

THE ULTIMATE COPYWRITING HANDBOOK



**How To Write Irresistable Sales
Copy So You Can Get More
Leads and Make More Sales!**

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Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Basic Skills	6
How to Improve Your Writing Skills	6
Good Grammar is the Minimum	6
Style Trumps Grammar	7
Writing for Your Target Audience	10
Step #1: Research Your Audience	11
Step #2: Write for Your Audience	12
How to Sell Through Writing	14
Writing Good Headlines.....	17
Why a Headline Can Make or Break a Sales Letter	17
10 Different Techniques for Writing a Good Headline	17
Good Headline Examples	19
Testing and Tracking	28
Step #1: Define Your Experiment Carefully.....	28
Step #2: Hold All Else Constant	29
Step #3: Collect Large Samples	29
Step #4: Make a Decision.....	29
Powerful Tricks for Boosting Conversion Rates	31
How to Use Bullet Points Correctly.....	31
How to Use Sub-Headings	32
How to Correctly Use Bolding and Highlighting.....	34
Closing a Sale.....	36
Retaining Reader Interest.....	36
Using Calls to Action Correctly	38
Step #1: Tell The Reader Exactly What To Do	39
Step #2: Surround the Call to Action with Supporting Text.....	39
Step #3: Make it Easy to Follow Your Call to Action	40
The AIDA Method	42
Attention.....	42
Interest.....	43
Part #1: Introduce a Problem	43
Part #2: Introduce a Solution to the Problem	44

=>> [Amazing Content For Your Sites - Click Here](#) <=<

Decision	45
Action	45
The 30-Day Copywriting Plan.....	46
Week #1: Focus on Basic Skills & Market Research	46
Week #2: Complete Two Sales Letters	46
Week #3: Make Changes & Compile a Swipe File.....	47
Week #4: Polish Your Copy, Test, and Track	48
Week #5 and Beyond: Practice, Refine, Track, and Test	49
Conclusion.....	50

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Introduction

If you're like most Internet marketers, you wouldn't hire a copywriter for most of your projects—and for good reasons, too. First, you know that most of your projects are simply too small to bring in a high-powered copywriter and pay them \$50-100 per page.

And second, few others know your product and your market as well as you do. No matter how hard you try to convey important points about your product to the copywriter, you know you'll lose something in translation.

So what can you do? Your first option is to continue to write sub-par copy for most of your sales letters; and simply hope that it will do the trick.

However, if you're more realistic with yourself, you'll probably quickly see the problem with doing this—namely, that you're leaving hundreds or even thousands of dollars on the table every time you create a sales page that converts 1%, rather than 2% or 3%.

And this is precisely why you must learn the art of copywriting: it will not only save you money, but it will also ensure that you have a master copywriter working on every project you initiate.

In this ebook, I hope to help you develop a robust, powerful set of copywriting strategies. I will not only show you how to improve your writing and your sales skills, but I will also give you a step-by-step, 30-day outline that you can use to guide you through the process.

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Basic Skills

Above all else, mastering basic writing skills is important. No matter how persuasive you are verbally, if you cannot put those words into clear, thoughtful, grammatically correct writing, your arguments may prove more off-putting than enticing.

And this is precisely why I recommend developing your basic writing skills before you try to delve deep into copywriting and other forms of sales writing.

How to Improve Your Writing Skills

Good Grammar is the Minimum

When it comes to copywriting, no one is going to be impressed by your good grammar. In fact, no one will notice your grammar at all unless it is bad. And this is precisely why it is important to think about good grammar being the starting point for any sales letter—not a lofty goal to achieve.

If you have a weak background in writing, there's a good chance you are frequently making grammatical errors that most readers perceive as a poor reflection on you. For instance, you might use sentence fragments often; or you might have subject-verb agreement issues. Either way, you are probably repeating these mistakes again and again without even noticing it.

In fact, writers make these mistakes all the time. And when they do, it not only makes them look bad, but it can even confuse the reader by providing the wrong information.

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So what can you do about it? You can start by identifying your areas of weakness; and then practicing grammar drills to improve.

Doing “grammar drills” isn’t on the top of the list of the things you want to spend your weekend doing, but if you truly aspire to be a MASTER copywriter—not a mediocre copywriter—you must start by mastering grammar first.

When it comes to doing grammar drills, you have a number of options. I personally recommend that you use one of the following three sites, all of which provide free information and drills:

1. <http://odl.vwv.at/english/odlres/res8/Grammar/grammar.htm>
2. http://dartmouth.edu/~writing/materials/student/ac_paper/drills/index.shtml
3. http://www.englisch-hilfen.de/en/exercises_list/alle_grammar.htm

As with most things in life, your time is probably best used concentrating on your problem areas. So, rather than re-learning English grammar in its entirety, you should eliminate your weaknesses. You can use the following tests to identify which areas you should work on:

1. http://www.world-english.org/diagnostic_grammar.htm
2. <http://www.dailywritingtips.com/grammar-test-1/>
3. http://www.grammarbook.com/grammar_quiz/grammar_mastery.asp

Style Trumps Grammar

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When it comes to copywriting, good grammar is the bare minimum. It is expected; and if you don't have it, then many will dismiss your sales letter outright.

And, yet, going from good grammar to perfect won't be enough to change your conversion rate from 1% to 2%. Nor will a grammatically flawless headline keep people reading your sales letter with increasing attention.

In fact, when it comes to improving your conversion rates, style—not grammar—is most important. When your style is weak, clunky, or disorganized, your readers will stop paying attention and will eventually leave.

And when your style is clear and riveting, readers will be drawn into your copy; and will want to read more. And this is why you must make an effort to improve your style in addition to your grammar.

What many don't understand is that style improvements don't occur magically. Style also isn't a "talent" that you either have or don't. Rather, you can improve your style, just as you can improve your grammar.

You can even purchase style guides that tell you exactly how to improve your writing according to a set of clear rules. However, before you buy any books, you should start with the following set of ten rules:

1. Avoid using clichés. Clichés are tiresome and create the impression of uninspired, uncreative writing, so avoid using them where possible.
2. List major points. Instead of spreading information throughout the body of a document, summarize important points in a central location using bullet points.

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3. Give the reader directions. Rather than simply leaving your reader to figure out what's going on, give her hints about where she's been, where she is, and where she's going.
4. Write in the active voice. Consider the following two statements: a) "John created the website"; and b) "The website was created by John." The first statement is in the active voice, which is what you should try to adopt in all of your writing.
5. Get rid of unnecessary qualifiers. Most style experts claim that words like "really" and "very" don't add anything to writing, but often take away from it. Try to avoid using them where possible.
6. After you write the first draft, always try to reduce the size of the piece of writing, rather than adding to it. Cut out unnecessary sentences and clauses; and simplify constructions that are planning to keep.
7. Keep sentences short and clear. Long, complicated sentences with confusing constructions will do little other than baffle your readers.
8. Avoid turning verbs into nouns. For instance, instead of saying "I had to make a decision," say "I had to decide."
9. Maintain a single voice. If you don't maintain a single, coherent style throughout the piece of writing, it will be difficult for a reader to envision you as a person. When it comes to sales writing, it is critical that they can do this.
10. Organize your writing. Organize the paper, including its sections, subsections, and paragraphs. A clear and organized purpose will make it easier for the reader to pay attention to your writing.

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In addition to following these 10 style tips, you should also invest some time in style drills; and in reading a style manual. One good fall-back is the classic “The Elements of Style,” which you can read for free at the following URL:

<http://www.crockford.com/wrrld/style.html>.

Writing for Your Target Audience

One of the most important parts of good writing is knowing and speaking to your audience. Many novice Internet marketers who attempt to write copy do not consider this at all. Rather, they simply craft a generic sales letter that sounds generally persuasive, but do not consider who will be reading it.

Unfortunately, this error can be a fatal one (at least as far as your conversion rates go). If you fail to speak to the people who are reading your sales letter, then your campaign is unlikely to be successful, no matter how persuasive you believe it sounds.

For a number of excellent examples of “speaking to your audience,” see the following achieve of sales letters from the late Gary Halbert:

<http://www.thegaryhalbertletter.com/newsletter-archives.htm>

Among other things, one thing you’ll notice about Gary’s sales letters is that they always talk to a specific person with a specific problem. Indeed, if you watered down the sales language a little bit, some could almost be viewed as a letter to a friend that makes a strong case for one particular product or another.

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When you write sales letter—and do sales writing in general—this is something you, too, must do. It won't be easy at first, but it will definitely be doable. I personally recommend that you use this two step approach to accomplish it:

Step #1: Research Your Audience

Before you create any product at all, you should do some market research. You should find out who is buying the type of product you aim to sell; and what features and benefits they desire most.

However, if you have already started to sell your product, then there's a good chance you'll be able to solicit this information from your buyers. For instance, you could send out a survey to your list subscribers; or you could offer a discount on the next product you release if past buyers are willing to provide you with feedback about your ideas.

In addition to conducting surveys of your existing clientele, you should also visit forums in your niche. If you don't already visit some regularly, you can find relevant forums on <http://www.big-boards.com>.

Once you locate a number of promising forums, you should begin reading through the user-generated content to find out what people think about products in your niche. Try to learn how they feel and think about the products and question; and try hard to put yourself in their place.

As you go, take notes about your potential buyers. For instance, jot down things about their personality traits, their goals, their ideas; and their reasons for wanting your product. Is there some particular feature or benefit that comes up frequently?

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Step #2: Write for Your Audience

It's one thing to understand who your audience is; and it's an entirely different thing to write for them. It's different because it requires careful thought, attentive writing, and a well-crafted, organized plan.

A good place to start is with the notes you took. Focus specifically on the image of a single individual who fits the "typical" buyer in your niche. Think about his or her interests. And fix yourself on his or her reasons for wanting your product.

For instance, does he want your product because it will increase his income, which will finally allow him to pay down his debt and attain financial security?

Or will the product improve some facet of his business in a way that will help him to gain admiration among his peers; and will help him to provide better for his family?

These are important things to consider when creating a description of your target buyer. And they are important qualities and motivations that you will want to refer to throughout your sales letter.

Now, using these notes, write down a list of "benefits" in bullet point format that describe what your target buyer wants most from your product.

When you write the sales letter, make an attempt to consistently refer back to this list, so that you repeatedly mention benefits that your target individual will find enticing.

If you do this correctly, you'll find that readers will increasingly connect to your sales pitches; and, over time, you should see the conversion rates on your sales letters increase significantly.

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How to Sell Through Writing

One thing that many good writers never understand is that writing to sell and writing an essay are not the same exercise. Sure, good essays need to be persuasive and well-written, but if they were written in the style of a sales letter, most readers would find them off-putting.

Not surprisingly, the same can be said about sales letters that are written like an essay. If, for instance, your sales letter reads like a long, well-reasoned argument that weighs the pros-and-cons of purchasing your product, then it isn't good sales material.

Rather, a good sales letter is not impartial or unbiased. It is forceful, direct, and compelling. It grabs the reader immediately; and forces them to work through an argument in favor of your product.

In short, a good sales letter is not just a good piece of writing. It is a powerfully-persuasive piece of writing that takes no prisoners; and focuses narrowly on enticing, alluring, and then closing sales.

So, if you have existing sales letters that lack vitality and power, get to work fixing them. Don't simply let visitors show up and leave unconverted; fix the weaknesses and strengthen your sales letter.

In particular, there are 10 qualities you should change about your writing when trying to sell or persuade:

1. Be direct. When you're writing an essay or a piece of fiction, cleverness and flowery language can often be impressive. However, when it comes to sales, communication trumps all else. Tell your reader exactly what you're

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selling, exactly what it costs, and exactly why they must buy it.

2. Use short sentences and short paragraphs. Today, it's common to refer to this type of writing as being written for "Internet readers." That is, when people browsing sites, they don't want to run into gigantic walls of text. They want something that is light and readable. And this is exactly how your sales letters should be.
3. Get rid of jargon. Again, when it comes to sales, showing off your vocabulary is not particularly effective. Few people will be turned off if you don't use large words, but many will find it off-putting if you do.
4. Make persuasion your ultimate goal. Instead of writing to fill a page, think about using each word as part of a master plan to persuade your reader. Think about how he will respond to each word, sentence, and paragraph; craft it with him in mind.
5. Don't try to keep the writing "even" throughout the sales letter. Instead, focus on different things in different parts. In the beginning, try to grab the reader's attention. In the middle, show the benefits of your product. And towards the end, put a lot of pressure on the reader to buy—and to buy NOW.
6. Use lists frequently. If you read the blogs and writings of successful copywriters, you'll notice that most swear by the power of bullet points. The reason for this is simple: bullet points convey a great deal of information in a format that is scannable and enjoyable to read.
7. Bold, italicize, and highlight. In an essay, it would be considered tacky. In a sales letter, it is an absolute must. Bolding, italicizing, and highlighting allows you to tell readers what they should scan; and, alternatively, what is

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not terribly important.

8. Use subheadings. Subheadings allow you to divide up your sales letter into several pieces. This will ensure that your readers are able to follow the flow; and to scan for important information, too.
9. Make shocking, controversial statements—and then back them up. Make a big, true claim about your product. And then demonstrate how it is true.
10. Avoid introspection. When it comes to sales, your goal should always be to think about and target the reader, so try to stay out of your own head; and focused on what the reader is thinking.

In short, these are some of the basic rules that most good sales letters (and good sales writing in general) usually follow. When you begin writing sales letters (or when you check old sales letters), you should start with these 10 items. If your sales letter doesn't satisfy this list, then it might be a good piece of writing—but it isn't a good sales letter.

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Writing Good Headlines

Why a Headline Can Make or Break a Sales Letter

When a reader first lands on your page, the first thing she will see is your headline, which will most likely be in a large, bolded, red or dark blue font. Before she reads about your product's benefits, before she falls under the influence of your persuasion, before she contemplates whether or not she needs your product, she will read this headline.

If the headline is gripping, she will have to continue reading—if only to satisfy her curiosity. If the headline is good, but not great, she may feel compelled to read on. And if the headline is mediocre, she'll quickly decide that nothing can be contained from reading the rest; and she'll happily close the page and move on with her life.

As an Internet marketer, you cannot afford to discourage readers before they even wade into the text of your argument. You have to grip them early and firmly, so they have no interest in escaping; and are far too compelled by desire or curiosity to look away.

And that's exactly what a good headline will do for you.

10 Different Techniques for Writing a Good Headline

When it comes to writing a good headline, technique is important. Indeed, it may sound strange, but the best headlines often flow from formulas, rather than from pure creativity. And, for this reason, it is important to know what those formulas are.

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Below, I highlight 10 of the most frequently used techniques for writing good sales letter headlines:

1. Use psychological triggers. These are words like scientifically-proven, shocking, explosive, secret, and free. They activate people's minds and generate interest in a way that other words simply cannot.
2. Keep your headline short and crisp. Ideally, your headline should leave readers wanting for more—not wishing there had been less. Keep things short, crisp, and intriguing, rather than long, dull, and droning.
3. Keep things formulaic. Rather than trying something experimental and creative, open with something like “How would you like to...” or “Did you know that 9/10 marketers never...” Just make sure that you complete those lines in a way that is shocking or intriguing.
4. Open your headline with “Put an end to your [problem] once and for all.” It's succinct, clear, and gets at the heart of the matter: that the readers have a problem and you can tell them how to solve it.
5. Avoid intentionally misinforming. When your only objective is to get page views, it may make sense to create headlines that are misleading. To see that this works, look at any online version of a major newspaper. The titles often will involve some type of intentionally misleading play on words that will entice you to click. However, when it comes to sales letters, your goal is to close the deal, so don't mislead people into believing they will find something different—only to let them down when you should be closing a sale instead.
6. State the biggest benefit your product offers. For instance, let's say that your product will help webmasters to get more traffic, but more

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specifically, it will allow them to improve their SERPs on Google by 1-2 pages for keywords that get as many as 500,000 searches per month. Then state this benefit compactly in the headline.”

7. Write your headline in the fashion of a news headline. For instance, you could say something like “California woman finds strategy for quadrupling your organic search engine traffic every two weeks.”
8. Start your headline with “How to...” It may seem simple, but it is truly one of the best formulas for retaining readers’ interest.
9. Use the word “you” at least once in the headline. Speaking to readers directly will draw them into the sales letter; and make them more likely to continue on after the headline.
10. Use large, bold, red or dark blue font for your headline. Dark blue has been shown to put readers at ease; and often causes them to stay on the page longer. Red, on the other hand, elevates blood pressure slightly and pushes people to take action.

As a copywriter, you should try to mix and match these headline-writing techniques. Observe what works best for you over time; and keep that part of the headline. Also, find out what does work and discard it.

The better you get at identifying and discarding weak parts of your headlines, the better you will get at writing high-converting sales letters.

Good Headline Examples

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As a copywriter, one of the most useful things you can do is to create a “swipe file” of headlines. This is simply a document that consists of hundreds of best-selling sales letter headlines.

When it comes to compiling a swipe file, you have two options. You can either purchase a large archive of headlines or you can compile your own list of headlines.

Personally, I recommend that you do both. Purchasing a “swipe file” archive will give you immediate access to hundreds of different headline ideas; however, they will often be given out of context. This means that you don’t know where they were used and why.

And that’s exactly why building your own swipe file is helpful: you will know the exact context of all of the headlines you use. This will give you a better chance to understand why they are useful; and why they worked in that particular setting, so that you don’t misuse them when it comes time to write your own.

If you’re looking for a good place to find killer headlines, a good place to start is with the sales letters of Internet marketing gurus. Below, we will consider headlines from 10 different gurus:

1. <http://www.sitesell.com/>. This is Ken Evoy’s successful site-building system business. While the headline isn’t standard by any means, it is still worth looking at. It says “Prosperity, Passion, Priorities, Freedom and Family.”

At first, this might not seem like anything staggeringly powerful. However, it contains at least two elements that make it strong: first, it stresses the benefits of financial success more than it does the success itself. This tends to resonate better with prospective customers.

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The second thing this headline does well is to differentiate Evoy's SiteBuildIt from most other Internet marketing tools. It does this by avoiding overtly salesly overtones, as is the norm elsewhere. In Evoy's case, this makes perfect sense for his business model, which focuses on long-term, realistic business plans, rather than the "get rich quick schemes" that are unfortunately all too popular in Internet Marketing.

2. <http://www.internetmarketing.com/sbs-pricing.html>. Founded by Corey Rudl originally, marketingtips.com was handed over Derek Gehl after Rudl's passing. To this day, the site sells a premier guide to Internet marketing.

The headline reads as follows: "The Step-by-Step Guide Is The Most Comprehensive Business Startup Program Available Anywhere... And It's Fully Guaranteed!"

In this case, the Gehl has a big claim: that his product is the most comprehensive in its particular Internet marketing niche. While you might not be able to truthfully make such a claim about your own product, it definitely does make sense to make about the important features of your product where possible.

3. <http://www.perrymarshall.com/google/>. If you want to find a good headline, look no further than the AdWords Guru's—Perry Marshall's—sales page. With years of consistent success on his back, it is clear that there is a lot to learn from his strategies, including his headline word choices. The headline reads as follows:

"Google AdWords Looks Like A Great Tool ... But the Best-Keywods Are Too Expensive, My Ads Keep Getting Disabled, And This Is A Whole Lot Harder Than It Should Be!"

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Now, if you've ever run an AdWords campaign unsuccessfully, you know exactly why this is a good headline: it presents the exact thoughts that every person encounters after failing at their first few attempts to build a good AdWords campaign.

When you write headlines, you should also try to duplicate Marshall's technique. Try to find out what it is that your customers struggle most with; and then relate your product to it as a solution.

4. <http://www.opportunity.com>. Created by master Internet marketer, John Reese, who is perhaps best known for making 1 million dollars in a single day from Traffic Secrets, this sales page is an excellent case-study for any budding copywriter.

The headline reads as follows: "Many of the Most Trusted Companies in the World Are Waiting to Send You Checks Every Month for Your Part-Time or Full-Time Online Help."

In this case, Reese doesn't rely heavily on psychological triggers, but does try to paint a clear picture for readers. First, he refers to "Many of the Most Trusted Companies in the World," which immediately tells the reader that he's not trying to get you to sell a bunch of shifty, questionable products as an affiliate. And, next he makes it clear that you will be getting checks on a monthly basis and can work according to your own schedule.

Combined, all of this information makes a strong headline. And as someone who swears by tracking and testing, you can be assured that this particular configuration of words isn't random, but came from many trials and split tests.

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In addition to the words themselves, there's something else you should notice about Reese's headline: it's an image, rather than text. This has become increasingly popular in recent years and for a good reason: it looks much nicer and converts significantly better. If you aren't already using image files for your headlines, you should consider switching to them.

5. <http://www.dankennedy.com/index.php/gkic-style-small-business-marketing-strategies.php>. A legend in marketing, Dan Kennedy offers a number of excellent case-studies in headline writing on his site.

The headline reads as follows: "How To Use 'Glazer-Kennedy Style' Small Business Marketing Strategies To Solve All Your Advertising, Marketing And Sales Problems, Once And For All."

There are several important elements in this headline that make it effective. First, since Kennedy and Glazer are strong brands in and of themselves, there's a reference to the Glazer-Kennedy style. This lets site visitors know that they won't simply be passed off on an assistant with very little training, but rather, will learn the hallmark strategies of two marketing powerhouses.

Next, it focuses on the most important benefit, rather than a number of scattered features. Instead of saying that buyers will become "better copywriters" or will "find more prospects," it claims that users will be able to solve all advertising, marketing, and sales problems; and they will do it once and for all.

Now, if you have run a small, Internet-based business for any amount of time, you understand why this claim is important. Often, you can become very good at one thing, but then fail in some other critical way. Here, Kennedy and Glazer claim to solve all problems; and to do so permanently.

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6. <http://www.affilorama.com/premium>. Another excellent case-study for Internet marketers is Mark Ling's Affilorama sales page. Unlike many of the other top-notch sales pages we have seen so far, Ling's page sticks very closely to Internet marketing principles.

Ling's headline reads as follows: "Copy This Underground \$10,047 Per Week Method All Starting Without Your Own Product, Without Your Own Site, And Without Any Previous Experience..."

You'll notice that there are several elements that make this a powerful headline. The first is his use of an exact sum of money--\$10,047—rather than a vague claim of perhaps \$5,000 or \$10,000. Many split tests have revealed that buyers find that exact figure more convincing; and this is even more true when you can back it up with a screenshot, as Ling does immediately thereafter.

Another powerful element of Ling's headline is his use of market research (or, at least, familiarity). He knows that many people who try to start an Internet-based business simply lack the skills to do so initially. They do not know how to create a website; they don't have any real experience; and it is unlikely that they will be able to make a killer product that has the potential to sell hundreds or even thousands of copies.

So, what does Ling do? He appeals to this directly. He mentions that you don't need to do any of those things yourself. Instead, you can make large, regular sums of money without doing any of those things at all.

7. When it comes to good headline case-studies, there are few better places you could go to than any of Joe Vitale's website. Let's start with:
<http://www.pelmanisonline.com/>

The headline reads as follows:

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"If You're The Kind Of Person Who Wants To Break Free From Limited Thinking And Finally Get Whatever You Want In Life... These 12 Long-Lost Astonishing Books Written In The 1920's Will Set You Free!"

Above all else, Vitale is excellent at quickly generating curiosity. And this headline is no exception. He starts by referencing the reader and mentioning that the reader might be "the kind of person who wants to break free from limited thinking and finally get whatever you want in life." So far, so good.

Next, he references 12 mysterious books written in the 1920s. To many marketers, including those who have read classics like "Think and Grow Rich," the idea of secret knowledge in old texts is irresistible. And this is precisely why Vitale's headline will strike a chord with most of his sales letter readers.

Another excellent example of Vitale's work can be found at the following URL: <http://www.hypnoticgold.com/>. Again, he uses mystery and intrigue to draw in the reader.

For marketers who are constantly looking to improve conversion rates, few things could sound more attractive than the following headline: "Who Else Wants to Receive Their Own Copy of the Historic Sales Letter That Pulled a WHOPPING 100% Response?"

Of course, one of the benefits Vitale has going for him is that he actually has such a sales letter. However, that doesn't change the fact that he used that sales letter in a way that others ultimately wouldn't: he used it to leverage strong interest in his next product.

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If anything can be learned from this, it is mainly to use the resources at hand. If you can make a big claim—and that claim is true—then do it. Your readers will be shocked; and this will compel them to read on.

8. <https://www.nitrosecure.com/sub-im/>. Another example of a simple, but great headline is Larry Dotson's sales letter for "Subconscious Internet Marketing." The headline reads as follows: "746 Proven Ways to Get People to Buy."

Unlike some of the other headlines we have seen, it doesn't try to get clever or creative and it isn't laden with psychological triggers. Instead, it simply states a powerful benefit: if you purchase and use the material, you will have access to 746 different methods that can be used to get people to buy.

Another excellent feature of this headline is that it uses a specific number, 746, rather than say, 800, or 700. This creates the appearance that the author simply wrote down all of the proven buying methods that he knew until he ran out. To the contrary, if he had used 800 as the number, it may have seemed as if he simply set that as a target and then spend time trying to come up with them.

At the end of the day, believability is important, which is precisely why this headline is so effective.

9. <https://www.successchef.com/esp/>. Another great example of the use of headlines is Michel Fortin's Marketing E.S.P Cookbook.

While you might find Fortin's tactics gimmicky at first, you will see very quickly why they are successful. His headline is short and simply states: "Pinpoint Hungry Markets like a Psychic."

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For starters, it makes strong claims and uses psychological triggers. Additionally, it focuses on being effective, rather than long. In a single sentence, it grabs your attention, reels you in; and then keeps you around to learn more.

10. <http://www.ultimatecopywritingworkshop.com/>. As a final example, consider Yanik Silver's Ultimate Copywriting Workshop. His headline reads as follows: "Now You Can Instantly (At least) Double The Pulling Power of Any Ad, Email, Web Site or Sales Letter."

Here, too, it's not difficult to see why such a headline would connect with readers. It's succinct and to-the-point; and it clearly communicates the benefits of the product. You are told immediately that it will "(at least) double the pulling power of any ad, email, web site or sales letter." For some teetering on the margin of profit and loss, this sounds like an excellent way to immediately break into profit.

Additionally, notice the use of psychological triggers, such as "instantly" and "power." These have an effect on readers; and make them more prone to respond by reading further.

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Testing and Tracking

In addition to using the strategies I have outlined above, you should also spend time testing and tracking your results. Without conducting proper tests and measuring the results, you will have no means of determining how your sales letter is truly performing.

Tracking and testing is truly a simple process, but if you do it wrong, your results will be useless, so it is important that you follow the four-step process that I outline below in order to ensure that your results are correct.

Step #1: Define Your Experiment Carefully

When it comes to deriving a valid, scientific result, your approach should always involve gradual, purposeful changes; and should attempt to hold all else constant.

For instance, if you decide to change three words in your headline, then you should change only those three words; and then track your results to determine whether or not your conversion rate increased.

If, on the other hand, you make additional changes to the body of the sales letter at the same time, then you may have no reasonable way to separate the two different effects. It may even be the case that one is contributing negatively and the other is contributing positively.

So, start by defining the experiment carefully. For instance, write down two distinct headlines; and then test which one performs better when all else is held constant.

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Step #2: Hold All Else Constant

Whenever it comes to deriving reliable, scientific results, holding everything else constant is critical. If the conditions under which two experiments are performed are different, then it will never be clear what is driving the results.

For instance, one element that could confound your results is the quality of your traffic. If you use the sales page on your site's home page to test and track results, but, as you go, add additional sources of traffic, then it's not clear whether your results are driven by the quality of the traffic or the changes in the headline.

So, when you design your strategy for testing results, make sure that you try to keep things as scientific as possible by keeping everything else constant.

Step #3: Collect Large Samples

When it comes to tracking and testing, you always need large samples. It's simply not sufficient to look at the conversion rate generated by 30 visitors; and then make a strong conclusion based on that.

At a minimum, you should wait until several hundred visitors land on your page and respond to the copy change before you make any decisions. This will ensure that you are going in the right direction, rather than basing your ideas on small sample results.

Step #4: Make a Decision

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Once the results are in, it's time to make a decision. Look at the conversion rates generated by the two versions of your sales page; and then decide whether the results are sufficiently strong to merit a change. If they are, make the change and move on to the next test.

With this said, you now have a powerful strategy for evaluating the quality of your projects. Put it to work every time you alter a sales letter; and you will be pleasantly surprised by your results.

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Powerful Tricks for Boosting Conversion Rates

When it comes to copywriting, your primary objective should be to convert readers into buyers. If your conversion rate is 1%, then you should aim for 2%. And, if it's 2%, then you should aim for 3%. Push yourself hard to improve your copy; and the results will pay off in consistently thicker profit margins.

Below, I consider some of the methods you can use to crank up your conversion rates; and generally squeeze more money out of each sales letter. We'll start below with using bullet points correctly.

How to Use Bullet Points Correctly

If you talk to most skilled copywriters, they'll tell you that bullet points should be a prominent part of any sales letter. It doesn't matter whether you're using short copy or long copy, bullet points get the job done in ways that paragraphs often cannot.

Bullet points and ordered lists provide your readers with a simple means to capture a lot of information without having to wade through dense writing. For instance, they can drink up an entire list of benefits; or they can skim a list of ways in which their businesses may be transformed if they begin using your new technique.

Now, beyond simply using bullet points frequently, you should also try to use them the right way. Below, I have compiled a short list of ways in which you can use bullet points in your copy that should help you to significantly increase your conversion rates:

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1. Keep bullet points short. If your bullet points are actually paragraphs, you're doing something wrong. The goal should be to summarize, not expand on, important benefits and features of your product.
2. Alternate between bolded and un-bolded bullet points. Great copywriters, such as the late Gary Halbert, often used this technique; and claimed that it made it easier for readers to digest each bullet point.
3. Communicate only one idea per bullet. Bullet points work best when they're short and succinct, so avoid long-winded, multi-sentence bullets.
4. If you have several large, dense paragraphs that contain many thoughts, break them up into smaller blocks of bullet points. This will improve readability and the flow of your sales letter in general.
5. Use bullet points to convert long copy into short copy. If a long copy sales page is converting poorly, then change it to a short copy page. This has the potential to change things up and allow you to increase the conversion rate.

If you practice these rules consistently when you use bullet points, the quality of your sales pages will improve over time. It is simply a matter of practicing and observing those who use bullet points well.

How to Use Sub-Headings

One common misunderstanding among new copywriters is that sub-headings aren't important. They believe that all a good piece of copy requires is a strong headline, a compelling introduction, and a powerful call to action. In reality, this couldn't be more incorrect.

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So why are sub-headings important? The short answer is that they allow readers to skim your sales letter for important points. If your sales letter consists of one-paragraph after another with no well-defined structure, the only people who get through it are those who have a stomach for lengthy prose—and who have a very strong interest in your product or service.

Unfortunately, this means that a lot of people slip through the cracks. And when people slip through the cracks, their money slips through the cracks with them.

In short, making it easier for people to skim your sales letter, retain information, and use that information to make a buying decision is vital. And this is precisely why you must include sub-headings in your sales letters.

When it comes to using sub-headings, I personally recommend that you follow the short list of tips below:

1. Use a large, bold font that is smaller than your headline, but much larger than the body text.
2. State the most important benefit of the upcoming section in a sub-heading. For instance, you might say “I’ll reveal one secret that push your profits into the six-figure category.” In the immediately following section, you can then talk up that secret further.
3. Think of the sub-headings as a road map for your readers. With this in mind, try to convey the most important information about what’s coming up without using too many words.
4. Put the most shocking and most powerful sub-headings first (along with the appropriate sections) and the less powerful bullet points later. If people see seemingly weak benefits first, they may not be compelled to go on.

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However, if people see strong benefits initially, but still aren't convinced, then they may at least be persuaded to continue on to the weaker benefits.

5. Try to fill your sub-headings with psychological triggers. Words like shocking, scientifically proven, powerful, explosive, secret, hidden, free, and limited will generate responses from your readers.
6. Keep sub-headings short. The goal is to make it easy—not time-consuming—for readers to skim through your sales letter; and to make the decision to buy. Help them achieve this by creating short, crisp sub-headings.
7. Try to emulate the style of famous copywriters, such as Michel Fortin, Gary Halbert, and others. See how they use sub-headings in their own writing; and attempt to import their methods into your own work.

In short, sub-headings are a powerful means of organizing your work. Use them wisely and frequently; and you will make your sales page more readable and skimmable.

How to Correctly Use Bolding and Highlighting

As I mentioned before, writing an essay and writing a sales letter requires similar, but distinct sets of skills. If you were writing an essay, it would be considered unsophisticated to bold, highlight, and italicize all sorts of words and phrases.

To the contrary, when you are writing a sales letter, it is both common and useful to do this. If you ask most copywriters about this, their reasoning behind it is simple: if you bold or highlight something, skimmers will see it.

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Just as you created sub-headings to give skimmers a road map for getting through your sales letter, you should also bold, italicize, and highlight to give them additional information about your product.

In the list below, I will cover some of the most important things you should keep in mind when marking up your sales letter:

1. Don't mark up your sales letter until you have finished writing it. You should then re-read the entire sales letter at least once; and, along the way, figure out what items are most important. Be parsimonious and highlight only things that you think are truly important.
2. In order to create a stronger effect, try to bold or highlight words at the end of sentences.
3. Once you have done your initial mark-ups, read through the sales letter by reading only the sub-headings and the marked-up text. If you feel like this provides you with a sufficient amount of information to make a buying decision, then you probably did a good job. If not, it's time to re-work your mark-ups.

In summary, mark-ups are important. They set important pieces of information apart from everything else. They also make it easier for people to skim and to capture important information in the process.

So, next time you are re-working a sales letter, be sure to put some extra emphasis on the mark-ups. Make sure you're getting them right; and make sure that they are providing useful information to the reader.

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Closing a Sale

I won't claim that closing a sale is the only thing that is important. In fact, many visitors will read your sales page, leave without buying, and then come back another day to buy. So, in fact, planting the seed of curiosity can sometimes be just as important as directly closing the sale on the first try.

However, when it comes to sales letter writing, closing the sale is at least as important as anything else. If you're good at it, readers will become buyers; and if you're bad at it, the readers will disappear, leaving you to hope that they'll choose to return.

So how can you ratchet up the pressure and close sales? In this section we'll go over two strategies.

Retaining Reader Interest

When it comes to closing sales, few things are more important than retaining the readers' interest. If your readers become bored early on by a lackluster sales letter, there's almost nothing you can do to jolt them back to life. Instead, they will probably leave before they read even a quarter of your pitch.

To the contrary, if you grip readers from the beginning and ratchet up the pitch as the sales letter goes on, readers will have no choice but to stick around. And they will do so not to give you the benefit of the doubt, but because they truly believe that not buying now means that they will definitely be worse off.

So how can you retain readers' interest and encourage them to come back? I personally suggest that you take the following five steps:

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1. Cover the benefits and features of your product in order of importance. Start with the most important benefit of your product. And as the sales letter goes on, continue to list the less and less important features.

Indeed, you may have seen this approach elsewhere. This style of writing is used in newspapers very frequently. The idea is to focus on retaining a person's interest for as long as is possible.

With newspapers, you can start by reading the first few paragraphs. If the story looks good, you may continue on until the end of it. If you get sick of it early, you at least got the most important pieces of information before moving on.

This works well with newspapers; and it works well with sales copy, too. It allows the people who are most motivated to buy to stop reading early and buy; and it allows those who are hardest to persuade to continue on until you have had the chance to make a sufficiently strong case for your product.

2. "Edit down" your sales letter. Virtually without exception, sales letters are too wordy and contain too many filler sentences. Unfortunately for sellers, having a lot of filler usually does nothing to further your pitch.

So, once you have finished constructing your sales letter, read through it a second time. Wherever possible, make an attempt to squeeze out any filler material, so that your sales letter becomes increasingly potent with each revision.

3. Push readers forward right before you attempt to pitch your product. While your benefits should be listed in order of importance, it is still vital that you don't let the sales letter lose steam over time. Instead, you should move from listing the final benefit to shocking your readers with a surprise; and then making your attempt to close out the deal.

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In general, try to make sure that your sales letter doesn't lose steam over time. Instead, focus on supporting it through the introduction of additional benefits, so that it demonstrates the robustness and usefulness of your product; and, at the same time, entices readers to become increasingly excited about it as they near the end of the sales letter.

4. Use bonuses to keep readers interested. After you have finished detailing all of the great benefits of your product, start throwing in bonuses as you work your way to the final pitch.

Bonuses can go a long way towards spicing up your product pitch; and converting unlikely buyers into definite buyers.

5. "Introduce" your product at the end of the pitch. Instead of opening your sales letter with the name and purpose of your product, open your sales letter with a problem that the reader has. As you go, suggest how that problem could be overcome by subtly alluding to strategies and methods detailed in your product.

Finally, once you build a strong case for the category of product in which your product falls, introduce your product as the solution for all of the aforementioned problems.

In summary—retaining reader interest is a vital part of crafting a successful sales letter. Follow the tips I outlined above; and you should be successful in your Endeavour to keep your sales letter lively and effective.

Using Calls to Action Correctly

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Another important part of closing the sale is using a powerful call to action. If you're unfamiliar with the term, a call to action simply tells the reader to buy and to buy now.

Unfortunately for many Internet marketers, their calls to action simply don't get the job done. Whether they are too weak or too spread out, they never build up the oomph required to push readers to become buyers.

If you find yourself in this position now, then it is time to re-work your calls to action (or to learn how to do it correctly if you never have before).

I personally suggest that you take the following three steps whenever you write a call to action:

Step #1: Tell The Reader Exactly What To Do

Usually, with a sales letter, this part is easy. You simply want the reader to stop reading and buy; and this is exactly what you have to tell them to do.

Of course, in some situations, your goal may be a little subtler. For instance, you might want the reader to return at the end of a countdown to buy your product at its release date. Or you might want the reader to either buy or sign up for a newsletter, which you will then use to pitch to them.

Whatever it is that you want them to do, make sure you clarify that goal for yourself. Once you have done that, make sure that you put it into your sales letter repeatedly and clearly. Tell readers exactly what to do and exactly when to do it.

Step #2: Surround the Call to Action with Supporting Text

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Simply calling people to action isn't enough. If your call to action isn't surrounded by relevant and encouraging text, the call to action may fall flat. It may either seem out of place or too dramatic.

In either case, the antidote for this problem is a strong build-up; and a calculated wind-down. In the strong build-up, you should focus exclusively on moving towards a pitch. Explain why the problems they encounter are formidable; and explain why other products are unlikely to do the job.

By the time you get to the call to action, they should be ready to buy. And after you deliver it, all that is left to do is provide additional support. For those still reading (who haven't bought), push them to reconsider.

Step #3: Make it Easy to Follow Your Call to Action

If your call to action is difficult to follow, expect few people to follow it. To the contrary, if your call to action is simple and is easy to follow, then expect many people to follow it. That's just how things work.

With that said, do yourself a favor: make your call to action simple to follow. For instance, if you repeatedly tell people to "buy now," follow those calls to action with a link that allows them to buy immediately. Don't simply put one buy now button at the bottom of the page and none elsewhere.

And if you ask people to come back on the launch date (or something similar), then offer to remind them of the launch date via email. This not only makes it easy for them to follow your call to action, but it also enables you to pick up some email addresses in the meantime.

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In summary—a weak call to action could make an otherwise brilliantly-written sales letter flat and unconvincing. To the contrary, a powerful call to action can transform a relatively weak sales letter into something that has legs.

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The AIDA Method

So far, we've reviewed a wide array of different strategies you can use to increase conversion rates, and to generally make sales letters more coherent and more effective. One thing that has been conspicuously absent throughout, however, is the AIDA (Attention, Interest, Decision, Action) method.

If you're a relatively more experienced copywriter, there's a very good chance you know of and have used the AIDA method. However, if you've never heard of it before, don't worry. This entire chapter is dedicated to helping you understand it.

With that said, let's get started with the "attention" portion of AIDA:

Attention

When it comes to writing a sales letter, the AIDA method tells us to focus on attention first. Why? It's simple. If you never catch a person's attention to begin with, there's no point in going any further with your sales pitch, because no one is going to read it.

If you haven't guessed yet, getting a reader's attention starts with a well-crafted headline. As we went over earlier, a good headline is the difference between a 1% converting sales letter and a 5% converting sales letter.

If you catch people's attention immediately with your headline, then you will have the rest of the sales letter to convince them to buy. If you never catch it to begin with, then you may never get that chance.

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Of course, it is important to note that “attention” doesn’t end with the headline. From there, you have to push hard to keep the reader moving. You can do this by including a small paragraph after your headline that mentions important benefits.

And this brings us to our next section: interest.

Interest

The second component of AIDA involves building interest. This generally has three different parts.

Part #1: Introduce a Problem

If you’ve done your market research, you understand that problems trip up customers in your niche all the time. For instance, if you’re in the golf niche, your customers probably struggle to putt well; or find themselves coming up too short too frequently on long drives.

Furthermore, your product is probably designed to tackle at least one of these problems that customers in your niche encounter all the time. And this is exactly why introducing a problem is important.

You can start with something like this for our example above: “Do you have trouble putting consistently? Is your mental game adding strokes to your actual game? If so, you might be suffering from...”

After that sentence, you would proceed to explain the problem that the typical person in your niche encounters on a regular basis. You would build up the problem, so that it is both detailed and recognizable.

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And once you did that, you would move to the next part.

Part #2: Introduce a Solution to the Problem

The next part in getting the readers interest is introducing a solution to the aforementioned problem. Once you do this, the reader will begin to have hope that the problem can be solved; and that he can improve in whatever areas he is struggling.

Of course, the solution should subtly move in the direction of your product; however, you should not explicitly introduce it initially. Instead, you should explain how certain strategies can be used to overcome the problem; however, they are involved and many are not able to carry them out.

As the reader begins to sense that you might be able to help them with their problem, their interest in the sales letter will start to grow. And this is precisely when you move into the next phase of the “interest section.”

Part #3: Introduce Your Product AS the Solution

Now that readers have spent time reading about the problem in question and have considered the solutions you have suggested, it's time to build a strong bridge between the two.

You can do this by explaining exactly how it is that your product is a solution to the problem in question. And furthermore, explain how the reader's life or business will be difference once they gain access to the product and are finally able to overcome the problem in question.

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After working through this part, you will move on to the “decision” portion of AIDA.

Decision

Earlier, we discussed “calls to action” and the build-ups that precede them. When it comes to the AIDA method, the build-up to the call to action is called the “decision” portion of the sales letter.

In this part, you will want to transition from introducing your product as the solution to the problem to convincing readers that they absolutely must have it.

For the rest of the sales letter, you should provide copious amounts of supporting material, including endless strings of benefits and bonuses. Your goal should be to maximize the probability that a reader will make the decision to buy before they get through this section.

Once they have made the decision to buy, there’s only one thing left to do.

Action

The final portion of AIDA involves telling people to take action. Put simply, this is your call to action (or calls to action). It should not only include multiple links throughout the body of the sales letter, but a final, and well-displayed “buy now” button at the bottom of the page.

Additionally, the “action” portion of the sales letter should include a p.s. and p.p.s. after you include your signature. These can be used to compel readers to return to the “buy it now” button to avoid missing out on an opportunity.

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The 30-Day Copywriting Plan

We've now gone through a robust overview of how to become a master copywriter. We've discussed specific methods, broad strategies, and details. We've also looked at the examples from copywriters who have truly mastered the discipline; and have discussed the pitfalls of certain approaches.

With all of this knowledge, let's now consider how you can go from your current situation to master copywriter in only 30 days.

Week #1: Focus on Basic Skills & Market Research

For at least the first three days of week 1, focus only on basic skills. Take the grammar and style tests, figure out where you have weaknesses, and work to eliminate those fundamental weaknesses.

After those three days are over, continue to work on your basic skills, but do so only for a portion of each day. Depending on how badly you need to improve your basic skills, this can vary, but I would suggest spending no more than $\frac{1}{4}$ of your day on basic skills exercises after the first three days.

For the remaining four days, hone your market research skills. Spend time conducting surveys with your existing clientele. Try to tease information out of them and to learn more from them. Also, begin frequenting forums and taking notes.

Week #2: Complete Two Sales Letters

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In week two, continue to work infrequently on basic skills. However, with the majority of your time, focus on cranking out two high-quality sales letters using the market research you conducted in the first week.

At least one of these sales letters should use the AIDA method. The other can use whichever method you feel will work best for your site and product.

When writing these sales letters, focus very narrowly on ensuring that everything is fundamentally sound. Use psychological triggers, develop headlines carefully and thoughtfully, use sub-headlines as a road map, and be careful with your choice of bolded, italicized, and underlined words.

Once you have completed the two sales letters, get other people to read and severely criticize them. At first, your stomach may churn at this idea, but after you think it over, you will realize that there is no other better option when it comes to ensuring that your sales letters are high-quality.

You could consider asking for reviews at either of the following two sites:

1.

<http://copywriting.com/community/forums.html><http://www.copywriting.com/community/forums.html>

2. <http://www.warriorforum.com>

Before moving on to the next phase, it is probably a good idea to spend at least a few days getting and responding to criticism.

Week #3: Make Changes & Compile a Swipe File

Now that you have received serious criticism for each of the sales pages you created, it's time to begin revising them. Of course, you shouldn't simply take all
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criticism as truth, but you should avoid getting defensive and ignoring important deficits in your sales letter.

This week, you should devote the bulk of your time to making changes to your two sales letters according to the criticism that you received. However, in addition to this, you should also spend some time creating a swipe file, which will positively contribute to your copywriting efforts for the remainder of your career.

As mentioned earlier, a swipe file is nothing more than a list of high-quality headlines. If you're not sure where you start, you can go to <http://www.gurudaq.com> and begin working through the rankings of Internet marketers.

Finally, if you have any extra time, you should spend time practicing your headline writing. Use the formulas provided in the previous section to construct dozens of different ways in which you could re-arrange your existing headlines to get a better response.

Week #4: Polish Your Copy, Test, and Track

In your final week, you should put the finishing touches on the two sales letters you created. You should then begin using them on your site.

After working through others' criticism, you should have a polished product that is ready to generate a high conversion rate. However, if it doesn't perform well, it is important that you don't become discouraged.

Instead, what you should do is use the sets of strategies I have outlined in this ebook to deal with the problems you encounter. For instance, if you think your headline might be performing poorly, then switch it with a new one; and then track the results.

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If you think your call to action is too weak, then re-work it and then track the results. And if you think sales letter fails to build interest or to encourage the reader to make a decision, then use the section on the AIDA method to re-work your sales letter.

Finally, remember to follow all of the steps I mentioned previously when testing and tracking. The more closely you follow them, the more accurate your results will be.

Week #5 and Beyond: Practice, Refine, Track, and Test

From week 5 onward, your goal should be to practice your skills, refine your existing sales letters, and then test and track your results.

As difficult as copywriting can be, it's entirely doable if you stick with the plan I've outlined above. The key is simply practicing the important components of copy; improving your existing sales letters; and then frequently checking your results to make sure that everything is happening as desired.

When you combine all of these elements with a strong desire to succeed, you are sure to become a master copywriter in no time.

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Conclusion

After reading this guide, I hope you've learned a lot about what it means to be a master copywriter. It not only means being a solid writer and employing good grammar, but it also means having complete mastery of a wide variety of selling techniques and strategies.

You should not only know how to use psychological triggers and to construct winning headlines, but you should also know how to use sub-headlines; and to employ the AIDA method correctly.

Furthermore, you should understand that good copywriting doesn't boil down to doing things once and once only. Rather, it involves the understanding that you will have to come up with a draft, ask for criticism, revise that draft; and then constantly work to improve that sales letter once it goes live.

In short, good copywriting not only means mastery and employment over the fundamentals, but it also means dynamicity, thoughtfulness, and willingness to continue testing, tracking, and making changes long after you thought you'd be done.

This is truly the essence of good copywriting; and it is an attitude that you must adopt if you wish to become a master copywriter. So, with that in mind, take all of the tricks and strategies you have learned and get to work on the 30-day plan starting today!

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