

There Is Writing, and Then There Is Writing. This Is How You Recognise Great Text Style.

Anyone can write. That's at least what everyone thinks. But the fact that writing does not equal writing, becomes obvious when you look at many advertising texts. Entrepreneurs sometimes think: Whatever the "expensive" copywriters do at the agencies, I, or my marketing staff, can surely do the same. That's why they write their own texts. If you take one look at them, however, you quickly realise: they can't. Their writing style is completely different from the writing style of a professional text. The sad thing is: People notice. Not only those who have to deal with it every day, but also the customers. And that means that all money "saved" on a copywriter will help the customer save money, too.

Luckily, there are a few points that indicate whether your text was written professionally. And the best part is, I'll even tell you.

1. A Good Text Is Vivid.

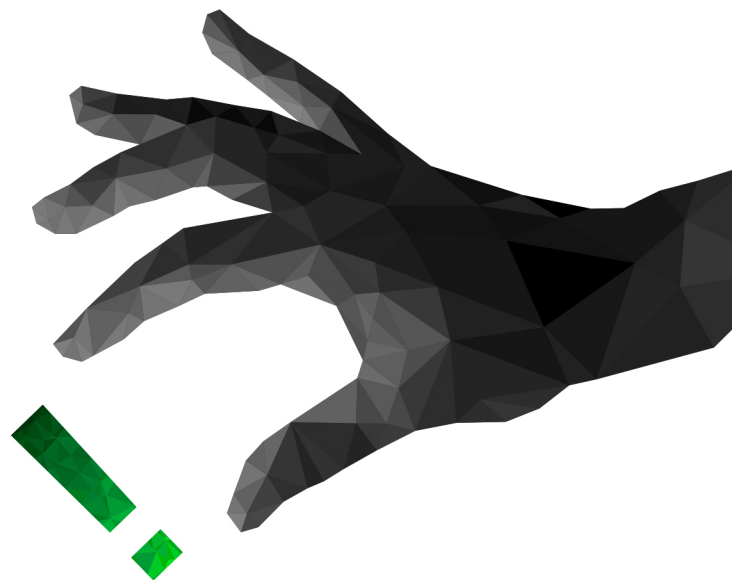
For a descriptive text, it is important to observe precisely. One should write what one can see, hear, smell, taste, and think in a simple language. Abstractions should be used as little as possible. They take away the reader's chance to delve into the text and experience it as a personal adventure.

2. A Good Text Is Precise and Avoids General Terms.

Collecting terms such as trees, vermin, machines, or cars do not evoke clear images in the reader's mind. Who's precise and writes about birches, spiders, presses, or mini convertibles, evokes images that are remembered.

3. A Good Text Has No Unnecessary Paragraphs.

Many have a tough time deleting something they have already written. This art, however, is indispensable, if you want to write texts that capture the reader. Superfluous repetitions or formulations that only serve as a back-up ensure that the reader zones out.



4. A Good Text Uses Active Verbs Instead of Passive Nouns.

If verbs are nominalised, and hence used as nouns, a sentence may be shorter. However, being denser with information, it becomes less comprehensible. It also sounds unnecessarily complicated and often stiff. Or would you have understood if someone said: “My concern is to avoid my reader’s frustration.” when they actually meant “I don’t want to bore my readers.”?

5. A Good Text Avoids Fillers.

Words like somehow, so to speak, basically, self-talking, simply, and many more need to get kicked out of a good text. They just inflate it unnecessarily. Anyone who feels that a sentence would be too short without these words should consider deleting it altogether.

6. A Good Text Skips Empty Phrases.

If you don’t want to bore your readers, you should leave phrases and clichés like “he left no stone unturned.”, “It’s Lombard Street to a China orange.”, or “Long story short” where they belong. In yesterday’s language. A fresh text cannot tolerate any outdated expressions.

7. A Good Text Saves on Adjectives.

Judgemental adjectives like good, bad, fantastic, admirable, or terrible leave the reader with nothing to go on. There is no way of developing an unbiased opinion then. Here, too, it is better to observe more closely and describe precisely.

8. A Good Text Has Short and Long Sentences.

In many guides for skilful writing, one can find guidelines like “No sentences should have more than 15 to 20 words.”, “There must be a full stop in every second line.”, “Avoid convoluted sentences and sub-clauses.” – In my opinion, these statements are too generalised. It always depends on the text as a whole, the type of text, the place of publication, and the target group. Sometimes a long, complex sentence between a few brief ones comes as a pleasant change to make the text more vivid. These cases are best decided by going with the gut feeling and either dividing a sentence into two or leaving it as one, depending on the situation.

9. A Good Text Has the Perfect Length.

Here too, people often say: “Nobody wants to read long texts – especially not on the internet.” This, too, cannot be said in general. If the author manages to inspire me, I will happily keep reading. Even online. In any case however, a text should not be dragged out unnecessarily. When the point is made, simply stop. No matter if that is after 3, 12, or 120 lines.

10. A Good Text Breaks Standards.

As often it is true, here, too: Rules matter. It matters knowing them. But sometimes, a text only becomes interesting, when the rules are broken. To accomplish that, they first need to be internalised. A crucial factor is experience. When in doubt, rather stick to the rules. At least one can then be sure that there’s a higher chance the reader will be delighted, than with a text that neglects the rules to begin with.