

## Proof the secret sauce works

My last full-time job as a journalist was as a senior editor for the Wall Street Journal. Now while working at the newspaper, I began to notice something very interesting. Whenever I'd edit a reporter's article, no matter how much time I spent on the actual edit, I'd end up making exactly four types of changes. First, I'd make the writing more simple. Second, I'd make the writing more clear. Third, I'd make the writing more elegant. And fourth, I'd make it more evocative.

Now as I thought about it, it suddenly became obvious to me that this was because those are really the essential four ingredients that give writing a feeling of higher quality. I was so impressed with those ingredients that I started referring to them as the secret sauce of exceptional writing. Again, simplicity, clarity, elegance, and evocativeness.

Watch now how these four ingredients can transform even the most basic of sentences into something more slick and polished. Take this sentence. "It was indicated to the president by his chief advisor that it should be attempted to formulate a decision to act at the earliest opportunity, in the best interests of circumventing what might otherwise result in the country flowering into embarking on a prolonged, extended, and exorbitant military conflagration."

Is that an enjoyable to read? Is it simple? Is it clear? Is it elegant? And is it evocative? I'm sure that you'll agree that it's none of those four things, is it? Now pause this and try to apply just those four concepts-- simplicity, clarity, elegance, and evocativeness to that sentence to make it better in whatever way you understand. There's no need to post your attempt. All these exercises are just for you to practise with.

Now I had a quick go myself at applying those four ingredients and got this. "The president's chief advisor urged him to act quickly to avert a long, costly war." Is that better than the original? If so, I hope you can agree that what a powerful formula this can be when applied even to a simple sentence. And to do it, I've used only a fraction of the techniques that I'm going to be teaching in this course. Soon, you'll be able to empower your writing using this secret sauce yourself. But here's a quick summary of what it will do for your writing.

Simplicity will help you create punchiness in your writing. Clarity will ensure your writing is easy to comprehend. Elegance will create orderliness and flow in your writing. And evocativeness will make your writing stimulating. As you'll see, there really isn't much else you need other than those four qualities to make your writing exceptional.