



# How to Write a Sentence: And How to Read One

By Stanley Fish

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*New York Times* Bestseller

**“Both deeper and more democratic than *The Elements of Style*” – Adam Haslett, *Financial Times***

**“A guided tour through some of the most beautiful, arresting sentences in the English language.” – *Slate***

**“Like a long periodic sentence, this book rumbles along, gathers steam, shifts gears, and packs a wallop.”  
—Roy Blount Jr.**

In this entertaining and erudite New York Times bestseller, beloved professor Stanley Fish offers both sentence craft and sentence pleasure. Drawing on a wide range of great writers, from Philip Roth to Antonin Scalia to Jane Austen, *How to Write a Sentence* is much more than a writing manual—it is a spirited love letter to the written word, and a key to understanding how great writing works.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

A whole book on the lowly sentence? Stanley Fish, America's English Professor, confides that he belongs "to the tribe of sentence watchers," and shares his passion and learning through an array of examples from sentence-making masters, among them Milton, James, Dr. King, Sterne, Swift, Salinger, Elmore Leonard, Conrad, and Gertrude Stein. For Fish, language is logic. He stresses how the sentence, regardless of length—whether declarative or embroidered with qualifiers—is a structure of logical relationships. He discusses the all-important opening sentence and closing sentence, especially as the latter can be isolated from its dramatic context to convey full rhetorical effect. The reader is advised to begin with form; with practice, writers can develop three basics of style (subordinating, additive, satiric) that will allow them to make an emotional impact with their words. In the end, the craft of sentence writing is elevated to the very center of our inner lives. Fish plays the opinion card well, though a piling on of example after example, particularly of long sentences drawn from literature or theology, might leave more experienced sentence-makers to cry, "Enough already!"

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From [Booklist](#)

New York Times columnist and college professor Fish appreciates fine sentences the way some people appreciate fine wine. In 10 short chapters, Fish takes readers through a cogent analysis of how to craft a sentence. He talks about form, content, and style, always taking care to illustrate his points with an ample selection of judiciously chosen quotations from virtuoso writers, from Milton and Shakespeare to Anton Scalia and Elmore Leonard. He then proceeds to drill down into the quotations, zeroing in on the tense, parts of speech, or precise phrasing that make the sentences sing. He also discusses famous first and last lines, always keeping in the forefront the extraordinary power of language to shape reality. And, befitting his subject matter, he does all this in the most luminous prose. He fluidly conveys the nitty-gritty details of crafting sentences, but, even more impressive, he communicates and instills in readers a deep appreciation for beautiful sentences that "do things the language you use every day would not have seemed capable of doing." Language lovers will flock to this homage to great writing. --Joanne Wilkinson

Review

"Both deeper and more democratic than *The Elements of Style*." (**Financial Times**)

"A guided tour through some of the most beautiful, arresting sentences in the English language." (**Slate**)

"[Fish] shares his connoisseurship of the elegant sentence." (**The New Yorker**)

"Stanley Fish just might be America's most famous professor." (**BookPage**)

"*How to Write a Sentence* is a compendium of syntactic gems—light reading for geeks." (**New York magazine**)

"*How to Write a Sentence* isn't merely a prescriptive guide to the craft of writing but a rich and layered exploration of language as an evolving cultural organism. It belongs not on the shelf of your home library but in your brain's most deep-seated amphibian sensemaking underbelly." (**Maria Popova, Brain Pickings**)

"[Fish's] approach is genially experiential—a lifelong reader's engagement whose amatory enthusiasm is an

attempt to overthrow Strunk & White's infamous insistences on grammar by rote.” (**New York Observer**)

“In this small feast of a book Stanley Fish displays his love of the English sentence. His connoisseurship is broad and deep, his examples are often breathtaking, and his analyses of how the masterpieces achieve their effects are acute and compelling.” (**New Republic**)

“A sentence is, in John Donne’s words, ‘a little world made cunningly,’ writes Fish. He’ll teach you the art.” (**People**)

“This splendid little volume describes how the shape of a sentence controls its meaning.” (**Boston Globe**)

“Like a long periodic sentence, this book rumbles along, gathers steam, shifts gears, and packs a wallop.” (**Roy Blount Jr.**)

“Language lovers will flock to this homage to great writing.” (**Booklist**)

“Fish is a personable and insightful guide with wide-ranging erudition and a lack of pretension.” (**National Post**)

“For both aspiring writer and eager reader, Fish’s insights into sentence construction and care are instructional, even inspirational.” (**The Huffington Post**)

“If you love language you’ll find something interesting, if not fascinating, in [*How to Write a Sentence*].” (**CBSNews.com**)

“[A] slender but potent volume. Fish, a distinguished law professor and literary theorist, is the anti-Strunk & White.” (**The Globe and Mail**)

“You’d get your money’s worth from the quotations alone...if you give this book the attention it so clearly deserves, you will be well rewarded.” (**Washington Times**)

“The fun comes from the examples cited throughout: John Updike, Jane Austen...all are cited throughout.” (**Washington Post**)

“*How to Write a Sentence* is the first step on the journey to the Promised Land of good writing.” (**Saudi Gazette**)

“*How to Write a Sentence* is a must read for aspiring writers and anyone who wants to deepen their appreciation of literature. If extraordinary sentences are like sports plays, Fish is the Vin Scully of great writing.” (**Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, authors of "They Say/I Say"**)

“Coming up with all-or-nothing arguments is simply what Fish does; and, in a sense, one of his most important contributions to the study of literature is that temperament...Whether people like Fish or not, though, they tend to find him fascinating.” (**The New Yorker**)

## Users Review

### From reader reviews:

**Joseph Jenkins:**

Here thing why this specific How to Write a Sentence: And How to Read One are different and reputable to be yours. First of all examining a book is good nonetheless it depends in the content than it which is the content is as tasty as food or not. How to Write a Sentence: And How to Read One giving you information deeper and different ways, you can find any reserve out there but there is no book that similar with How to Write a Sentence: And How to Read One. It gives you thrill reading journey, its open up your eyes about the thing in which happened in the world which is probably can be happened around you. You can bring everywhere like in park your car, café, or even in your means home by train. For anyone who is having difficulties in bringing the published book maybe the form of How to Write a Sentence: And How to Read One in e-book can be your alternate.

**Charles Wright:**

The book untitled How to Write a Sentence: And How to Read One contain a lot of information on the item. The writer explains her idea with easy way. The language is very simple to implement all the people, so do definitely not worry, you can easy to read this. The book was authored by famous author. The author brings you in the new period of literary works. It is possible to read this book because you can keep reading your smart phone, or model, so you can read the book with anywhere and anytime. If you want to buy the e-book, you can available their official web-site as well as order it. Have a nice study.

**Jeffrey Evans:**

That guide can make you to feel relax. That book How to Write a Sentence: And How to Read One was vibrant and of course has pictures on there. As we know that book How to Write a Sentence: And How to Read One has many kinds or genre. Start from kids until teenagers. For example Naruto or Investigator Conan you can read and believe you are the character on there. Therefore not at all of book are generally make you bored, any it can make you feel happy, fun and rest. Try to choose the best book for you personally and try to like reading which.

**Zandra Woods:**

What is your hobby? Have you heard this question when you got learners? We believe that that query was given by teacher on their students. Many kinds of hobby, Every individual has different hobby. Therefore you know that little person including reading or as studying become their hobby. You must know that reading is very important along with book as to be the matter. Book is important thing to include you knowledge, except your own personal teacher or lecturer. You get good news or update concerning something by book. Amount types of books that can you go onto be your object. One of them is How to Write a Sentence: And How to Read One.

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