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# Guide to Writing Conversationally

How to write for your website or blog in an authentic way

Conversational writing is relaxed and casual. It's informal and really similar to the way we talk to a friend or someone in our family. That's why "just write like you talk" seems to be pretty common advice these days.

Think of the difference between an email to a friend and a college textbook. The email uses short sentences, lots of emotional words, and might even include emoticons. There's no need to get super detailed in an email to a friend. Friends already speak a kind of shorthand that includes sentence fragments and slang.

Your email might say "Remember that time in the diner? I saw those same shoes on someone else today." There's no way this sentence makes sense until you were in the diner too. But, if you know the story, you're probably already giggling, right? *This is conversational writing.*

This is quite a bit different from informational or formal writing. You probably don't need an example. Just think of the kind of writing that feels heavy and flat... the stuff you skip or scan. Rather than evoke a strong feeling of connection and emotion, informational writing gives you the sense that you ought to be taking notes somewhere.

## But isn't blog writing informational? Good question...

Blog writing isn't informational or formal writing. *Blog writing is actually written information, shared conversationally.* There's a big difference.

Sure, your posts will share lots of helpful information and create plenty of value. But - PAY ATTENTION HERE - your posts will read and feel like a letter to a friend. Emotive, chatty, and relaxed. Information delivered in a helpful, friendly manner. That's your goal... and you can do it!

You already know how to communicate conversationally. You just need a little help putting the language you use with your friends to work in your blog writing. Don't worry... I can help.



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## Forget the rules you learned in school.

Remember that picky language teacher who covered your essays with red pencil? The one who insisted on proper grammar, perfect spelling, and complete sentences? Forget everything you learned in an effort to please her. She was teaching you formal writing... conversational writing is a totally different animal.

*Do you speak in formal sentences with proper nouns and participles that never dangle dangerously? Nope, you don't. Neither do I.*

We speak in sentence fragments filled with pronouns and exclamations and lists with lots of hyperbole. Here are some examples taken from actual conversations I had last weekend...

- **"I never got it. Did you send it? What? Seriously. Just... um, whatever."**
- **"Hey, that thing... Oh, you heard about it? Okay. Well, it happened again."**
- **"I love everything about today. Warm pants, mittens, snow, hot chocolate, and the dog."**
- **"What? Shut up! That's epic!"**

People just don't talk using perfect grammar. *So, forget the rules you've learned.* Instead of worrying about crafting a grammatically correct sentence, work on sharing meaning. Spend your time getting the emotions right... adding the humor... adding the spice and energy.

Then add just enough grammar so no one gets lost or confused. (Yes, punctuation, I'm looking right at YOU!)

## Write as fast as you can. No stopping, no editing.

Just write... type, scribble, whatever. As quickly as you can. Maybe even set a timer for 15 minutes and write in a sprint. No reading... no stopping... no second guessing. Just do it.

*Sound weird? Probably. But it's a pretty powerful secret for writing conversationally.*

Here's a secret... sometimes I even turn my monitor off and just type so I can't look at what I've written and start editing. Turning off the monitor is the only way to keep my fingers off of the backspace key some days.



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**Writing quickly works because our brain isn't formal... it's conversational.** The faster you write, the more you silence the analytical part of your mind and tap into the creative part. The part of your brain that feels and senses and gets excited. The part with the grand ideas and the drive to make them happen. The part that's free to just live and do and explore. The real you...

Okay, you might be feeling a little nervous right now. Thinking, "Oh crud, I can't just WRITE and put it out there as is! I'd embarrass myself!" *Relax, my friend. I said, "write," but I didn't say "publish." Of course you will do some editing. But you'll do it later... after you get the words on the page.*

## **Read your writing in your normal speaking voice as if you were talking to someone else.**

This is the ultimate test. Did you really write like you talk? The only way to know for sure is to "speak" what you've written.

Read your post to yourself. *Don't whisper though... raise your voice.* Use your normal speaking voice and just speak it as if you were talking to a friend at a coffee shop over a caramel macchiato with light whip. (Mmm... yep, sounds good.)

- **Do you stumble over your words?** Okay, they need a little editing love.
- **Do you need to breathe in the middle of a sentence?** Break that bad boy into two or even three lovely little sentences or fragments.
- **Does your voice get softer in spots?** That's a clue that you wouldn't really say that thing that exact way. So change it.

I believe the only way to truly "write like you talk" is to listen to your own voice reading what you write. If it sounds flat or boring to YOU - or like you're giving a speech to a group of your retired college professors - you aren't actually writing conversationally. *Time for a bit of a rewrite.*

## **Practice, Practice, Practice.**

A long time ago, before iPhones and Twitter, I spent some time learning to play piano. And by *learning* I actually mean practicing. Plunking out melody lines, putting together chords, and



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then trying to put them together in a way that didn't make my mother come into my room and beg me to stop. *The more I practiced, the better the music I made.*

But here's the thing... more practice alone wasn't enough. I needed to **practice consistently over time to get good**. If you really want to improve your writing, you need to practice. And not just once in a while. *Full disclosure:: I never DID get good at piano. But that's another story...*

## To truly improve your writing, you need to practice frequently.

Becoming a more comfortable, fluid writer means practicing consistently over time. But, here's the good news - it's not as difficult as learning the piano. Practicing conversational writing is as simple as spending a few minutes every day with a journal. Even 5 minutes will help.

So, here's my challenge...

Grab a journal you like. It can be a simple school notebook or a small journal from a dollar store or even that lovely sketchbook someone gave you at the last office Christmas party. *But not a computer. Let's do this old school, okay?*

Now grab a pen or a pencil or some colored pencils or markers. Pour yourself a cup of coffee. Make a cup of tea. Grab a glass of wine. Whatever makes this special time... time just for you.

READY? OKAY - WRITE!

Write whatever comes to mind. Describe the view out of your window. Share the high points of your day or your intentions for the next few minutes. You can even write "Gosh, I don't know what to write. Writing is difficult and I don't like it..." but keep writing.

*Write quickly... without editing... until your mug or glass or cup is empty.*

Do this nearly every day and, I promise you, magic will happen. You'll start to look forward to your special time with your journal. And more importantly, you'll become a better writer. And that's worth the effort. :)