

Joseph M. Williams, *Style: Towards Clarity and Grace*, U. Chicago Press, 1990.

Preface

1. The objective is “to explain how writers can improve the style and structure of their reports, analyses, articles, memoranda, proposals, monographs, books.”

“...we discuss neither how to prepare for nor how to produce a first draft...When we create a first draft, we should be most concerned with getting onto the page something that reflects what we had in mind when we began to write and, if we are lucky, something new that we didn't. But once we have made clear to ourselves what ideas, points, and arguments might be available, we then have to reshape that first draft to provide what our readers need. We write a first draft for ourselves; the drafts thereafter increasingly for the reader. This is the central objective of this book: to show how a writer quickly and efficiently transforms a rough first draft into a version crafted for the reader.”

2. “We have seen hundreds of students experience relief from doubts about their own competence when they realize that if they are unable to understand an article or monograph, it is not necessarily because they are incompetent, but because its author couldn't write clearly” (p. xi)

Complex writing

- May precisely reflect complex ideas,
- May gratuitously complicate complex ideas,
- May gratuitously complicate simple ideas.

“What counts most in comprehending a text is how much we already know about its content...since a competent writer usually knows his subject matter very well, perhaps too well, he is systematically handicapped in anticipating how easily readers will make sense of his text...a writer should give readers more help than he thinks they need.”

3. “We believe you will find here much that is familiar. What will seem new is the language we offer to articulate what you already know.”