

# How to Write a Bang-up Bio

**ASTD Mt. Diablo**  
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Association for Creative Business Writing

[ Do you freeze... ]

... when writing about yourself?



# [ Come in from the cold ]

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- Brainstorm with yourself.
- Tell stories.
- Edit, edit, edit.
- Have fun!
- P.S. Use these tools in all your writing.

# [ Off to a bad start ]

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- Accomplished writer and editor with hundreds of articles in major magazines, newspapers, and trade publications. M.F.A. in writing from...
- Author, nonfiction books, magazine writer. Publications include...

# [ Getting warmer ]

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We are committed to **recruiting highly skilled administrative support professionals** through our WorkTeam division. **Clients rely on us** to not only **coordinate** the match between employer and administrative specialist, but also to **assist** in the search and hiring processes. **We know the intricacies of the markets and businesses we serve...**

# [Warmer yet]

When I began writing professionally, a national editor took time to read an article I wrote for a local business publication. She told me, “Give me a lead like that every time, and I’ll keep you busy.” And she did.

I’ve gone on to write hundreds of articles for publications such as *Southern Living*, *Country Living*, *Yoga Journal*, and *washingtonpost.com*. And five books, including two award winners: *Words at Work* and *Contemporary Hawaii Woodworkers ...*  
[continues with career highlights]

# [ The difference? Stories! ]

1. Stories share your life & personality.
2. Stories evoke emotions.
3. Stories humanize us.
4. Stories allow readers to step into the picture.



# [ From corndogs to cornettes ]

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- Thomas Keller, chef owner, French Laundry, Yountville, Calif.
- Mother made corndogs with integrity.
- Trip to Baskin-Robbins



# [ Thomas Keller ]

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...A native of California, Thomas began his culinary career at a young age, working in the Palm Beach restaurant managed by his mother.

... Ad Hoc, a casual dining establishment inspired by the comfort food he enjoyed growing up, opened later that year in Yountville, California.

# [ Bang-up Bio ]

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Sue's sample bio – before & after

# [ How to write a bang-up bio ]

Three steps:

1. Brainstorm about yourself.
2. Tell stories.
3. Edit. Edit. Edit.

# [ Step One: Brainstorm ]

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Spaghetti head or frozen synapses?

Brain Dump to the rescue. Explore:

- What makes you happy/excited?
- What do you really want to do?
- What stories can you recall?

# [ Brain Dump ]

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I want this e-book to help people get over their fear both from mental hang-ups to creative insights. It can make the difference for our country and economy Thomas Friedman, NYTimes, innovate innovate innovate. So why not join me in our quest for creativity. I have long been on this goal with varying degrees of success. My goal: why be like everyone else why not go for something fresh and new? You can do it it doesn't have to be earthshattering to be important. Be yourself. Give it a try you can start small with a simile or just getting your thoughts down on paper. that's it just get your true thoughts down that's so important and when you do, they build on one another just like in the exercise we're going to do called braindump. You start with stuff just whatever comes out and then you get more and more. That's because of the way our brains work.

# [Your Brain Dump]

- Set a timer.
- Write fast & furiously.
- Don't worry about typos.
- **Don't stop!** This is how you tap into that marvelous brain of yours.
- If necessary, write "I don't know what to write" until your brain kicks in again.



# [ Story starters: ]

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- I hate it when...
- I love it when...
- My best innovation was...
- I solved problems by...
- When I was manager...
- One day, I told an employee....
- One day, I told my boss...

# Circle the nuggets

## Nuggets:

I want this e-book to help people get over their fear both from mental hang-ups to **creative insights**. It can make the difference for our country and economy. **Thomas Friedman**, NYTimes, innovate innovate **innovate**. So why not join me in our quest for creativity. I have long been on this goal with varying degrees of success. My goal **why be like everyone else** why not go for something fresh and new? You can do it it doesn't have to be earthshattering to be important. Be yourself. Give it a try you can start **small with a simile** or just getting your thoughts down on paper. that's it just get your **true thoughts down** that's so important and when you do, they build on one another just like in the exercise we're going to do called braindump. You start with stuff just whatever comes out and then you get more and more. That's because of **the way our brains work**.



# Prioritize nuggets

## Number nuggets:

6. I want this e-book to help people get over their fear both from mental hang-ups to creative insights. It can make the difference for our country and economy. 3. Thomas Friedman, NYTimes, innovate innovate innovate. So why not join me in our quest for creativity. 2. I have long been on this goal with varying degrees of success. My goal is why be like everyone else why not go for something fresh and new? You can do it it doesn't have to be earthshattering to be important. Be yourself. Give it a try you can start small with a simile or just getting your thoughts down on paper. 5. that's it just get your true thoughts down that's so important and when you do, they build on one another just like in the exercise we're going to do called braindump. You start with stuff just whatever comes out and then you get more and more. That's because of the way our brains work. 4.

# [ Organic Outline ]

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1. Why be like everyone else?
2. Thomas Friedman.
3. Innovate.
4. The way our brains work.
5. Start small—similes, true thoughts.
6. Creative insights.

# [ Step Two: Start writing ]

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- Use your anecdotes.
- Write your first draft fast.
- Let it flow.
- Add your personality.

# [ Write your first draft fast ]

- Let it rip.
- Relax.
- Don't Scribble & Scratch
- Show how wonderful you are!



# [ Be You! ]

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- Be true to yourself.
- Tell who you really are.
- Write conversationally.
- Talk *to* your readers, not *at* them.



## [ Step Three: Edit for success ]

Cut, catch & correct:

1. Cut as many words as you can.
2. Edit several times.
3. Edit in short bursts with breaks in between.
4. Don't write at the eleventh hour.
5. Find a proof buddy.

# [ Four myths about bios ]

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1. Keep it short.
2. Write in third person.
3. Avoid personal information
4. Write in a professional (aka stuffy) style.

# [ Myth #1: Keep it short ]

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Fact:

- If your bio is boring, short won't help.
- If it's interesting, your readers will read well beyond 100 words.
- Write what your gut tells you is vital and vivid.
- Then edit to make it concise.



# [ Myth #2: Write in third person ]

Fact:

- Write in first person whenever you can.
- Third person has its place.
- In social media, first person rules.

## [ Myth #3: Avoid personal info ]

Fact:

- People want to know more about you.
- Blogs and tweets have changed us; people expect to know more.
- They want to know you're more than a workaholic.

## [ Myth #4: Write in a formal style ]

Fact:

- Again, people want to know you and your personality.
- Passion and humor have their place (in moderation).
- Write in plain English. Forget big words and formal formatting.

# [ Cover letters ]

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- Cover letters can get your resume read.
- Recruiters still read them.
- Again, stories set you apart.

# [ What recruiters say ]

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*“A well-written cover letter makes such a positive difference!” says Jennifer Dupper, a recruiter for Starbucks. “When I’m screening an inbox full of applications and come across an interesting cover letter, I’m not only excited to view the resume, but more likely to contact the candidate—even when their experience may be lacking some of the necessary requirements of the position they are seeking.”*

# [ Cover Letters ]

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Sample cover letter – before & after.

# [ Six tips to takeaway ]

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1. Brainstorm.
2. Have fun!
3. Tell stories.
4. Edit. Edit. Edit.
5. Take breaks.

[ Take breaks! ]

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Thomas Keller's  
Salmon Cornettes





## [ 6. Be yourself! ]

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- Isn't that what bios are all about?

# [Thanks!]

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For more tips:

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2. Follow me on Twitter.
3. Check out AFCBW.



Association for Creative Business Writing

# [ Contact me ]

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