

# Thirty Commandments for Writing Vigorous English

Brought Down from the Mountain and Offered to the Faithful  
By Michael Budds

1. Thou shalt not use colloquial speech or slang.
2. Thou shalt not use contractions.
3. Thou shalt not use abbreviations.
4. Thou shalt not use jargon except the jargon that all musicians are expected to understand.
5. Thou shalt not use clichés.
6. Thou shalt not include gratuitous information.
7. Thou shalt not anthropomorphize.
8. Thou shalt not use cute expressions (no chumminess with the reader).
9. Thou shalt not compromise the reader by using "we," "you," and "us." (Do use "I")
10. Thou shalt not use purple prose.
11. Thou shalt not use euphemisms or "educationese."
12. Thou shalt not adopt a redundant approach to language (avoid reusing a limited vocabulary).
13. Thou shalt not ignore the connotation and denotation of specific words.
14. Thou shalt not use strong words more than once.
15. Thou shalt not write with adjectives and adverbs, but with verbs.
16. Thou shalt not prefer Latin derivatives to Anglo-Saxon words.
17. Thou shalt not prefer the passive voice to the active voice. placement
18. Thou shalt not refer to historical figures by first name (first names may be used only if tradition for doing so pre-exists.) [Characterize historical figures as a courtesy and provide birth and death dates on first appearance of name in parentheses.]
19. Thou shalt not use sexist language (prefer gender neutral language).
20. Thou shalt not use numerals for numbers less than one hundred (write out).
21. Thou shalt not modify absolute adjectives.
22. Thou shalt not use meaningless intensifiers (i.e., "very")
23. Thou shalt not dangle modifiers.
24. Thou shalt not ignore the grammatical distinction between "which" and "that" (go on a "which" hunt). , which...  
...that...
25. Thou shalt not ignore the proper treatment of titles. [Italics for big works; quotation marks for small works or parts of works; the title of a work should be accompanied by the date of composition in parentheses as a courtesy.]
26. Thou shalt not ignore the logical effectiveness of connective words or phrases ("however," "in addition," "on the other hand," etc.)
27. Thou shalt not omit the comma before the conjunction in a series of three or more elements. Part of the beginning of
28. Thou shalt not place essential information in parentheses. - "m"-dash-shift-options-hyph
29. Thou shalt not fail to respect the need for parallel constructions when it is appropriate but will vary sentence structure as a matter of course.
30. Thou shalt not write by sentence but rather by paragraph (all paragraphs must have a subject sentence).

Orthodox rules of spelling, grammar, capitalization,  
and hyphenation must be respected.

## Thou Shalt Proofread!