



Start writing essays
What is good writing?

Jane Van Hool:

What is good writing? John Humphrys and Helena Kennedy.

John Humphrys:

Simplicity is the most important thing. Never use three words if two will do, never use long difficult words if simple words will do. I am a great believer in making it as easy as possible and that doesn't mean that you patronise the listener or the reader. Obviously, what you say has to be said as intelligently as possible. But I'm fed up to the back teeth with the way we now, most people anyway, or a lot of people, take refuge in jargon, and that's because they're too lazy to find the right words that are actually relevant to what they're talking about. They also tend to use terribly complicated structures because they think that makes them sound and look very clever which, of course, it doesn't - it just gets in the way.

Helena Kennedy:

It's interesting, because in the courtrooms, and particularly in the courtrooms in which I operate, I think the language, on the whole, is fairly vibrant. I have been most depressed, as I've come into Government, or into bureaucracies, and I've done that more in the last ten years than ever before in my life, and I've seen the kind of publications, the communications that are put out inside institutions and organisations of Government, and I think that they are absolutely pole-axing in the boredom of the language. There are ways that people express themselves which I think are so dry and so turgid, and also, at times, impenetrable.

Jenny Bardwell:
(interviewer)

It's the jargon.

Helena Kennedy:

The jargon - the lack of comfort, and the lack of, of flavour and colour and texture, and it's not there! And I try to challenge it wherever I operate.

Jane Van Hool:

John Pilger.

John Pilger: There is a fine line between good writing and pretentious writing. And often, people when they start out to write, feel that there is a, an obligation for them to write in a pretentious way, they themselves are not pretentious, but they feel they must do that.

Claire Sandry:
(interviewer)

How important do you think good grammar is in being able to communicate effectively?

John Pilger:

Vital, vital. And I think one of the problems with young writers starting out, is that they may think, or are encouraged to think, that grammar doesn't matter, it does! Grammar doesn't, as some young writers think, cramp your style, it actually enhances it, because English grammar is so flexible and, and opens up all sorts of wonderful avenues. When the grammar is right, it reads well, it reads tight and, I'm, yeah, I'm a stickler for grammar.