



**The Elements of Writing (Originally Published as  
The Big Book of Writing and The Writing Code):  
The Complete How-To Guide to Writing, With 100  
Short Case Studies and Hints from Masters in All  
Genres**

*Charles Euchner*

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**"The book Pinker wishes he wrote." "Move over, Strunk and White." "Without peer." "Trust me; it works." "Just the right blend of rigor, encouragement, and fun." "Both useful and a pleasure." "A bounty of usable information."**

Everyone, these days, is a writer. Students, business professionals, teachers, even engineers and doctors -- not to mention journalists and other professional scribes -- all must express themselves in papers, memos, emails and other documents. But all of us get stuck. We struggle to explain a difficult concept or process. We tell a story that falls flat. Or we take too long to produce a draft or get stuff editing our tortured prose.

Writing can be a confusing, humbling activity. But does it need to be? *The Elements of Writing* offers a simple, intuitive approach to writing well in all fields. At the center of *The Elements* is this simple idea: Almost all challenges of writing -- storytelling, mechanics, and analysis -- fit a simple 1-2-3 format. When you understand how this format works, you can master all of the simple skills you need to write better and faster than ever before.

Most writing programs -- from secondary school and college classes to "creative writing" seminars to professional seminars -- take the extremes of scolding and coddling. The scolders consider writing a pitiless grind, requiring mastery of abstract endless rules and arcane formats. Coddlers say writing is a simple matter of allowing free thoughts to flow effortlessly.

In *The Elements of Writing*, Charles Euchner takes a different approach. Step by step, he explains the simple patterns of writing, as well as simple "tricks of the trade" you can apply right away. You probably know these simple patterns already. But Euchner points then out explains how they work, step by step. He then enlists some of the greatest writers, from antiquity to the present day, to demonstrate those elements in action.

Euchner developed *The Elements* by systematically "reverse-engineering" some of the best writers from antiquity to modern times. *The Elements* provides close to 100 case studies showing how the masters approach every challenge a writer faces. Euchner shows, step by step, how the best writers deal with everything from character development to editing messy drafts.

As a result, *The Elements* provides tutorials from the very best in the business—Homer and Aristotle, Twain and Crane, Hemingway and Faulkner, Virginia Woolf and Tom Wolfe, Laura Hillenbrand and Elizabeth Gilbert, Martin Luther King and C.S. Lewis, *Casablanca* and *The Wizard of Oz*—and dozens more.

In this comprehensive work, Euchner shows how to:

- **Understand the *inner structure*** of all human perception and action through the Golden Rule of Writing.
- **Build great stories**, step by step, by treating compelling characters using the Character Dossier and Wheel of Archetypes ... building dynamic scenes using Beats and Cliffhangers ... and creating a compelling “World of the Story.”
- **Allow ideas to “unfold”** one by one, rather than rushing and packing ideas too closely together (the “tin or sardines” problem).
- **Use tools like the Landscape View**, the Idea Bucket, the Tabloid Headline, Slotting, Traffic Signs, and the Search and Destroy system to take command of the mechanics of writing.
- **Develop compelling arguments** by brainstorming like a pro, isolating possible explanations, and climbing up and down the ladder of abstraction.

Charles Euchner—now a case writer at the Yale School of Management and author of books on writing, the sports industry, civil rights, and politics—has taught his unique system to audiences across the U.S.

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#### **Loretta Yoder:**

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**Erma Ward:**

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