

# Simplicity of Diction: Copywriting Tip #2

*By Will Newman*

*To attain primacy in your chosen vocational pursuit of copywriting and its adjunct services, remember the significance of eschewing sesquipedalian rhetorical constructs and the necessity of writing in a manner that replicates instinctive vocal phrasing and intonation.*

Translation: ***To be a successful copywriter, write like you talk.***

Your prospect won't read your writing if it's too hard to read. He has far too much going on to struggle over your words. Your writing *must* be an open door leading your reader into your ideas.

"To attain primacy ..." is a closed door. It stops your reader before he starts.

You want *everything* you write to be straightforward. Direct. Easy to read. That means using everyday words and relatively simple sentence structure.

## ***Keeping it straightforward ...***

But there's a potential problem here. You'll often hear writers say that writing that's easy to read reflects a simple mind. That it's immature. This is far from the truth.

Simple, straightforward writing is *not* immature. It is *not* dumbed down. It's writing that recognizes your reader's understanding is more important than the writer's ego.

My favorite novel is Cormack McCarthy's Pulitzer Prize winning *The Road*. It's written with words a fifth grader could understand. If you've read it, though, you know it's anything but simple. However, it does have *simplicity of diction*.

"Simple writing" lacks depth. It lacks substance, fresh ideas, and the ability to compel your reader forward.

"Simplicity of diction" communicates without trying to impress. It *sounds* simple ... but does not simplify ideas. It sounds natural and conversational. It's how you must write to be a successful copywriter.

# How do you know?

So how do you find out if your writing sounds natural and conversational? By measuring its "readability" [using the Flesch-Kincaid](#) (FK) measure of readability. I use it because it's accurate, simple, and it comes bundled with Microsoft Word. (If you don't use Word, search online for "readability.")

The FK tool measures a number of factors in your writing including how many syllables your words have, how long your sentences are, and how many passive sentences you've written.

When you use the FK tool, you come up with several different scores. The easiest to understand is FK Grade Level. You want your writing to be between 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade levels.

Cormack McCarthy, John Steinbeck, and Earnest Hemingway score in this range. And their ideas are *not* simple.

How did my opening paragraph rate? It scored a whopping 24.7!

What did this article score on the FK scale? 6.1 (6<sup>th</sup> Grade Level, not including the horrible first paragraph!)

I'll see you tomorrow when we'll talk about how to lower your FK grade level. In the meantime if you have any questions or comments, share them here.

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## 3 Responses to "Simplicity of Diction: Copywriting Tip #2"

I agree with you! When I broke down the contents of a letter so that the person who received it could understand it, I was told that I was unprofessional! I thought it was important that they understand; I still do. If people don't understand what you mean, what's the point?

*KarenB* – over a year ago

Flesch-Kincaid (FK) measure of readability. I looked at my latest version of Word for Mac and I see no "options." I love to use "big" words, especially in emails. In fact, I have one friend who says that she is learning more vocabulary from me, because she inevitably has to look up at least one word. But for copy, I would like the FK measure. It doesn't seem to be on my Word for Mac.

*Guest (MAM)* – over a year ago

The "write like you talk" concept is outstanding. Why try to act so "deep" by using all kind of big words that you probably have to look up, yourself. When the reader understand what you wrote, there is a better chance of them purchasing the "item" or "offer" in the copy.

*Guest (Mary D)* – over a year ago

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