

Voice in Writing

When we talk about voice in writing, we talk about personality-on-paper. When writing contains voice we sit up straight because it feels like an actual person is talking to us. When writing lacks voice it sounds cold, stiff, and lifeless. Such writing usually does not make us want to read it:

At the conclusion of the year, it is imperative that all children make a thorough and conscientious search for any and all missing library books. Each student will be held responsible for the full replacement cost of lost books.

Writing with voice sounds personal. It has the quirks and rhythms of real human speech:

“Library books are precious resources. Honestly, as a librarian I consider books my close personal friends—I couldn’t imagine living without them. I’d be so grateful if you would look through your backpacks, under your bed, in your bookcases, for any library books you might have forgotten to return, and bring them to the library before June 10th. Thanks!”

Writing with voice may include:

- *ungrammatical sentences (sentence fragments, for example)
- *conversational language and expressions
- *punctuation used in surprising ways

Voice is not just the “frosting on the cake” of the writing. Rather it is the crucial human element that fuses us to whoever is writing, and what is being written. Voice makes us want to keep reading.

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