

Rules for Jewish Writers

Don't worry about finding your voice.

You won't lose your personality when you write correctly. Speaking is different from writing. Know that. Run-on sentences, poor grammar, and excessive adverbs work when you speak. They are clutter when you write.

Speak to your audience. Don't be awkward or indirect. Don't say "one" when you mean "you."

For example, don't say: "When *one* asks a question." Say: "When *you* ask a question." Say, "you." Speak to your readers. Show you care.

Be direct.

Forget qualifiers like "a little" "a bit" – don't demean your ideas. Be clear, direct, and concise.

Get rid of useless adverbs.

An adverb is a word that modifies a verb or any word other than a noun. Adverbs are almost always unnecessary. Don't use them unless you have to. Adverb abuse is a sign of poor writing.

Write like you speak.

Be normal. Nobody says, "She had milk-white teeth." They say, "She had white teeth."

Use words people use.

For example, if you are raising money for your building, say "building" – don't say "edifice." No one says "edifice." You don't sound intelligent. You sound like an idiot.

Don't be PC.

The default singular pronoun in English is "he." Use it. Don't use "they" when you mean "he." Its ok. You won't offend anyone.

Translate everything.

Don't say Moshe, say Moses. Don't say Yisroel, say Israel. Certain words like Torah and Shabbos are considered English. Most others aren't. Transliterations are confusing and clumsy.

Don't put slang or hip terms in quotes.

If you use a slang term, use it and don't be afraid. State it clearly. And please be advised that no one has used the term "with it" since the early 70s.

Use the active voice.

Don't use the passive voice unless you have to. You can almost always rewrite using the active voice.

Don't beat around the bush.

Be direct. If you don't like my book don't say, "The feeling is that your book is not appropriate." Say, "I don't think your book is appropriate." Don't be a wimp.