



## The A-Z of writing

### Q-r

From Q to r. This week, why should we ask questions? What can they do for us? Next in the series revisiting John Simmons' book *The Invisible Grail*. Follow our weekly series for a workout in writing agility that will influence and improve your words for work. Next week – R to s, published on Friday 7 August.

Questions can be very useful in helping you get started on a piece of writing. Why should this be so? Aren't questions inevitably a sign of some uncertainty? What if we want to give the impression that we are totally in control of our case? *Relax*. You can still be in control because the process of raising questions leads you to provide answers.

But why are you so desperate to appear in control anyway? 'Control' seems to have become a national obsession, and not a healthy one. The whole process of thinking something through with questions and answers is one that happens in our minds constantly. It's healthy to be quizzical.

“It's healthy to be quizzical.”

Questions can be used as important turning points in any narrative or presentation. *But what do we need to do at this point?* The question means that the reader or listener joins you in thinking your thoughts. *What would I do in this situation?*

Perhaps the most famous question in our culture is: “To be or not to be?” After all, it is the existential question. We can all complete Hamlet's line, but it's worth a more intense study of the lines that follow it, to notice how

Shakespeare goes on to explore the question – and others that arise. He sets out an extended argument over a number of lines, triggered by questions.

Of course, there are many different ways of asking a question. You can be aggressive or gently curious. When working with Lever Fabergé I was interested in what happened when I turned dry descriptions of new concepts from the factual language of market research into a whole series of questions – and nothing but questions. One question led to another, forming a trail of enquiry that seemed to me to have the effect of being far more respectful to the 'target consumer'.

Did it work? Did it create a new way of writing concepts? No, but that was not the intention. The intention was simply to open people's minds to a different possibility. And that is an important aim for any writer.

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With a new chapter released weekly, look out for the next in the series, R-s, arriving with you on Friday 7 August. Follow us on [Linked In](#) or via our [Insights page](#) to find your weekly dose of writing inspiration.

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