



Great Spirit Publishing's Q&A Series

Answering a question posed by Candy Simonson in the Springfield Writers' Guild Critique Group, successful author, editor, and poet-extraordinaire **Wanda Sue Parrott** has this to say:

WHAT IS THE HARDEST PART OF WRITING FOR ME?

Finding gold. If I don't have an attention-grabbing lead, the piece won't fly because no one will read it.

Do you wonder if there is a shortcut for success for cutting through your own first-sentence writer's block? Yes there is!

Write your story first and then return to the beginning and write your final lead-in words last. This will prevent your becoming trapped in the Writer's Roadblock, beyond which many new writers never pass.

Here is a tip that has worked for me since I was a reporter with tight deadlines in the 1970s. I call it the **Magic F-I-N-G Trick**. Grammarians say it cannot be done, but it can be done if you do it right. If you do it wrong, you wind up with Deadly Dangling Participles. It gets easier to master this trick with practice.

This trick has resulted in successful publication of at least one million words, most for pay, others for free, using 18 pen names. Here is that tip, and you must be very careful with it in order to avoid writing things like "Running downhill, the dog's tail wagged."

Gerundize a verb by adding "ing" to the end, thus making it the subject of your first sentence. Words like running, reading, writing, singing, schlepping and dying are all gerunds. The 'ing' seems to have the psychological effect of invoking in the reader a feeling of action; action is vivifying and draws the reader to read further.

"If" is a powerful preposition with which to start the second sentence. If never stands alone. If must be followed by a statement, so make that statement so intriguing that your reader wants to know more.

The "ing" trick combined with "If" should give you an opening paragraph that is a powerful hook. You then go right into the body of your story and tell it.

In case you wonder how to make the leap into the body of the story, this tip works: Ask a question.

Note that I used these tips in the opening portion of this mini-article. The writing time was all of seven minutes.

Remember, a proper sentence is constructed in this sequence in English format: Subject, verb, object.

A perfect sentence is: *He said nothing.* So, when giving tags to individuals who are speaking, you will never be wrong if you say, *"Goodbye, John," Sally said.* You are inverting sentence sequence if you say, *"Hello, Sally," said John.* The greatest modern writers invert their sentence sequences all the time and get away with it; be inventive and unafraid to experiment, starting with gerunds as subjects.

By gerundizing my first sentence in this example, I combined the subject-verb to answer the question about what is the hardest part of writing for me:

Finding gold. (Gold is the object of the gerundized verb. It is a metaphor for success as well as a substitute for "the right words.")

Note the brevity of that first statement. And the follow-up text after the word If. If this tip compelled you to read this far, you were hooked. Use this as an example and write your own F-I-N-G magic, even if the experts say it cannot be done.

One final question you might ask: What does F-I-N-G mean?

It is the four magic letters which, in proper combination, can provide you with secret skills that turn your status from aspiring writer to successful scribe.

A final tip. Try using If to start your first sentence. Then use a gerund (word ending in ing) to start your second sentence. Play with the four magic letters. Go for the gold!

~Wanda Sue Parrott, aka Professor Parrott

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