

A Cheater's Desk Reference for Copywriters

27 Tips, Tricks and Techniques
to Help You Work Less
and Make More

Special Bonus...
Michael
Masterson's
Panel-Review
Technique

How to Write A
Promo "Overnight"

How to Borrow
Ideas Without
Breaking the Law

Idea Starters:
95 Headlines
Archetypes to
Get Your Creative
Juices Flowing

The "Ben Franklin"
(and Other Secret
Ways to Close a
Sales Pitch)

How to Write
Guarantees That
Guarantee You a
Winning Package

5 Ways to Create
a Powerful and
Passionate P.S.

The 12 Elements
of a Strong
Order Device

Be A Much Better –
and Faster –
Copywriter by
Avoiding the
Biggest Mistake
Most Writers Make

Copyright © 2006 by American Writers & Artists Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Published by:

**American Writers & Artists Inc.
245 NE 4th Avenue, Suite 102
Delray Beach, FL 33483**

Phone: 866-879-2924 Fax: 561-278-5929

Website: www.awaionline.com

A Cheater's Desk Reference for Copywriters

27 Tips, Tricks and Techniques
to Help You Work Less and Make More

Introduction

The more copy you produce, the more money you make. (That's a no-brainer!) And the obvious way to do that is to wake up earlier, go to bed later, and discipline yourself to keep your nose to the grindstone.

But that's not the lifestyle we were after when we went into copywriting, is it?

Fortunately, there are many ways to speed up your production time — shortcuts experienced copywriters take that allow them to crank out package after package and still enjoy hours of freedom every day.

How do they do it? That's what this special report is all about.

How to Write a Promo “Overnight”

Maybe you’ve heard about “just-in-time” manufacturing. This is where companies streamline the production process so they can fill orders almost the moment they’re made — but without the waste or risk of stockpiled inventory.

There’s also a form of “just-in-time” copywriting. In truth, it’s almost an inverse metaphor to its factory-tooled cousin.

In “just-in-time” copywriting, what you’re doing IS stockpiling. You’re actually preparing yourself to write several promos at once by using shortcuts already figured out for you by other writers. Here are some of the ways you can make it work:

1. Follow the formula(s).

This might be the most obvious of the secrets. Surely, you’ve seen a formulaic movie you’ve loved, read a formulaic book you couldn’t put down, or heard a verse-chorus-verse pop song that worked just fine. In sales copy, there are formulas too. Identify them and use them as a framework for your next sales letter (Attention-Interest-Desire-Action, Promise-Picture-Proof-Push, etc.).

Keep a blank “framework” document that lists each element of your favorite formula, followed by enough white space or a line-break. When you’re ready to start your next promo, simply fill in the blanks as you sift through your pile of research.

2. Build a “plot-line” library from past controls.

There are only so many classic “plots” for stories. In fact, it’s been said that every Hollywood movie has been built around one or another

of 13 recycled themes. And if that's true for movies, it's definitely true of direct-marketing letters.

Visit your swipe file and pick out the winners. Take apart the best controls to see how they were put together. John Forde calls this the “filet of soul” approach to package outlining — where you carve away the copy and extract the bones of its outline.

Use a similar outline to build your own promo, using your own research and prose. Keep a file of outlines for use later on.

This is also a great way to get jumpstarted when you're stuck. Just be careful how much you borrow. You don't want to get accused of plagiarism or copyright infringement. (More about this a little later.)

3. Create your own promo-construction kit.

For products you write for over and over, ready yourself ahead of time with a “toolbox” of key elements. This is especially useful for sales letters that use the same sidebars between packages.

For instance, you might not know the lead of your next promo for “Widget X,” but you know testimonials will come in handy. Write the testimonial sidebar. Then write one with news clippings. Write another with a third-party endorsement letter. Then drop them all into a folder on your computer desktop called “Widget X Credibility Sidebars.”

You'll have them ready to go when the next assignment for that project rolls in.

4. Prepare more.

For the writer who gets lost or loses steam, spending more time on the outline before actually writing can be tedious at first, but help speed the process. Especially in the later stages and in the revision process.

Doing more preliminary work is also great advice for any newbie writer who's nervous about what to do next.

5. Prepare less.

On the other hand, maybe your problem is too much preparation.

Lawrence Block, a novelist, says he prefers writing fast. He just

plunges in and lets momentum take him where it will. The resulting copy, for him, is fresher and more powerful. This might be especially profitable for the experienced writer.

Outlining is good. Research is good. But once you've poured your coffee and cracked your knuckles, sometimes the best thing to do is just start typing.

6. Build a library of graphic templates.

Some writers actually write their copy inside a desktop-publishing program. If you know Quark or Adobe InDesign, this tip might work for you too.

Start collecting a library of graphic templates. Ask designers to give you their files on CD. Use the files to create graphic templates with notes to yourself ("track record goes here" ... "sales close starts here" ... "main headline goes here").

Next time you're in a rush, fill in the blanks. It's a little like writing on an assembly line. And you might find that watching the design and copy develop at the same time gives you a better feel for how your reader will see what you produce.

Warning: The downside to this is that, if you're a perfectionist, you could lose time tinkering with the graphics in the same way you tinker with the copy. So be careful. Know thyself.

7. Don't re-invent the wheel.

Of course, you can't churn out every new promo to be like the last one. If you do, you'd deflate the value of your own innovations. Who wants to keep paying for the same work — no matter how creative — over and over again?

Still, since some things are just so much the same between files, it would be a shame to start from scratch each time. For instance, keep a generic guarantee paragraph that you re-write between packages. Do the same for the reply page. Paste the old one into your new document and adapt. Couldn't be simpler.

Even if you keep only the formatting of the original pieces, you save time. And you get a de facto checklist of elements you know you'll need to include.

How to Borrow Ideas Without Breaking the Law

When you're writing a promotion, you gather a ton of material to support the claims in your letter. How do you know what you can legally use?

Let's start with terminology. What, exactly, IS copyright infringement?

According to Matt Turner, senior lawyer for a major publishing company: "In the context of the written word, copyright infringement is literally stealing (i.e., 'copying') someone else's words without permission. However, ideas themselves aren't copyrightable." (This, obviously, is a controversial point.)

In the shortest terms, what puts you most at risk is representing someone else's work *directly* and *exactly* as your own.

Once you have this simple concept clear in your mind, you have to deal with the nuances. For instance, *journalistic* and *commercial* speech do **NOT** have the same freedoms.

Matt explains: "In commercial speech, the law is not as favorable to the writer ... advertising copy is commercial speech, since its aim is to sell."

So, what does that mean?

It does **NOT** mean that you're barred from citing great stats or famous quotes. In fact, quite the opposite. A good citation or borrowed anecdote — provided you don't violate "fair use" laws (another can of worms) — can actually *increase* your credibility and legitimacy rather than threaten it.

The big difference between journalism and promo writing, says Matt, is the use of images and photos. Including, by the way, those photos for which you can buy the rights. “You can’t use someone’s photo to sell something without his permission. On the other hand, you **CAN** use the same photo in a new story or editorial. Because it’s news, not the key element of a sales pitch.”

Okay, that seems pretty clear, yes? So what about data and stats?

“Pure data has little or no copyright protection, either. You can’t and shouldn’t just steal a chart outright. However, if the information you’re using is something publicly observable that someone took the time to gather — and you find your own way to represent it — you should be fine.”

What about the slightly sticky area of the “essence” or outline of an idea?

“Ideas are **NEVER** legally safe,” says Matt. “It’s only the actual expression of the idea that’s protected.”

Phew! Sounds like an intellectual free-for-all! But don’t lick your chops just yet, you unscrupulous mongrel. “Stealing someone’s work can cost you plenty,” warns Matt, “especially if it can be shown you cut into their business by taking their words.”

So, what have we learned here?

You can use data to punch up your points ... you can use quotes that fortify credibility ... you can even make vigorous adaptations of one or two borrowed ideas along the way. But ... stealing material outright is different. How so? Well, if you feel like you’re cheating, you probably are.

Let the tingle in your spine be your guide.

A Mini Masters Lesson in Writing Winning Headlines

Research shows that certain types of headlines work better at drawing your prospect into the copy.

To make a headline work, you have to make it specific enough to be intriguing but vague enough to provoke curiosity. The purpose of the headline is not to sell the prospect — it is to capture his attention and engage him in the selling process.

Following are nine frequently-used types of headlines. Pick up just about any successful sales letter and you'll likely run into one of them:

1. The “How To...” headline.

This is the most popular and most effective of the archetypes. A good place to start with any assignment. Many headlines aren't nearly as compelling if you remove the “how to.” These two words act as a command for your prospect to carry out.

Examples:

- ▲ “How to End Your Money Worries Forever”
- ▲ “How to Win Friends and Influence People”

2. The Big Benefit Headline.

This headline puts your biggest, most compelling benefit right up front.

Examples:

- ▲ “Earn \$5,000 Next Weekend Without Leaving Your EasyBoy Recliner”
- ▲ “Pay Zero Taxes Next Year!”
- ▲ “Lose 40 Pounds in 7 Days Without Dieting!”

3. The News-Style Headline.

This refers to a headline that sounds like editorial copy. To make it work well, it is helpful to have some legitimate news to talk about. You might, for example, be promoting a new product. Or you might uncover some new facts related to an old product.

Examples:

- ▲ “New Natural Hormone Promises to End Cancer Without Chemotherapy”
- ▲ “Dentists Are Outraged — New Book Reveals How to Get Free Dental Care!”
- ▲ “Skinny School Teacher Gains 15 Pounds of Muscle With Miracle Meal”

4. The Anxiety Headline.

Scare your prospect into paying attention. Give him a problem and the hope of solving it.

Examples:

- ▲ “What Will You Do When Your Personal Assets Are Seized to Satisfy a Judgment Against Your Corporation?”
- ▲ “Do You Make These Mistakes in English?”

5. The Personal Revelation Headline.

Offer an interesting admission about a topic your prospect should be interested in.

Examples:

- ▲ “They Thought I Was Crazy to Ship Maine Lobsters as Far as 1,800 Miles From the Ocean.”
- ▲ “The Lazy Man’s Way to Riches”

-
- ▲ “They Laughed When I Sat Down to Play the Piano ... But When I Started to Play”

6. The Question Headline.

Ask a question that implies a promise, a benefit, or a solution. (But make absolutely sure you know what your prospect’s answer will be.)

Examples:

- ▲ “Why Is Your Dog Eating Dirt?”
- ▲ “Tired of Making Your Boss Rich?”
- ▲ “Do You Close the Bathroom Door When No One Is Home?”

7. The Testimonial Headline.

If you’ve done your research, and have a convincing case history, this can be one of the easiest headlines to write ... and very powerful.

Examples:

- ▲ “I Gambled with 3 Cents and Won \$35,850 in 2 Years.”
- ▲ “I Couldn’t Believe My Eyes When I Tore Open the Envelope!”

8. The Story Headline.

Everyone likes to read a good story.

Examples:

- ▲ “The Insult that Made a Man Out of Tim Riley.”
- ▲ “The Greatest Story Ever Told”

9. The Guarantee Headline.

When you are pretty sure your prospect wants your product — and you want to give him a reason to choose yours over the competition — this type of headline can be very effective.

Examples:

- ▲ “Play Guitar in 7 Days or Your Money Back!”
- ▲ “The Most Comfortable Shoes You’ve Ever Worn, or Your Money Back!”

One way you can make your headline writing faster and better is to write a half dozen or so headlines for each of these nine types. *Here are a few to start...*

Idea Starters: 95 Headline Archetypes to Get Your Creative Juices Flowing

1. Let Me Help You ____ In *[time frame]*
2. Get Rid Of Your ____ Forever!
3. How You Can ____ In The Next *[time frame]*
4. Give Me [#] Days And I'll ____
5. Make A Million By ____ In *[time frame]*
6. The Fastest And Easiest Way To ____
7. The Secret Of ____
8. The Secret Of ____ — Yours If You Qualify
9. Secrets Of ____
10. [#] Ways To ____
11. [#] Ways To Avoid ____
12. [#] Steps To ____
13. What Never Ever To ____
14. Amazing Techniques For ____
15. The Truth About ____
16. What You Should Know About ____
17. The One Sensible Way To ____
18. What Every ____ Should Know
19. *[problem]* — How To Fix It
20. Why You ____
21. What Makes ____?
22. What It Takes To ____
23. You ____ — We Do The Rest
24. What Everybody Ought To Know About ____
25. Little-Known Ways To ____

-
26. The Wrong Way And The Right Way To _____
 27. Do You Recognize The [#] Early Warning Signs Of _____?
 28. See How Easily You Can _____
 29. You Don't Have To Be _____ To _____
 30. [#] Ways To Beat _____
 31. Thousands Now _____ Who Never Thought They Could
 32. When Experts _____, This Is What They Do
 33. Science Finds _____
 34. The Greatest _____ In [#] Years
 35. Buy No *[product type]* Till You've Seen *[product name or description]*
 36. [#] _____ That Will Change _____ In *[time frame]*
 37. Man Who _____ Gets _____
 38. The Ultimate _____
 39. The World's Greatest _____
 40. Your _____ Is In Imminent Danger
 41. A Rare Opportunity To _____
 42. Be One Of The First To _____
 43. Why *[product name]* *[does something]* Other *[product type]* Can't
 44. Now, Have The *[benefit]* Of A *[something that seems expensive]* That You Can Afford
 45. A *[product type]* That Looks Expensive And Is Wonderfully *[additional benefit]*
 46. It LOOKS Like *[something expensive]*, It FEELS Like *[something else that's expensive]*, But It'll *[unique benefit]*
 47. For _____ Who Want _____
 48. _____ In *[time frame]* With This New Method
 49. What's New In _____
 50. New Concept In _____
 51. How An Uninformed _____ Made A Fortune In _____
 52. How An Unexpected _____ Changed My _____

-
53. How I _____ In *[time frame]*
 54. Confessions Of A _____
 55. How I _____ By _____
 56. I _____ Until I _____
 57. How's This For _____?
 58. Suppose _____?
 59. How I Improved My _____
 60. Do You Make These Mistakes In _____?
 61. The Lazy Man's Way To _____
 62. The *[adjective]* Man's Way To _____
 63. Read This And _____
 64. How to _____
 65. How To _____ By _____
 66. How To _____ In *[time frame]*
 67. How To Turn _____ Into _____
 68. How To Get _____ From _____
 69. How To Improve Your _____
 70. How To Start _____
 71. How To Have _____
 72. How To Make _____ *[do something great]*
 73. You Can Laugh At _____ — If You _____
 74. Want To Be _____?
 75. *[product]* For Only *[cost]*
 76. Double Your Money Back If This Isn't The Best _____
You've Ever _____
 77. _____, Or Your Money Back
 78. Free Report Tells You _____
 79. Free! Our Latest _____
 80. How To Get Free _____
 81. Open Note To Anyone Who Has _____
 82. A Warning To _____ Who _____

-
83. Are You Ever _____?
 84. To People Who Want To _____ But Can't
 85. Dare To Be _____!
 86. Tired Of _____?
 87. Fed Up With _____?
 88. Read This Or _____!
 89. An Invitation To _____
 90. Should You _____?
 91. Are You _____?
 92. Are You Ashamed Of _____?
 93. You'll Never _____ Again!
 94. Have/Own A _____ You Can Be Proud Of
 95. Wanted: _____

The Masters: Use The "S" Factor to Boost Readership and Response

By Bob Bly

Want to boost your response? Add an "s" to the verb in your headline.

Example: In a lecture, direct-marketing consultant Shell Alpert told the story of a marketer selling a home-study course on playing the piano. By adding an "s" to the verb in the headline, it changed from "Put Music in Your Life" to "Puts Music in Your Life" — and substantially increased response.

Why it works: "Put Music in Your Life" makes the reader do the work. "Puts Music in Your Life" implies that the product is doing the work.
