests you will be disappointed. I wasn't expecting to finish this book as an expert on writing (if there is such a thing) but I figured it would give me at least a few good ideas of where to go next.

If one of your personal goals is to be a better writer, buy this book. Mr. Fish will guide you through the intricacy of the English language. Through reading his examples and doing his suggested exercises you will emerge as both a better writer and a reader. You will want to reread the novels and stories that you loved and as a better informed reader, observe how writing works. You, should, if possible buy the book, not the Kindle version. This is a book to hold and feel, to make marks in when necessary, to read when you are winding down for evening, to take to bed with you thereby insuring thoughtful dreams, and to take to your local cafe and write a few good sentences yourself.

How to write a sentence. Sounds simple enough, doesn't it? There, I've just written two. In the second, I omitted the subject which should probably be "It

If not for anything else, Stanley Fish's "How to Write a Sentence: And How to Read One" made me understand why I love the authors I love so much. It put me back in touch with Pater, Stein, Woolf, Hemingway, and so many other writers that I devoured back in college and in graduate school. Normally, I dislike having the works I love dissected, deconstructed, whatever, because it is done so, usually, to meet some political agenda. In the case of Fish's work, it is done so for the reader's appreciation of the text and an appreciation of the writer's labor. What follows after all this appreciation, it is hoped, will be an ability for anyone interested in writing to do so with command, style and clarity. (However, I must admit that I am extremely self-conscious of my writing right now.) As an instructor of freshman English composition, however, I am reluctant to pooh-pooh Strunk & White's "The Elements of Style". While I understand Fish's complaint about its use (or over-use), I cannot dismiss "The Elements of Style" so quickly. Too many students have found it valuable. I am, however, considering using "How to Write a Sentence..." for my more advanced classes and elective writing courses. One last note, I got the hardcover, in nearly perfect condition, for under \$10. Maybe I should write something called "How to Buy a Book." Maybe not. Rocco Dormarunno
The College of New Rochelle

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