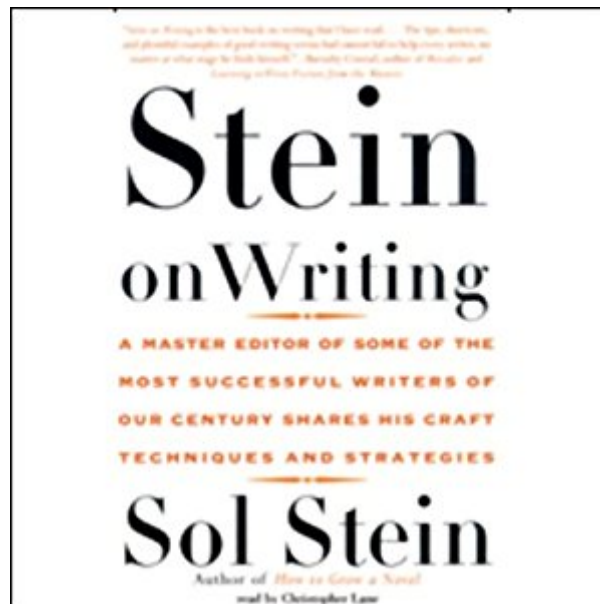


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# Stein On Writing: A Master Editor Shares His Craft, Techniques, And Strategies



## Synopsis

Stein on Writing provides immediately useful advice for writers of fiction and nonfiction, whether newcomers or accomplished professionals. As Sol Stein, renowned editor, author, and instructor, explains, "This is not a book of theory. It is a book of usable solutions, how to fix writing that is flawed, how to improve writing that is good, how to create interesting writing in the first place." With examples from his best sellers as well as aspiring students' writing, Stein offers detailed sections on characterization, dialogue, pacing, flashbacks, liposuctioning flab, the "triage" method of revision, using the techniques of fiction to enliven nonfiction, and more.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 11 hours and 16 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Blackstone Audio, Inc.

Audible.com Release Date: June 9, 2004

Language: English

ASIN: B0002P0DAK

Best Sellers Rank: #48 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Nonfiction > Language Arts &

Disciplines #56 in Books > Reference > Writing, Research & Publishing Guides > Publishing &

Books > Authorship #113 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Nonfiction > Reference

## Customer Reviews

Aristotle taught us that plot is everything. But then came Lajos Egri with Art of Dramatic Writing and told us that no it is character that creates plot. If you still reside in the plot creates character camp then stay away from Stein on Writing. Sol Stein goes as far as to say that that method is for hacks. That authoritative no nonsense do it this way or you're wrong attitude is what I love about this book. He doesn't stumble around in the dark mumbling out fancy writers' jargon. He covers everything and you better believe he will be clear about what and what not to do. Many of these reviews already tell the specifics of the contents so I won't repeat that. I just wanted to make it clear that all the reviews for this book are either going to be 1 star from plot based writers, or 5 stars from character based writers. I've read this book 3 times already and I keep it next to me while I write along with the above Lajos Egri book and Bill Johnson's A Story is a Promise. Stein specifically laid it out in such a way that it could be used for quick reference. And you will use it that way. Buy this book and use it. It's

worth a lot more to you than the \$\$ he's asking for.

Any aspiring writer looking to start a library of essential writing books should make Sol Stein's "Stein on Writing" the cornerstone of that library. It captures the craft better than any ten other writing books and does so in a manner that other books do not: it gets to the point. No review can capture the essence of the book perfectly because the author is so multitalented. As an editor, author, publisher, and book doctor, Stein brings a wealth of wisdom. His greatest skill, though, is cutting through the drivel other books peddle by telling writers what really will take their work to the next level. For instance, his chapter on pacing techniques is unique to all the writing books I've encountered. If you want to know how to cut the flab from your work, Stein gives the best advice you'll find. His recommendations on particularity are especially helpful, and just another of the essential writing tools that others gloss over. Few writing books discuss the importance of choosing an appropriate title for one's work, and again, Stein gives stellar advice. Chapter after chapter is filled with sage solutions to every writer's problems. The best thing about "Stein on Writing" is that the advice is timeless. Stein himself shows how his answers aren't new, but go back to Hemingway, Faulkner, Fitzgerald, and Melville. This creates a sense of fraternity that gives the new writer the courage and hope to press on. The best thing that can be said about this book is that right after reading a chapter you want to rush to your computer and get to work. The most deserving of five stars of any book on writing I've read, "Stein on Writing" is the best book on the subject you'll find. Essential reading.

Sol Stein knows his stuff when it comes to writing, but this isn't just another dry writing reference. You'll find a wealth of writer's secrets between these pages, all written in an easy, readable style. I was so enthralled by some of the methods provided here--from *The Crucible* to *The Actor's Studio Method*--that I promptly plunked myself down at the keyboard and started writing something just to test drive the concepts. *Stein On Writing* will probably prove more useful to the advanced beginner than the starry-eyed newbie, but I do believe this book belongs in every writer's library.

Do you want your characters to live and breathe, see, smell, touch, love, hate? Do you want your plot to MOVE? Do you want to set the hook in readers on the first page and hold them through to the end? Do you want dialog that supports each character's character, that adds drama to your story? Do you want to show rather than tell? Do you want to get the flab out of your writing? If your answer on any of the above is "yes", get "Stein on Writing". You'll find, too, that I've only scratched the surface

of what's in it. Sol Stein knows what he's talking about here. And he doesn't waste a word, which is why this huge book is only 300 pages. I read it in a day but I'll never be through with it -- here it sits, open, at my left elbow, marked up something awful. I applied the advice in this little book to a "finished" manuscript that had been professionally edited, it had received valuable input from some fine readers, and I was satisfied that it was as good as I could get it. Now, a month after Stein dropped in the story is 20 percent shorter and there is more to it. I write non-fiction as well, and it's going to be a lot better from here on out because Stein covers that, too. I don't care who you are, I'll bet you 50 cents this book will improve your writing.

An excellent resource overall. However, if you've read a lot of "how to write" books, you won't find a tremendous amount that's new here. Nonetheless, with this book you'll find it all in place and presented with much gusto, along with good examples of great writing. If you haven't read dozens of other how-to books, you too will find much useful advice. Regardless, reading this book makes you realize that mastering the craft of writing is an unending process that will take anyone a lifetime to master. Moreover, Sol doesn't lean too far to the "literary" or "commercial" side. He's after good writing, period, and that's such a welcome distinction from most other writing "teachers" (cf. Zuckerman and Gardner). Plus, his exercise on "finding your voice" may be the hardest writing lesson you'll ever face.

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