

The background of the cover is a blue-tinted photograph of a desk. It features several sheets of paper, some with text and dates like 'MAY 4 2005'. A yellow highlighter is visible, along with a pen. The overall aesthetic is professional and academic.

The Logical Writing Method

Writing Fiction or Fact
The Logical Guide

James Michael Stephenson

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Chapter 1: Introduction

You could probably say I was not natural-born writer as I have only picked up what I know by trial and error over the years.

Although early reports suggested I might be good at languages, when I settled into secondary education, Mathematics definitely took over. I got two good A-level grades in Maths and one in Physics at 18, but I'd had to retake English O-Level¹ before I could hope to secure a place at University.

When I was taught Mathematics I would be shown step by step how to do something and then you would practice yourself and be corrected when you got it wrong.

When I learnt English I was told to read a book and report on it, or come up with a random story. There were no step by step instructions to follow so I had normally failed.

There is a certain magic and beauty to Mathematics. Describing different types of Infinity, proving one theorem from another or finding a simple answer to a chaotic question; all of these can give you a spark of wonder or a sense of accomplishment.

I made it into a *Mathematics with Computing* Degree at Exeter University but after a while I began to find much of it uninspiring and some of it pointless. The “with Computing” part of my degree didn't really amount to much, and what it did amount to was nothing much to do with Computing².

So I decided to swap to Computer Science after two terms. I lost a year, but having a second-first year wasn't that bad at all.³

Computer Science turned out to be a more inspiring choice for me than most of you might think. Exeter have some leading experts in Artificial Intelligence and Cognitive Science, and studying these subjects not only got me thinking, but it got me to start writing my thoughts down on paper.

¹ Equivalent to General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) grade C. I was in the last year of O-Levels before they were replaced by GCSEs.

² It was all about Numerical Analysis; writing stone-age programs to estimate the solutions of some very dull equations.

³ Luckily it was the days where the Student Grant paid for most of your expenses and my holiday jobs paid for my beer money.

I also had a few good lecturers, some of whom were very accomplished writers themselves and their guidance helped me more than ten years of English teachers had done at school.

Some professional writers and English teachers may argue that someone who is good at science is wired up differently to someone who is a gifted writer.

I agree completely, the higher your IQ, the better your ability to think about things more and the less you rely on instinct. So because you rely less on instinct you need to have a method to follow in order to be able to write competently.

If you have been given the gift of writing at an early age then you are lucky. But being a gifted thinker can be luckier.

If you are a gifted thinker then all you need is a method and some practice.

I am now a writer of both non-fiction and fiction, both in the realm of E-books and in-print. My published or yet-to-be published works include:

- Blackshift – a fiction of Time Travel in the mid 21st Century.
- Credo – on Belief and Meaning a Scientific World.
- The Geek's Guide to God – What is it? From Einstein to the Dalai Lama.
- Book of Big Questions – scientific questions answered with an open mind.

Chapter 2: The Method

Writing isn't something you have to be *born* good at.

Being good at Maths or Science does not mean that you have no imagination, nor does it mean you will never see your ideas in print.

But if it is not instinctive, if it doesn't come naturally, then all you need are some step by step instructions.

Having taught myself to write, I have developed this logical method in order to help the writer in everyone come out to play.

Some of the method is becoming instinctive, as it will with you, but I have captured the essence of it and present it here before it has been lost into my unconscious.

It is a method I use myself whenever I want to put pen to paper or fingers to keys. It is deliberately easy on the surface but the detail has substance.

The basic method is as follows:

- **What to Write?** - The first stage is to find something you want to write about.
- **Start to Write!** - The second stage is to start writing.
- **Get it Right!** - The third stage is to change it until it is right.

Each of these steps is described in some detail, with fully worked out examples and a cheat sheet is included at the end of the book. It highlights each of the stages and key tools you need to use in order to make your writing better.

It includes:

- How to generate and elaborate on ideas.
- How to write those ideas down and develop them.
- How to develop new opinions, perspectives and viewpoints.
- How to identify and develop characters, events, objects and places.
- How to present and review your work.
- How to get help or prepare for publishing.

Stage One: What to Write?

You get ideas from daydreaming. You get ideas from being bored. You get ideas all the time.

The only difference between writers and other people is we notice when we're doing it.

Neil Gaiman, 1997

Stage Two: Start Writing!

Any writer, I suppose, feels that the world into which he was born is nothing less than a conspiracy against the cultivation of his talent

James Baldwin, 1952

Stage Three: Get it Right!

When something can be read without effort,
great effort has gone into its writing.

Enrique Jardiel Poncela, 2008