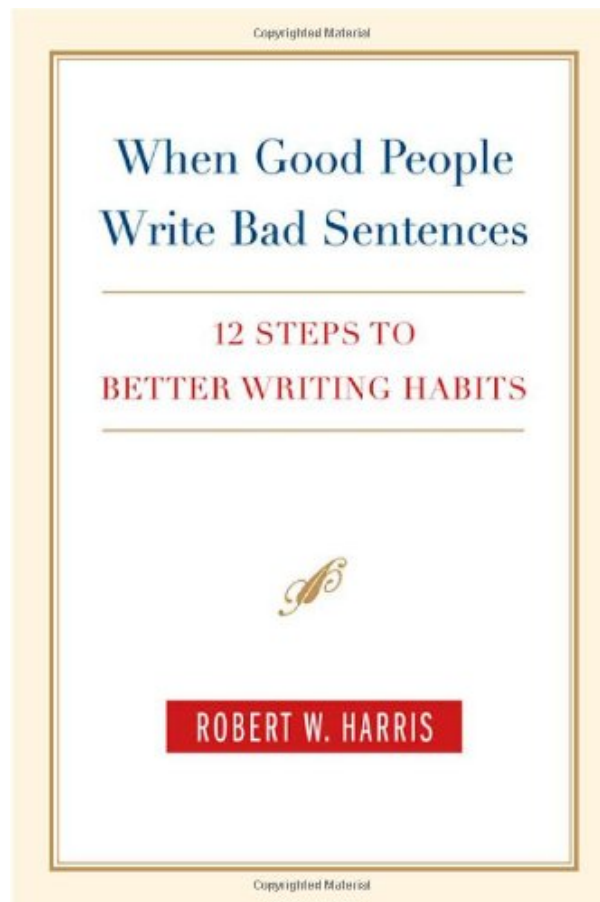


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# When Good People Write Bad Sentences

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12 STEPS TO  
BETTER WRITING HABITS

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## About the Author

Robert W. Harris has worked as a technical and business writer for the past 20 years. He is the author of ten books, including *Fun with Phone Solicitors* and *Understanding Desktop Publishing*.

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At last, help for writers who can admit they have a problem.

Do you get a lift by dangling a participle? Has your punctuation ever caused difficulties at home or at work? Do you consider yourself just a "social misspeller?"

These are just a few of the warning signs that you might have an addiction to bad writing. But fear not. This practical guide to eliminating bad writing habits will put you on the path to recovery. Filled with accessible advice and examples, this "powerful 12-step program" identifies the most common writing mistakes and offers simple ways to correct them. Here, you can learn to overcome wordiness, formality, incompleteness, and other problems that stand in the way of clear communication. And as you learn to eliminate ineffective sentences, you'll be "writing off" jargon, mixed metaphors, clichés, and more.

The advice in this ingenious and useful book has helped Tom G., Martha D., and Cathy W.\* write more clearly, confidently, and persuasively. It can do the same for you - whether you write for school, work, or pleasure. If you've tried other programs, only to fall back on bad habits, let Standard English be your guide. This book will show you how.

Get ready to improve your writing skills - one sentence at a time.

\*their real names

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books, including Fun with Phone Solicitors and Understanding Desktop Publishing.

Most helpful customer reviews

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

let's reconsider

By Mandy Gipson

I read through the other reviews and I understand where they're coming from. Yes, the book is written like an alcoholic's 12 step program BUT Harris is kind of right. At first, I was almost confused as to whether it was a joke or not, but as I read further, I realized that the bad habits that writers have are actually based upon insecurities. Harris tells the reader to suck it up - quit caring so much about what other people might think of your writing - and write good strong sentences. Once you actually get to the 12 steps, I think there is some really useful information in there. I was not overpowered by technical issues. Harris clearly and simply states what to look out for in your own writing. He actually lists them - which makes this a good reference manual to put on my desk. So the book is based on a joke (if that's what you want to call it). I found it funny. Even funnier, I saw myself in what he was saying.

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

Humorous read...

By fiona

This book was pretty humorous. I picked it up after I thought it would be kind of like Eats, Shoots and Leaves. It deals more with sentence structure, though (although some parts of it does deal with grammar).

Harris writes about our "inner child writer" and how it still has a lot of repressed feelings, which is why we lash out and write bad sentences. I didn't really consider myself a malescribe, but I can certainly understand the frustration and disappointment when you encounter one.

Although this book was informative and humorous, my only complaint was that it went a little too far. At times, parts of it seemed far-fetched and there was a bit too much exaggeration. I know this was supposed to be a humorous approach - but maybe less is more. For example, Harris states that malescribism can lead to depression, and even death. Well, I'd say very rarely.

Despite my one dislike about it, When Good People Write Bad Sentences is a humorous and informative read. Especially when you have malescribism. (Oops, was that supposed to be a sentence fragment?) :)

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

A VERY HELPFUL BOOK - GIVE IT A CHANCE.

By D. Blankenship

I have to tell you that I found this little book to be absolutely delightful and quite informative.

First though, I have to admire the author. Any person who writes a book addressing the correct way to write a language is leaving themselves open to all kind of cheap shots. Each time an author publishes such a book I am always stunned by the number of "experts" that seem to suddenly appear and attempt to tear the work to shreds. I suppose it is an ego thing with some people.

I am also always a bit hesitant to write a review on such books for the same reason. The last one I did cause at least two comments which more or less (in a very rude sort of way) telling me I should probably read the book again as I obviously had missed a lot of points. This criticism was just and truthful as I, more than any one I know, am fully aware of my shortcomings and ignorance of the English language. That is the reason I

read and study books such as this. If I were already an expert, there really would be no need I should think.

Anyway...

This is a nicely done little work to help people write better, or at least correctly. The author has indeed used a quirky method as a hook in that he sets the entire book up as a 12 step program which should enable to break a writer's addiction to poor writing skills and such. I can see where this method may aggravate some people and indeed, even offend some, but the method the author used should not distract the reader from the essence of the book; the purpose. I personally had not problems with it. Then again, I do not take much very seriously, including myself.

And I must say that the author has given us some wonderful advice, helpful hints and tips and extremely useful information; information that many of us have not been exposed to since we left high school...if even then!

I found the writing to be refreshing, non technical, practical, humorous and very easy to understand. Now this is not a comprehensive course in English. The author has focused primarily on the sentences, the does and the don't. He addresses structure, correctness and readability and given the reader much to think about and ponder.

I personally (although you probably will not think so after reading this review) found it most helpful and I learned much and relearned much that I thought I knew but had never actually learned it or had long forgotten.

This is a good book. Give it a try.

Don Blankenship  
The Ozarks

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