

What is good writing?

Good writing expresses clear thinking through clear prose.
It is clear, logical, and persuasive.
It has substance.

Why does good writing matter?

You have ideas that matter to you.
You want to persuade others that your ideas are worth considering.
Your ideas lack weight unless you present them clearly and support them with evidence.

What are the elements of a good essay?

It has a central idea or thesis.
It supports the thesis with evidence.
It presents the evidence in a logical, organized fashion.

Why are paragraphs important?

They are the organizational skeleton of your essay.
The logical sequence of paragraphs helps the reader understand what you wish to say.
The internal order or coherence of a paragraph helps the reader follow what you are saying.

What is "substance?"

The substance of your essay is the evidence and reasoning for your thesis, your argument. Merely writing about a topic does not give your essay substance.
Correct spelling, punctuation, proper use of words, and attention to mechanical aspects of writing constitute a necessary condition of good writing; they are not the substance.
Clear organization (introduction, body paragraphs, conclusion, proper composition of paragraphs) constitutes a necessary condition of good writing; it is not the substance.

What are the qualities a good thesis?

It explains, interprets, or analyzes something.
Avoid a thesis statement that says you are going to show that something is the case (description).
Compose a thesis statement that shows why something is the case (explanation).
Compose a thesis with an appropriate field of explanation.
Avoid a thesis that is too broad for the format. You cannot explain the American Civil War in a three-page essay.
Avoid a thesis that is too narrow for the format.

What is happening when you write?

Writing is a way to more completely master a subject and to enhance your understanding of it.
When you write, your mind is working and it makes connections you did not see before.
When you write, you may change your mind.
When you write, you may think of a more persuasive argument than the one you began with.

Why is writing hard?

It should be obvious by now!
You have to think of what you want to say.
You have to find ways to say it clearly.
You must have the patience and diligence to work through the stages of writing.

Prewriting involves taking notes, making outlines, composing disjointed paragraphs, thinking about what you want to say.
Completing a draft does not mean that you are almost finished. You have merely finished the first stage.
You have to revise your drafts, line by line, word by word, several times.

How can I learn to write well?

It takes a lot of work and time to improve your writing.
You need patience.
You need dedication.
You need high standards.
You approach writing as a form of craftsmanship.
You pay attention to detail to eliminate grammatical errors.
You strive for thoroughness.
You approach revision of your drafts as working on more than cosmetic change.
You rely on the suggestions of others on how to improve your writing.

Writing is a social process.
Professional writers---journalists, novelists, and scholars---depend on editors and peers to sharpen their writing.

What are some common errors in writing that really bug Commins?

Comma splices
Incomplete sentences
Confusing its and it's
Inconsistent verb tenses
Incorrect agreement between noun and pronoun, between noun/pronoun and verb.