



The A-Z of writing

R-s

From R to s: feel the rhythm of the words you use in your writing. 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 – S to t, published on Friday 14 August.

Rise to your feet and feel the words coursing through your veins. Sometimes it's no bad thing to stand and read your words aloud. The sound of your words will tell you a lot – a stumble might point out the word you're not sure about, a pause for breath might tell you when the sentence is too long. Of course, there is potential for embarrassment if you do this in public. But you can also listen to your words in your head and respond to their rhythm. It's not fanciful to aim for your words to sing in your head so that your feelings can dance along with them.

Rhythm is all around us, part of life, and therefore part of writing. One of the reasons why I've always liked writing on trains is that the train's rhythm provides a soundtrack for your words to play along with. When reading we respond to sound and rhythm, even if we don't consciously acknowledge it. I'm a slow reader but a musical one. Words have their rhythm. Why be tone-deaf towards them?

“Rhythm is all around us, part of life, and therefore part of writing.”

I remember Tim Smit, founder of the amazing Eden Project in Cornwall, giving a talk. He spoke with infectious enthusiasm about catching the spirit of the samba jellyfish and using samba dancing as part of the induction for new people joining Eden. The samba jellyfish is a creature we can imitate in our

childhood, but then it swims away out of our being. I wish I could dance. But I can in my head. And my words can dance straight off the page.

Some sentences have an easy lilt to them. When you write, your words can always be beautifully spoken in your head. You depend on no one else for their delivery. But you can give prompt cues to help your readers perform them as you would wish. Often these cues are punctuation marks – another reason why I believe punctuation is about creativity not pedantry (see P to q).

Sway. To high notes and low. Sometimes you can keep a steady rhythm swirling along but then, with a fingersnap, break it. We are talking of dance, we're talking of sound and song. Dancing with words. Now the words are not just heard inside your head but felt inside your body. Make short sharp quicksteps followed by long, languorous, slow stretches.

With a new chapter released weekly, look out for the next in the series, S-t, arriving with you on Friday 14 August. Follow us on [Linked In](#) or via our [Insights page](#) to find your weekly dose of writing inspiration.

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