

Writing Clearly

A manual for Filipino writers
and editors in English



HEALTH ACTION INFORMATION NETWORK

1989

Read this first

Writing Clearly

The examples I have used in this booklet to illustrate ineffective writing come from various sources: local newspapers, locally published books and copy that I have been given to edit. If you recognize anything here that you wrote, don't be angry or offended. I usually selected examples from writers who are generally excellent and whose occasional slips therefore stood out all the more.

A manual for Filipino writers
and editors in English

Mari Roberts

Published by Health Action Information Network (HAIN),
PO Box 10340, Broadway, Quezon City, Philippines

Cover design and illustrations by Boy Dominguez

© HAIN Health Action Information Network

1989

ISBN 971-8508-09-0

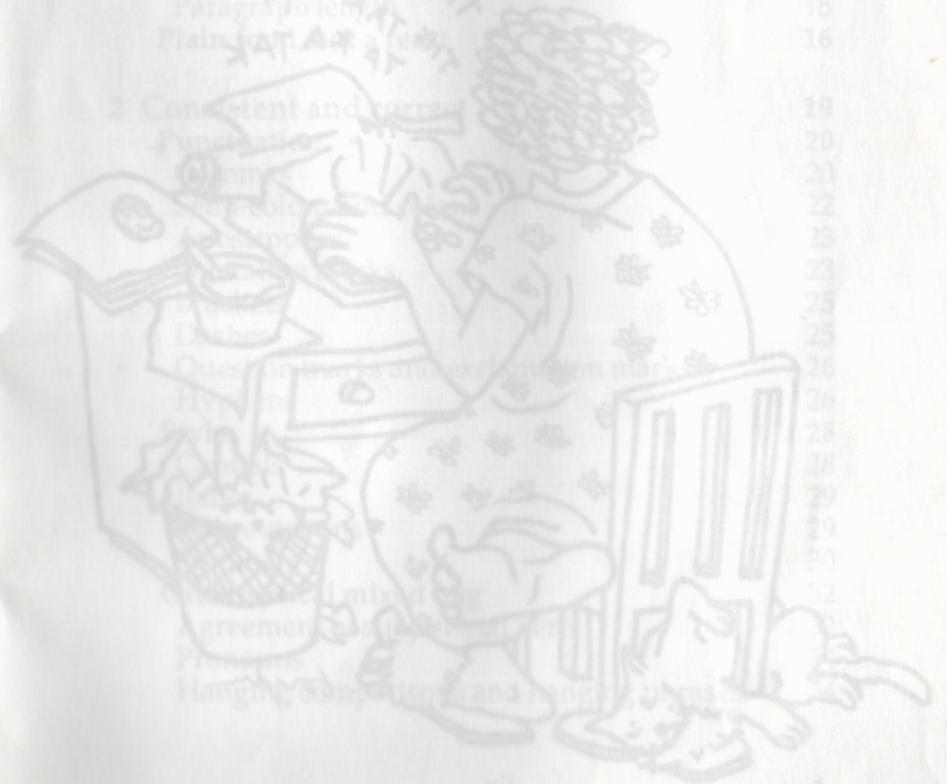
Writing Clearly

A manual for Filipino writers
and editors in English

2 copies for Mari Roberts

The examples I have used in this booklet to illustrate ineffective writing come from various sources: local newspapers, locally published books and copy that I have been given to edit. If you recognize anything here that you wrote, don't be angry or offended. I usually selected examples from writers who are generally excellent and whose occasional slips therefore stood out all the more.

I have used a technique of dividing the page in two to compare a piece of ineffective writing with a piece of effective writing. The piece on the left is the original version, and that on the right is what I consider to be an improved, more effective version.



Published by Health Action Information Network (HAIN),
PO Box 10340, Broadway, Quezon City, Philippines

Cover design and illustrations by Boy Dominguez

© HAIN and the author 1989

Desktop published at HAIN

ISBN 971-8508-09-0

Thank you — to the people who unwittingly supplied examples of writing

Thank you — to the people who provided advice and encouragement, especially to Marlene, who, in addition to advice and encouragement, also provided ice-cream



Preface	ix
1 Too many words	1
The basic rules	3
Cut out unnecessary words	3
Be precise	4
Use short words, not long ones	5
Use positive statements	7
Bring your writing to life	9
Active voice	9
Use verbs, not nouns	11
Short and snappy	13
One idea, one sentence	13
Paragraph length	15
Plain food, not a feast	16
2 Consistent and correct	19
Punctuation	20
Commas	20
Semi-colons and colons	22
Apostrophes	23
Quotation marks	23
Brackets	25
Dashes	25
Question marks and exclamation marks	26
Hyphens	26
Style	28
Capitals	28
Italics	29
Abbreviations	29
Numbers	30
Grammatical mixed bag	32
Agreement of subject and verb	32
Pronouns	34
Hanging comparisons and hanging phrases	34