



# 10 Rules for Good Writing

**1. Prefer the simple description to the elegant:**

—She was fusby with diminutive and colorless hands.

\*—She was chubby with small and pale hands.

**2. Prefer the familiar word to the exotic:**

—He held the ampula carelessly.

\*—He held the wine flask carelessly.

**3. Prefer the ordinary writing style to the romantic:**

—His lips gently brushed her pouting mouth.

\*—His kiss was tender.

**4. Prefer nouns and verbs to adjectives and adverbs:**

—Hanging the picturesque painting high above the red lacquered desk, she held heart-swelling and passionate thoughts of Walter.

\*—As she hangs the picture over the desk she feels tender thoughts of Walter.

**5. Use picture nouns and action verbs:**

—It was a hot summer day, but under the umbrella Jonathan Adams could deal with the heat.

\*—Jonathan Adams expected that August in Portland would be hot, but sitting under a blue and white striped table umbrella, he found the heat tolerable.

**6. Never use a long word when a short one will do as well:**

—"It was a serendipitous revelation to me, Watson."

\*—"It was news to me, Watson."

**7. Master the simple metaphor:**

\*—She was built as flat as Kansas.

\*—He was as tough as a year in jail.

**8. Prefer the simple sentence to the complicated:**

—The way to increase the world's production of food from existing acreage is through the application of relatively inexpensive chemicals that can be mass-produced in factories.

\*—The existing world's food production can be increased with the use of common chemicals.

**9. Vary your sentence length:**

—The President called in his advisor. They talked about the foreign options. The options were bleak and risky.

\*—The President called in his advisor to discuss options for resolving the foreign crisis. The options were risky.

**10. Prefer the active voice to the passive:**

—Budgetary limits were set by Congress, and the new contract was fought.

\*—Congress set budgetary limits, and the government workers' union fought the new contract.

