

William Zinsser

Quotes

Writing, Thinking, People, Want, Reading, Trying, Art, Fall, Editors, Paper, Hard Work, Jobs, Adjectives, Looks, Believe, Inspirational, Men, Eye, Voice, Essence

Writing is thinking on paper.

~William Zinsser

Clutter is the disease of American writing. We are a society strangling in unnecessary words, circular constructions, pompous frills, and meaningless jargon.

~William Zinsser

Hard writing makes easy reading. Easy writing makes hard reading.

~William Zinsser

Four basic premises of writing: clarity, brevity, simplicity, and humanity.

~William Zinsser

When you're ready to stop, stop. If you have presented all the facts and made the point you want to make, look for the nearest exit.

~William Zinsser

I almost always urge people to write in the first person. ... Writing is an act of ego and you might as well admit it.

~William Zinsser

Thought is action in rehearsal.

~William Zinsser

A clear sentence is no accident.

~William Zinsser

If the nails are weak, your house will collapse. If your verbs are weak and your syntax is rickety, your sentences will fall apart.

~William Zinsser

Clear thinking becomes clear writing; one can't exist without the other.

~William Zinsser

One of underestimated tasks in nonfiction writing is to impose narrative shape on an unwieldy mass of material.

~William Zinsser

There's not much to be said about the period except that most writers don't reach it soon enough.

~William Zinsser

Few people realize how badly they write. Nobody has shown them how much excess or murkiness has crept into their style.

~William Zinsser

Examine every word you put on paper. You'll find a surprising number that don't serve any purpose.

~William Zinsser

If writing seems hard, it's because it is hard. It's one of the hardest things people do.

~William Zinsser

Clutter is the disease of American writing.

~William Zinsser

Ultimately the product that any writer has to sell is not the subject being written about, but who he or she is.

~William Zinsser

You can solve most of your writing problems if you stop after every sentence and ask: what does the reader need to know next?

~William Zinsser

If you write for yourself, you'll reach all the people you want to write for.

~William Zinsser

Writing is a craft not an art.

~William Zinsser

To defend what you've written is a sign that you are alive.

~William Zinsser

The game is won or lost on hundreds of small details.

~William Zinsser

I think a sentence is a fine thing to put a preposition at the end of.

~William Zinsser

The only way to learn to write is to force yourself to produce a certain number of words on a regular basis.

~William Zinsser

People read with their ears, whether they know it or not.

~William Zinsser

Good writing has an aliveness that keeps the reader reading from one paragraph to the next, and it's not a question of gimmicks to "personalize" the author.

~William Zinsser

Good writers are visible just behind their words.

~William Zinsser

Rewriting is the essence of writing well - where the game is won or lost.

~William Zinsser

Never hesitate to imitate another writer - every person learning a craft or an art needs models. Eventually you'll find your own voice and will shed the skin of the writer you imitated.

~William Zinsser

A writer will do anything to avoid the act of writing.

~William Zinsser

Keep your paragraphs short. Writing is visual - it catches the eye before it has a chance to catch the brain.

~William Zinsser

The best way to learn to write is to study the work of the men and women who are doing the kind of writing you want to do.

~William Zinsser

It's a fitting irony that under Richard Nixon "launder" became a dirty word.

~William Zinsser

Writers can write to affirm and to celebrate, or they can write to debunk and destroy; the choice is ours.

~William Zinsser

The secret of good writing is to strip every sentence to its cleanest components.

~William Zinsser

But nothing has replaced the writer. He or she is still stuck with the same old job of saying something that other people will want to read.

~William Zinsser

Make a habit of reading what is being written today and what has been written before. Writing is learned by imitation.

~William Zinsser

Be yourself and your readers will follow you anywhere. Try to commit

an act of writing and they will jump overboard to get away.

~William Zinsser

Don't be kind of bold. Be bold.

~William Zinsser

All writers should strive to deliver something fresh-something editors or readers won't know they want until they see it.

~William Zinsser

Even a poor translator couldn't kill a style that moves with such narrative clarity.

~William Zinsser

All writing is ultimately a question of solving a problem.

~William Zinsser

If you lose the dullards back in the dust, that's where they belong. You don't want them anyway.

~William Zinsser

Nobody ever stopped reading E. B. White or V. S. Pritchett because the writing was too good.

~William Zinsser

Never let anything go out into the world that you don't understand.

~William Zinsser

There are all kinds of writers and all kinds of methods, and any method that helps you to say what you want to say is the right method for you.

~William Zinsser

Nobody told all the new e-mail writers that the essence of writing is rewriting. Just because they are writing with ease and enjoyment

doesn't mean they are writing well.

~William Zinsser

Noise is the typographical error and the poorly designed page...Ambiguity is noise. Redundancy is noise. Misuse of words is noise. Vagueness is noise. Jargon is noise.

~William Zinsser

No one has something original or important to say will willingly run the risk of being misunderstood; people who write obscurely are either unskilled in writing or up to mischief

~William Zinsser

Never forget that you are practicing a craft with certain principles.

~William Zinsser

Writers are the custodians of memory, and that's what this chapter is about: how to leave some kind of record of your life and of the family you were born into.

~William Zinsser

Writers must constantly ask: what I am trying to say? Surprisingly often, they don't know.

~William Zinsser

Writing is hard work.

~William Zinsser

Nobody becomes Tom Wolfe overnight, not even Tom Wolfe.

~William Zinsser

Memoir is the art of inventing the truth.

~William Zinsser

Writing and learning and thinking are the same process.

~William Zinsser

Dare to tell the smallest of stories if you want to generate large emotions.

~William Zinsser

The writers job is like solving a puzzle, and finally arriving at a solution is a tremendous satisfaction.

~William Zinsser

Decide what you want to do. Then decide to do it. Then do it.

~William Zinsser

Writing improves in direct ratio to the things we can keep out of it that shouldn't be there.

~William Zinsser

Be grateful for every word you can cut.

~William Zinsser

Readers must be given room to bring their own emotions to a piece so crammed with emotional content; the writer must tenaciously resist explaining why the material is so moving.

~William Zinsser

My four articles of faith: clarity, simplicity, brevity and humanity.

~William Zinsser

Be wary of security as a goal. It may often look like life's best prize. Usually it's not.

~William Zinsser

Avoid the ecstatic adjectives that occupy such disproportionate space

in every critic's quiver - words like "enthraling" and "luminous."

~William Zinsser

As a writer I try to operate within a framework of Christian principles, and the words that are important to me are religious words: witness, pilgrimage, intention.

~William Zinsser

You learn to write by writing.

~William Zinsser

Not everybody has a talent for painting, or for the piano, or for dance. But we can write our way into the artist's head and into his problems and solutions. Or we can go there with another writer.

~William Zinsser

The writer who cares about usage must always know the quick from the dead.

~William Zinsser

Today the outlandish becomes routine overnight. The humorist is trying to say that it's still outlandish.

~William Zinsser

The sound of the bat is the music of spring training.

~William Zinsser

Writing wasn't easy and wasn't fun. It was hard and lonely, and the words seldom just flowed.

~William Zinsser

Motivation clears the head faster than a nasal spray.

~William Zinsser

Abraham Lincoln and Winston Churchill rode to glory on the back of the strong declarative sentence.

~William Zinsser

Finding a voice that your readers will enjoy is largely a matter of taste. Saying that isn't much help-taste is a quality so intangible that it can't even be defined. But we know it when we meet it.

~William Zinsser

What I want to do is to make people laugh so that they'll see things seriously.

~William Zinsser

A simple [writing] style is the result of very hard work.

~William Zinsser

Editors are licensed to be curious.

~William Zinsser

There's no sentence that's too short in the eyes of God.

~William Zinsser

Writing is no respecter of blueprints.

~William Zinsser

Fighting clutter is like fighting weeds-the writer is always slightly behind.

~William Zinsser

Scholarship hath no fury like that of a language purist faced with sludge.

~William Zinsser

Journalism is writing that first appears in any periodic journal.

~William Zinsser

Eloquence invites us to bring some part of ourselves to the transaction.

~William Zinsser

I have no interest in teaching writers how to sell. I want to teach them how to write. If the process is sound, the product will take care of itself, and sales are likely to follow.

~William Zinsser

Writing is thinking on paper. Anyone who thinks clearly should be able to write clearly-about any subject at all.

~William Zinsser

Good writing is lean and confident.

~William Zinsser

A writer is always working.

~William Zinsser

If a good word already exists, there is no need to invent something painful.

~William Zinsser

Much of my writing has taken the form of a pilgrimage: to sacred places that represent the best of America, to musicians and other artists who represent the best of their art.

~William Zinsser

Not every oak has to be gnarled, every detective hard-bitten. The adjective that exists solely as a decoration is a self-indulgence for the writer and an obstacle for the reader.

~William Zinsser

People and places are the twin pillars on which most nonfiction is built. Every human event happens somewhere, and the reader wants to know what that somewhere was like.

~William Zinsser

Telling a writer to relax is like telling a man to relax while being prodded for a possible hernia.

~William Zinsser

Probably every subject is interesting if an avenue into it can be found that has humanity and that an ordinary person can follow.

~William Zinsser

Don't try to visualize the great mass audience. There is no such audienceâ€”every reader is a different person.

~William Zinsser

Clutter is the official language used by corporations to hide their mistakes.

~William Zinsser

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