

An Exercise for Finding Your Voice

Not sure where to start? No problem. Most of us need help understanding our voice. Here's a short exercise that can help you — just follow these 10 steps:

1. Describe yourself in three adjectives. Example: snarky, fun, and flirty.
2. Ask (and answer) the question: “Is this how I talk?”
3. Imagine your ideal reader. Describe him in detail. Then, write to him, and only him. Example: My ideal reader is smart. He has a sense of humor, a short attention span, and is pretty savvy when it comes to technology and pop culture. He's sarcastic and fun, but doesn't like to waste time. And he loves pizza.
4. Jot down at least five books, articles, or blogs you like to read. Spend some time examining them. How are they alike? How are they different? What about how they're written intrigues you? Often what we admire is what we aspire to be. Example: Copyblogger, Chris Brogan, Seth Godin, Ernest Hemingway, and C.S. Lewis. I like these writers, because their writing is intelligent, pithy, and poignant.
5. List your favorite artistic and cultural influences. Are you using these as references in your writing, or avoiding them, because you don't think people would understand them. Example: I use some of my favorite bands' music in my writing to teach deeper lessons.
6. Ask other people: “What's my voice? What do I sound like?” Take notes of the answers you get.
7. Free-write. Just go nuts. Write in a way that's most comfortable to you, without editing. Then go back and read it, asking yourself, “Do I publish stuff that sounds like this?”
8. Read something you've recently written, and honestly ask yourself, “Is this something I would read?” If not, you must change your voice.
9. Ask yourself: “Do I enjoy what I'm writing as I'm writing it?” If it feels like work, you may not be writing like yourself. (Caveat: Not every writer loves the act of writing, but it's at least worth asking.)
10. Pay attention to how you're feeling. How do you feel before publishing? Afraid? Nervous? Worried? Good. You're on the right track. If you're completely calm, then you probably aren't being vulnerable. Try writing something dangerous, something a little more you. Fear can be good. It motivates you to make your writing matter.

Source: <https://goinswriter.com/writing-voice/>