

the POWER process

An NLP Approach To Writing

The POWER Process works; we know it does. This method has been tried and proven consistently. We began with an analysis of the process of successful writers, people who are efficient, and discovered some important elements that were common. We compared their patterns with those of people who have trouble writing. Then we distilled out the essence of the process, packaged it into a format that is easily taught and learned, and gave it to others.

What you won't find in this book are rules of grammar, sentence diagrams, and other artificial writing aids. We assume you already have something to say, and you want to say it clearly. You will find methods for improving your own thinking processes, touching with the skills and talents you have, and making use of the "rules" you already know.

Dixie Elise Hickman & Sid Jacobson



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Preface To POWER

Another book on writing? Will this one be any different from the others? Yes. And yes, this one has something the others are missing. *The POWER Process*? The title of this book isn't just a catchy phrase meant to sell books. It's a reflection of the techniques we'll teach you. We aren't promising you fame or fortune. We do promise to get you writing better, faster, easier and more often. By the way, you'll have more fun, too.

WHAT THIS BOOK IS ABOUT

The POWER Process works; we know it does. This model has been tried and proven consistently. We began with analyzing the writing process of successful writers, people who are effective and efficient, and discovered some important elements they had in common. We compared their patterns with those of people who have trouble writing. Then we distilled out the necessities in the process, packaged them in a form easily taught and learned, and gave it to others. Their improvement in writing has shown us how well we have done.

What you won't find here are rules of grammar, sentence diagrams, and other standard fare. Nor will you find invention techniques and artificial writing assignments. We assume you already have something to say, and you want to say it better. That's why you picked up this book. What you will find here are methods for improving your own thinking processes, getting in touch with the skills and talents you have, and making better use of the "rules" you already know.

HOW THIS BOOK DIFFERS FROM OTHERS

There are things in this book never before included in any book on writing, as well as new combinations of more familiar things.

First on the list of differences is Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP for short). Essentially, NLP is a model of human communication. It was developed to study the elements of excellence itself, regardless of the subject or activity. It gives us the tools to build the best possible model(s) of anything that works well. We use NLP in everything we do. It guarantees our effectiveness.

Second is a simple, but not oversimplified, model of what to do when you write, a model based on what effective writers actually do and how they use their thinking processes while they do it. Drawing on current research in the processes of writing and creativity, we go beyond those models using the tools of NLP, and package the result so that you can use it. Best of all, although you will be using the same thought processes as truly effective writers, you will be able to maintain and even enhance your own personal style.

Third, this book will actually get you writing as you go through it, step by step. No matter how incapable or how stuck you think you are, we'll guide you through the same steps that create successful results for others, and you will create them as well. These steps take place inside your head and in your behavior, as well as on your paper or your word processor. And the process is self-reinforcing in nature. It feeds on its own success. So as you step through the work book experiments, use the material you are actually working on—or wish you were working on. This book will help you unlock your creative juices and release the power of your ideas.

Fourth, while this is primarily a book about writing, you will find yourself applying these principles and techniques to other areas of your life. You may even surprise and delight yourself as the learning from this book automatically expands into other parts of your thinking and behavior.

Fifth, these new styles of thinking you learn will not only get you writing but will also teach you a lot about yourself and people in general. Writing is a very personal thing, and anything that makes you a better person can make you a better writer.

Finally, you will be building enjoyment into the learning and writing process. When you enjoy what you are doing, you learn it faster, do it more, do it better, and want to do it again and again. That doesn't mean we'll take all the work out of writing. Good writing will still take time and effort. But it can also be a lot of fun.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is designed so that you can read it at your leisure, use it as a work book to actually guide yourself through a writing project, and keep it handy as a reference guide for handling special problems or situations.

There's a second Preface that describes our ethics and attitudes toward you. Then in *Part I: POWER Sources*, the first two chapters give you a general overview of what we'll be working with. *The Context of POWER* introduces our model of the writing process. It also explains why many writers run into writing blocks; it's very easy to lose awareness of the complete context of your writing. *The Power of NLP* explains some techniques for using your brain more effectively and gets you started on using it to write more effectively.

The next four chapters in **Part II: The POWER Process** take you step by step through the POWER process. We'll introduce you to some other writers who've solved their writing problems using our methods to make their writing more comfortable, more streamlined and more effective. Then we'll guide you in using these methods as you step through the process with your own writing project. These exercises will literally install effective writing strategies in your thought processes, both conscious and unconscious, and in your behavior. You will learn to elicit your own best states of mind for certain tasks and train yourself so that you can get into the proper frame of mind when you want to.

Part III: POWER Applications deals with special kinds of writing and how the POWER process can be applied or adapted to such situations as literary writing (fiction, poetry, and drama), business correspondence, and school papers. In the **Appendix** you'll find extra worksheets, answers to the most common questions and problems people have with writing, and a streamlined quick-reference guide through the POWER Process. And finally, there's a brief bibliography for more specialized concerns and for further exploration of NLP.

Although we recommend starting at the beginning and reading and working on through with a specific writing project, you may want to go ahead with the first two chapters while you decide how you want to apply it first. Or you may want to work on several projects at the same time. However you begin, this is a book to be used—and enjoyed. So read on, and more POWER to you!

Chapter Three

The POWER Of Neuro-Linguistic Programming

Having an understanding of the writing process is one thing. Actually getting into the process comfortably and effectively, is, for many people, quite another. This chapter will introduce you to the techniques we can use to get ourselves in gear, to motivate ourselves to really do what we intend to do. You'll learn how you can tap your own powers of concentration and your best internal resources to accomplish the things you want to do.

INTRODUCTION TO NLP

“Neuro WHAT?” is the usual response when we say “Neuro-Linguistic Programming” to the uninitiated. That is one of the reasons it has that name: it fosters curiosity. “Neuro” pays tribute to the brain, that marvelous organ that controls so much. “Linguistic” acknowledges the power of language on the way we think. “Programming” puts the emphasis on the way we direct our brains to function. Once the confusion about the name passes, people find one of the most fascinating sets of tools they have ever experienced. Although NLP will soon be familiar to all literate people, we recognize that it is presently unknown to most. Out of the many books and articles available on NLP, we've included some of our favorites in the bibliography.

Of course you don't need all the techniques and models of NLP to be an effective writer. But some of them can help tremendously. We're going to introduce you to NLP techniques for motivation, creativity, decision making, objectivity, and other universally useful components. Then we'll show you how to use them to make yourself a more effective writer.

Like any specialized field, NLP has its own jargon—short-hand names for labeling certain sets of experience. Here are some of the most important:

States Of Consciousness

State of mind, state of awareness, mood, etc. are all roughly synonymous with state of consciousness. From now on, we'll simply call them states. For our purposes, we are interested in particular states—for example, the right state of mind for writing, for getting organized, or for being creative. The important thing is that we learn a method for distinguishing one state from another, so that we can explore its usefulness, modify it as we see fit, control it, and get it whenever we want.

Actually, we all go in and out of many states of consciousness all the time. Probably hundreds each day. These are what are called natural states, though this probably isn't the most useful term. Neither is the term "altered state," since that almost makes them sound unnatural. Some states are easier to tell from others, however, just in our own experience of them. So it is usually best to talk about that experience of being in a particular state as compared to some other. That's what we'll be concentrating on here.

This brings us to the method for identifying particular discrete states. The elements that help us define a given state of consciousness are based on the five senses: visual (sight), auditory (hearing), kinesthetic (feelings), olfactory (smell), and gustatory (taste). In a particular state of mind, external sensory detail is less important than our internal experience. In our system, visual refers to our internal pictures, auditory to our internal sounds, kinesthetic to feelings (both tactile and internal), and olfactory-gustatory (combined for convenience) to smells and tastes. A particular state is simply the sum total of each of these four components at a given time. Remember, this is only an experiential definition of a state. It doesn't include any objectively verifiable physiological data (blood pressure, metabolic rate, temperature, respiration, EEG readings, galvanic skin response, etc.) because that isn't important for our purpose. Be aware that these things do change along with our experiences, but measuring them is irrelevant in this context.

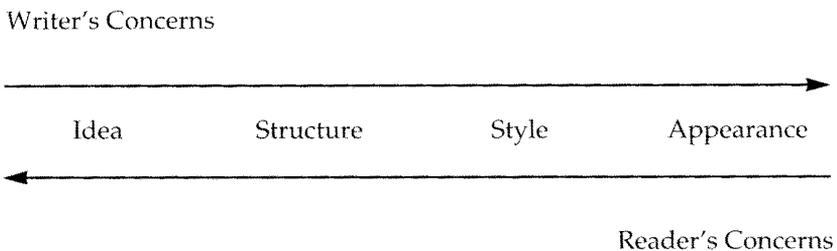
Changing one part of a given state has a ripple effect on the other parts. That is how we go from one state of mind to another. We can control our internal images, the voices in our heads and so forth, so we can choose at will, to change the states we don't like to ones we do. To begin with, we can think of each of the sensory modes as an independent part. For example, often we are

POLISHING THE SURFACE

The very last step of evaluating and revising is Proofseeing. Now is the time, when you're sure your content and style fulfill your expectations, to check those surface factors, like spelling, grammar, and punctuation, that can destroy the reader's response. Don't underestimate their importance, for these are the first things a reader will notice if the errors interfere with reading. But don't let them get out of place in the process.

Considering the differences between the processes of reading and writing can put the hierarchy of Evaluating and Revising into perspective. The writer's concerns begin with generating an idea and getting it into words, then move to polishing the style of those words, and finally shift to presenting the material to the reader. A reader's impressions, however, begin at the other end. The diagram below, although it oversimplifies somewhat, illustrates the hierarchy of editorial elements in the order the writer is concerned with them and in the order they affect the reader's opinions.

Figure 7.1
Hierarchy Of Editorial Elements



This last step is traditionally called proofreading, or copyreading, and those terms emphasize the major problem in the task. When we read, we seldom see the details of a word. We see the general outline, and our knowledge of context fills in the detail. When we proofread our own writing, the problem is compounded; we see what we intended to write, not necessarily what is actually written.

In the individual conferences Dixie holds, when she asks clients about their understanding of grammatical or structural errors, they often say something like, “Why, I read right over that. And I read through this paper four times!” That’s exactly what happens: people *read* over and through the writing on the paper to get at the ideas. In this final stage, you want to *see* what’s actually there, not *read* what you intended to have written. Changing the term to proofseeing emphasizes the real nature of the task and helps program the brain to do it more effectively.

STEPPING INTO YOUR OWN WRITING

The next two exercises will help you evaluate and revise your own writing. They are presented sequentially. In practice, however, you will actually interrupt your evaluation to revise from your viewpoint of the communication context. That done, you’ll return to evaluating from your reader’s side of the picture, and then revise again.

Evaluating

Now is the time to invite the critics in your mind to voice their opinions, both positive and negative, about your writing. You’ll begin with content and then work down to sentence structure and tone.

Evaluating Your Writing

1. Take the outline (list, flow chart, whatever) you made while Organizing and check each item with your written draft. Did you get in everything you intended? The actual order in which you treated each item may be different now, and that’s fine. You’re simply making sure you’ve included all the necessary information. Once that’s done, you won’t need that outline any more.
2. You began this project with an idea in mind, a purpose. With this idea firmly in mind now, go through your manuscript to see if what you wrote matches what you meant. Does it unfold in an orderly manner? Does it feel logical? As you hear what you wrote, what images do the words create in your mind? Do these images match your intent?

You may find places that aren't right. Make a note to yourself at that spot, so you'll remember what you need to repair. Unless it's something that can be fixed quickly, without losing your train of thought, leave it alone for now. Just note that something needs to be done, and keep on reading.

3. If you have major content repairs to make, such as complete restructuring (return to Organizing) or a large chunk of missing information to fill in (return to Previewing: Experience), do that now. If not, go on to step 4.

4. When you're sure the content matches your intention, check for compatibility with your Self. Get yourself firmly into the role you've chosen for this project. Remember those feelings of confidence and authority. Read your manuscript again, this time listening carefully to your own voice. Do you sound the way you want to? Is the rhythm appropriate? Comfortable? Did you maintain your role consistently?

There is, of course, a definite difference between the spoken and written word. But effective communication carries the sound of the human voice with it. Listening to your voice will pinpoint places you may want to make some stylistic changes. Some phrases may feel awkward. Some sentences may be too long, or too short. Generally, though, if you can say it comfortably, out loud, without losing your breath, your audience will be able to read it comfortably.

Again, as you read, make changes only if you can do so quickly, without losing your consciousness of your role. Otherwise, simply make notes to yourself about what the problems are as you continue through the manuscript.

5. If you have major changes to make here, after evaluating from your own point of view, proceed to the Revising part of the writing process. Then come back to Evaluating, step 6, to consider your audience's point of view.

6. Once the content matches your intention and the general style is compatible with your role, you need to be sure that your audience will get the same concept and will respond as you wish. So call up your picture of your audience. Put yourself in much the same position as when you were trying

Distilling the essence of what makes a writer successful, *The POWER Process* applies the NLP model specifically to writing of every kind, showing how to perfect writing techniques, and get it right! If you need to write effective copy at work, or if you are keen to embark on creative projects, this invaluable aid and reference guide will revolutionize and energize your approaches to writing.

Dixie Elise Hickman

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Sid Jacobson

has been working in NLP since 1978, and was one of the early trainers certified by the Society of NLP. Though beginning as a psychotherapist, he has worked broadly in NLP as a researcher, trainer and consultant. He holds a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology and is an expert on the application of NLP to education and training, having written the classic three-volume set *Meta-Cation*. He founded and directs the South Central Institute of NLP in New Orleans.



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"If you want people to enjoy reading your masterpiece, and keep asking for more, Sid's SPACE story is probably worth the price of the first print run of this book."
—Diana Beaver, author of *Easy Being and Lazy Learning*.

"The authors have pioneered new ground. This excellent, readable and practical book charts the path for effective writing by using the high-level distinctions of excellence from the field of NLP and will especially make a difference in the field of business writing."
—L. Michael Hall, Ph.D., author of *The Spirit of NLP and Secrets of Personal Mastery*.

"Much more than just a 'how to' book, Sid and Dixie have written *The POWER Process* so that you experience using the process as you read. They offer a wonderful example of using Neuro-Linguistic Programming to model the strategies of experts in a field and pass the model on for others to use – gently, easily and humorously. You will find yourself motivated to tackle all your writing projects more skilfully and with new enthusiasm, to benefit you and your readers alike."
—Jo Cooper, NLP Trainer and Master Practitioner.

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