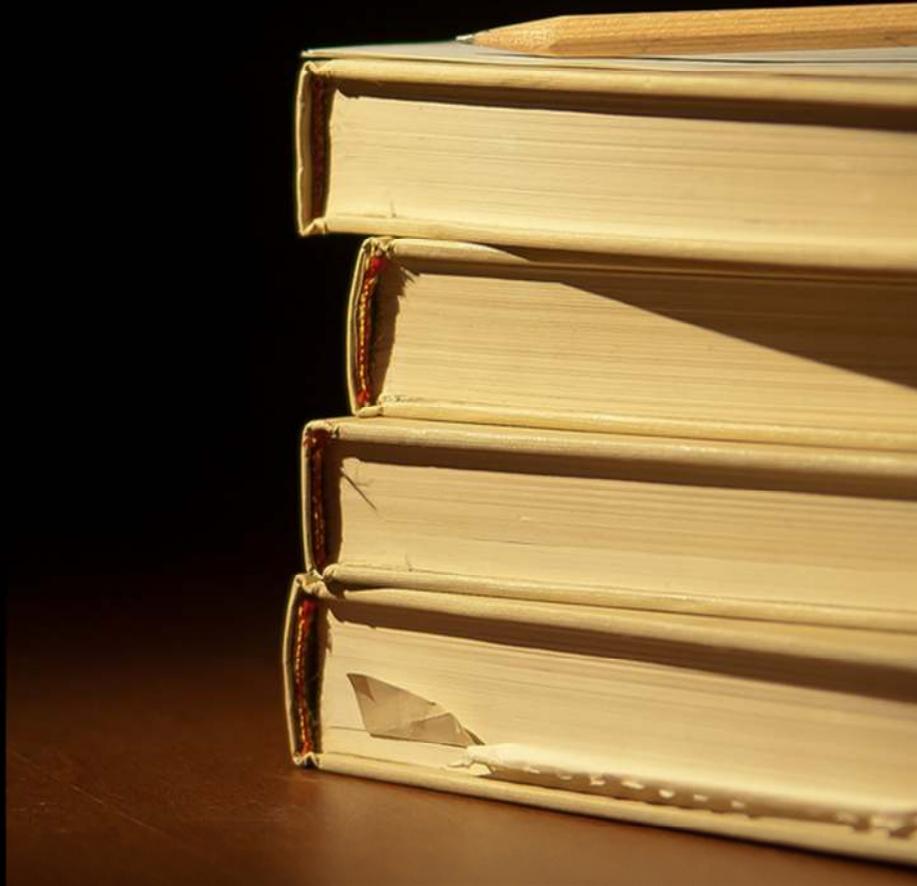


# *How To* **Write**



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# How To Write

Trinity School of Christian Journalism: Volume 003

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# How To Write

## Trinity School of Christian Journalism: Volume 003

Even the best instruction in the world is worthless till it is put into action. Therefore, beginning with this lesson, we will ask you to write a lot. Do not be discouraged by the initial difficulties. Persist, and you will be a different person by the time you reach the last lesson.

In this lesson we will first tell you about the types of writing, and then guide you into "how to begin writing".

All writings (essays, poems, stories, novels, etc.) can be classified into two broad categories: factual writing and creative writing. All factual writing will have a lot of creativity going into it and all creative writing will be aided by factual information, yet they are clearly distinguishable one from another. One does not read a novel and a dictionary alike because they belong to two entirely different categories of writing.

## Factual Writing

Essays, news, textbooks, research reports, any other kind of writing that deals with facts is called factual writing.

Almost everything in print that can be classified as "non-fiction" is factual writing. The aim of factual writing is to present facts in a captivating way. The purpose is to educate, entertain and even motivate the readers towards a specific action.

The field of factual writing is very broad. The number of subjects available is uncountable and the opportunities to write upon them are unlimited. These statements might puzzle or surprise many who have not launched yet into the field of writing, but I assure you that the above statements are not exaggerations.

Consider a very simple and commonplace topic like "Water". A beginner might consider it nonsense when I suggest that dozens of articles can be built around this subject. But before you become too sure that I am wrong, consider the following titles:

- Water: The source of all life
- Water: The greatest tonic for health
- Water Pollution: Causes and effects
- Water-loss(dehydration)- the greatest killer in summer
- Drinking Water: How to purify it
- The chemistry of water
- The physics of water, the wonder liquid.

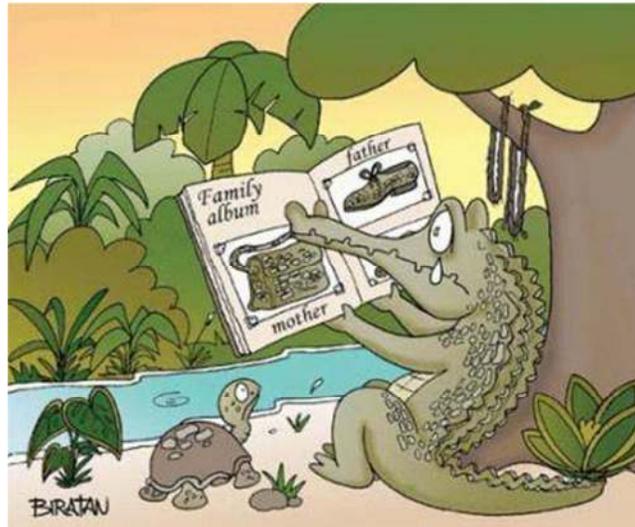
I have suggested only seven topics, and that also by spending only three to five minutes for thinking. Further, I have not mentioned many obvious and interesting subjects like, Conserving Water For

Summers, Water As Source Of Hydro and Tidal Electricity, Water And Industries, Water And Transportation, etc.

Thinking up for an hour or two per day will bring up at least a hundred interesting subjects, and just a month of such effort will swell up the list to at least 3000 subjects ! Believe me, even the most successful writers find that too many titles for their whole life.

I'm not suggesting that you spend the next month filling your diary with possible subjects. On the contrary, the above illustration has been given to show you that the field of factual writing is so vast that all the writers of the world together will never be able to exhaust the available subjects.

All what you need is a bit of self-confidence, a little creativity, and a desire to find subjects. I guarantee that in three to five years you will wish that you could write with all four of your limbs. Believe me, you could still not exhaust your own list even if that wish were granted!



## Creative Writing

All writings classified as fiction come into this category. Songs and poems can also be placed into this category because

their creative part is more dominant than their factual one.

Stories, novels, most poems, songs, many satires, dramas, etc. are included in creative writing. They have been given this title because they are "created" almost out of non-existing material. While the main attempt in factual writing is to explain preexisting facts, the main attempt in creative writing is to produce an entity that did not exist previously.

Even though the creative writer creates a story that did not exist before, he needs an idea or a "plot" to create it. Since plots for stories do not drop from the skies, the creative writer has to develop skills necessary to capture, conceive, and develop new ideas.

Both factual as well as creative writing are challenging jobs, and each has its own unique difficulties. Most writers confine themselves to one of these fields, and only very few try to produce both kinds of materials.

You must evaluate your natural talents, inclinations, and abilities before you choose whether you will write fiction or non-fiction. Whatever the field you choose, you should never ignore the

techniques of the other side. Non-fiction writers can always benefit from the techniques used by the fiction writers and people who produce fiction can always benefit from people who produce factual writings.

In the present course our stress will be upon factual writing. These are two reasons for it. First, the majority of writers produce only factual material. Second, creative writers have to follow most of the basic principles of factual writing, and therefore this is the right starting point for writers of all kinds. We will offer you specialized information about producing fiction in another module of this course.

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## How To Begin Writing

writing is taking the first step. There's nothing very surprising about this. In any game the first move is the most tense one and the opening batsman bears the most intense pressure. Even in human life the first step of a baby is always more difficult than the next one.

However, as the baby grows, walking becomes so natural to him that he does it without any special effort or without even being conscious of it. It is the same way with writing. The first step will be difficult, but the more you hesitate, the more the time that you lose. I therefore urge you to start writing immediately ! Do not worry at this stage about the quality or usefulness of the first few

writings. Nor should you worry about who is going to publish them.

Have you ever seen a trainee potter, tailor, typist, or cook at work? Their initial output is usually so crude, childish, abnormal, or deformed that nobody buys it from them. Yet they keep working because they know that the initial output is not meant for others. Their first product is meant for practice.

In the same way, you should assume that the first few (six to twelve) articles that you produce are meant for your training and not for publication. It will be a joy if someone publishes them, but you should not be discouraged if something meant for practice does not get into print.

With these points in mind, the first few steps that you have to take can be listed as follows:

1. Choose a subject
2. Make an outline
3. Collect information
4. Refine outline, if needed
5. Write
6. Rewrite

It is obvious that one cannot write upon a subject that has not yet been chosen. The first thing to do, therefore, is to choose a subject. I have already explained some methods for discovering useful and exciting subjects. You should choose a subject using the same technique.

The next thing to do is to make an outline. This should always be brief yet sufficiently clear. There should always be a suitable introduction, an informative and absorbing body, and a challenging end. The structure (in theory) would look something like the following:

1. Introduction
2. Body
3. Conclusion

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**The average reader cannot keep many points in his head. You should use only three to five points. Three points is optimum and five is about the maximum.**

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The body of the article should contain the points that you want to stress. These points should be limited to as few as possible. Most writers show the tendency to pile point upon point till they reach infinity, with several sub-points attached to each point. While this might give them some mental satisfaction, or even pride, the practice is foolish.

The average reader cannot keep that many points, or their intricate relationship with each other, in his head. You should therefore use only three to five points in the body of your writing, unless you are going to write it for a bunch of your classroom students. Three points is optimum and five is about the maximum. If you think that you have more than five points for inclusion, many things could be wrong with you. Either you are overenthusiastic (because of your inexperience) or you have unnecessarily split the subject into too many points.

Yet another reason could be that you have chosen too broad a subject. If that is so, and if you have a great desire to use all those points, then split up your write-up into two or more articles.

Thus, the theoretical outline of a properly designed article would look something like:

1. Introduction
2. Body
  - a. Point no.1
  - b. Point no.2
  - c. Point no.3
3. Conclusion

This is only a guideline, and not a rigid rule. Other approaches are also possible. What is important is to keep the outline COMPACT. Look at another compact outline below.

1. Introduction
2. Point no.1
  - a. Subpoint no.1
  - b. Subpoint no.2
3. Point-2
  - a. Subpoint no.1
  - b. Subpoint no.2
4. Conclusion.

So far the above outline is only theoretical. In practice you should write down what these points are and what the emphasis of the introduction and conclusion are going to be.

Once this much is done, you must collect all the information on this subject that you can. You might at first be baffled about how to collect such information, but I assure you that if you go in the right direction you will get so much information that you will never be able to use all of it.

One of the best sources of information is books. You can look into your own collection (if you have one), ask other book lovers, go to a public library, or even go to any other kind of library. Most people tend to underestimate and even downgrade these sources of information, but a writer should not be too foolish to do that.

Even if the library in your city is too small or too outdated, you should still visit it to see what it has to offer you. Do not worry about what it does not have to offer; what's important is what it HAS got. Never

underestimate the value or importance of a source.

Once this much information is available, you might sometimes want to modify the outline. Feel free to make any change that you deem necessary at this stage. Further, if you feel that you should expand the outline by adding a few more sentences to each line, then do so freely.

Once all this is over, you are ready to write. Start as soon as you can, and write your first draft as FAST as you can. Even if your mind prompts you to make changes here and there, do not pause. This is time to put the article on to paper, not for correction, polishing or amplification.

Once the first draft is ready, you should read the entire article carefully and make whatever changes, additions, and deletions you want. You will notice several omissions, unnecessary repetitions, and abrupt statements, and you should iron them all out. This is now your semifinal draft and this should be sent for

publication only if there is a pressing need. If there is no such emergency then keep it away for few days and work on some other article. After a reasonable break, read the article once again and make whatever corrections come to your mind.

At no stage should you compromise with this process of writing because all compromise affects

quality. On the other hand, this is not a rigid guideline, and therefore you should feel free to modify this process occasionally to suit your special needs.

The above discussion is complete in itself, but to give you a greater understanding of the

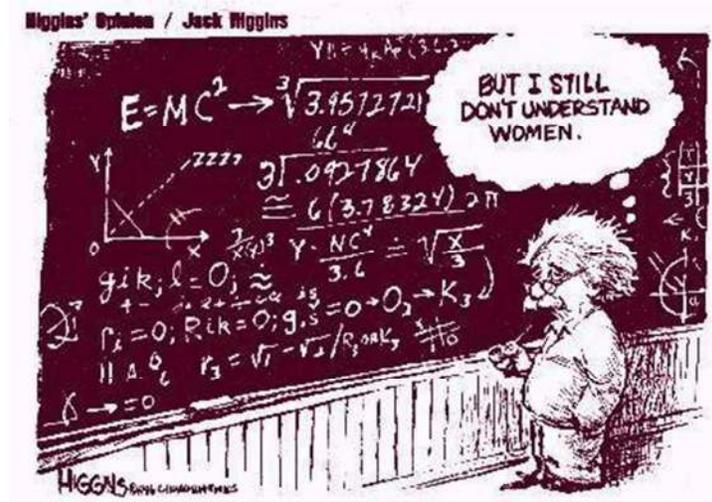
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*Even if the library in your city is too small or too outdated, you should still visit it. Do not worry about what it does not have to offer. Never underestimate the value or importance of a source.*

---

process I have included a detailed example below. Once you see a writer in action, you

should feel greater confidence to do the job yourself.



## An Illustration

Let me now illustrate what I said in the previous section. I said that the first thing to do is to choose a subject. Suppose I choose, "Water, The

Greatest Tonic For Health". Now let us make a tentative outline:

- 1) Introduction: (Remind people that they are ignoring the greatest fluid for their health).
- 2) Water is important for kidneys, man's poison-filler.
- 3) Water is important for maintaining fluid balance of body.
- 4) All bodily functions need water.
- 5) Conclusion: Drink at least 4 to 8 litres of water every day.

The next activity is investigation and collection of information. Almost any medical doctor or nurse will be able to give you information and also guide you to appropriate books (technical as well as popular) for further information. Most books on physical fitness (which abound in our generation) or health-related magazines will also provide a lot of information. What's more, even family-magazines will give an occasional article on this topic.

The next step is to revise and expand (if necessary) the previously prepared outline. In our case, any investigation will reveal that water plays a great part in disease prevention. It plays this role by being the most important medium of washing, cleaning and hygiene. Quite a lot of germs can be washed away by ordinary running water to levels safe for the body.

The information mentioned above is quite startling, yet too important to be overlooked, and therefore it can be added as a new point, or else it can replace point 4 in our outline. The option is yours. I consider this point so important that I decide to write an entire article on the topic of "Water, your great friend against germs". I feel that offering this as a separate article will be a great help to readers in our country where disease-causing organisms are widespread. The poor country can save a lot of money spent on expensive medicines simply by encouraging proper washing habits.

I therefore leave the outline untouched. The helpful information and statistics collected is secure in my diary. If such information is jotted down on bits and pieces of paper they develop a tendency to vanish when most needed, wasting a lot of valuable time. Therefore I advise that you too buy a couple of diaries or note books.

Just as I decided not to revise the outline. I also decided not to expand the notes. In many cases I do both -- revision as well as expansion. With some experience you will also know what to do.

Now that the groundwork is over, I start working on the article itself. The first draft will have many imperfections, and my mind urges me to pause at every stage to iron out these problems. Experience has told me that it is more important at this stage to complete the article so that I might see it as a whole unit

before I work upon the parts. The first draft is ready in about two hours. It is about five pages long (around 900 words). The final draft will have about six handwritten (or three typed) pages. This will be about 1000 to 1200 words. Most popular magazines require articles to be between 1000 to 1500 words.

Instead of revising and polishing this draft immediately. I take a short break of fifteen minutes to about an hour. This refreshes my mind and makes me more alert to continue the work. Then I pick up the work, reread it and make corrections, additions and deletions liberally on the same sheets of paper. Once this is over, I immediately make a neat and clean copy. This will be my semi-final draft.

If I am in a hurry, I give this draft for typing. This happens only in about twenty per cent of the cases. In case of the majority of my articles, I place them in a file for few days and "sleep over" the article. This gives me time to reflect over what I have written. Further, when I revise my article after a few days, or even weeks, my mind has been "detached" sufficiently to look at it objectively. This enables me to spot many omissions and obscure statements that were difficult to spot when the subject was still fresh in my mind. I make corrections, and give the final copy for typing.

If typing is not possible, I make a neat and readable handwritten copy. This copy will go to the editor, while I keep the corrected copy. If typed, I send the original plus the first carbon-copy to the editor and keep the

*Do not avoid  
outline-making.  
Just as a house  
cannot be  
constructed  
without a plan, an  
article cannot be  
produced without  
an outline!*

second carbon-copy in my files. The project has reached a conclusion.

The total time for doing all this would be around 8 to 10 hours, but with maturing habits and insights it might come down even to four hours, but that will be a long way from today.

The above illustration is only for your illumination. The purpose is to give you general guidelines, not to show rigidly fixed

patterns. Feel free to experiment and be flexible, but do not compromise with the quality and content of what you produce.

Let me remind you once again: do not avoid outline-making. Compromising in this matter will only defeat your purpose. **JUST AS A HOUSE CANNOT BE CONSTRUCTED WITHOUT A PLAN, AN ARTICLE CANNOT BE PRODUCED WITHOUT AN OUTLINE!**

## Some Precautions

Every factual writer should remember to make his investigation thorough. Since you are writing about preexisting subjects, you should make sure that your statements and data are correct. It is a very bad testimony to your reliability if you make mistakes.

While no writer can be entirely accurate all his life, repeated mistakes and too obvious errors point to careless work and sloppy thinking. Such writers soon lose credibility, and also the demand for their articles. Editors soon start avoiding them.

Another thing to remember is to write everything in your own words. Do not copy other's writings verbatim. This is not only a sign of your incompetence, but is also a crime. Known as plagiarism, editors avoid writers given to it. What is worse, some magazines will openly publish letters of criticism against such articles, completely damaging your

name. Further, if you feel that a particular statement of another writer is so special that it should be given as it is to your readers you should put it as a quotation, and give full credit to the author from whom you have taken this quote.

Before closing I must remind you once again to choose a few areas of your interest for writing so that you do not become a jack of all trades but be reduced to master of none.

Just as specialization is necessary in other professional areas, writing also calls for specialization for the majority of your articles.



## Assignments

### Trinity School of Christian Journalism: Volume 003

Please complete the following assignments as soon as possible and at the same time move to Textbook 4.

1--We have shown you how to choose a subject and how to develop an outline. Using this technique, do the following:

- a- "Salt" is a common subject, exactly like water. Think up a subject related to salt and develop an outline.
- b- Pick up any common (or uncommon) subject of your choice. Develop an outline.
- c- Ask a fellow student or writer to critique your work and then rewrite the outline as per the feedback.
- d- Keep scanning the most popular magazines and books to pick up tips on how they make things so attractive.

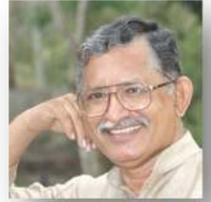


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**Trinity School of Christian Journalism: Volume 003**  
**About The Authors**

**Dr. Johnson C. Philip** is a physicist and Christian communicator. He is also the senior-most Christian apologist in India, having trained more than 10,000 apologists worldwide through distance education. At present he serves on the faculty of several theological seminaries worldwide.



He has authored close to 100 books/ebooks and over 10,000 articles (2011) and a good number of his ebooks are available free. He is also an expert in Indian Numismatics.



**Dr. Saneesh Cherian** is sociology major with interest in Theology and communication. He has authored close to 50 books/ebooks and numerous articles. He was one of the architects of the first Christian apologetics and Systematic Theology textbooks in the Malayalam language.

At present he serves on the faculty of several theological seminaries worldwide, including Brethren Theological College as its Academic Dean.

**Come, Let Us Go Back To The Bible!**

Please Join The Mission of Brethren Theological Journal

Every reform movement comes to slumber in a century or less. There are practically no exceptions in the last two millennia of church history. Thus each generation needs Ezras and Nehemiahs to rebuild the foundations that were once laid down but which are in ruins now! The only solution is to go back to the Bible and its fundamentals.

The authors stand unashamedly and without wavering on the following fundamental principles: Bible Alone (Sola Scriptura), Faith Alone (Sola Fide), Grace Alone (Sola Gratia), Christ Alone (Solus Christus). With this in mind we bring to you a set of writers who stand strong on these principles.

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