

## On writing well . . . Great advice from Peter Jacobi

**"I know not, sir, whether Bacon wrote the works of Shakespeare, but if he did not it seems to me that he missed the opportunity of his life."**

James Matthew Barrie

(Scottish Dramatist and Novelist best known as the creator of Peter Pan, 1860-1937)

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<http://mrmagazine.wordpress.com/>

Peter Jacobi is a household name when it comes to magazine editing and writing. The professor emeritus at The University of Indiana is probably more famous than the former basketball coach Bobby Knight (well, at least in the magazine circles). I had the pleasure to meet Professor Jacobi in person for the first time at the first children's magazine editors retreat at Boyds Mill home of the founders of Highlights for Children magazine. We both spoke at the retreat. He talked about writing and I talked about publishing. What follows is Professor Jacobi's advice regarding successful writing:

**To be a successful writer your article must have:**

- 1. The invitation: the lead or the initial tease; it should even hook the reluctant reader**
- 2. The thesis: telling the reader what the article is all about, sort of an early summary. Perhaps a response to the readers expectations.**
- 3. Purpose: the why it is for me "piece of writing." It is an extended explanation of the purpose of the piece. The purpose must be made evident (another sales pitch).**
- 4. Direction: you must have a sense of clear direction. Every point along the "verbal highway" must set the course. . . a crystal clear viewable course . . . you must write with a compass.**
- 5. Propulsion: a sense of motion, going forward. Your writing must have actual movement with pulse and progress.**
- 6. Memory: pleasure of reading should be followed by a sense of recalling. Good writing should give me "something to remember."**

In short, Professor Jacobi said, "the best writing supplies the ties that bind." And no matter what, read your article load" . . . yes, Jacobi said, "read it loud and see if it tells a story and keeps you connected." Great advice from the master himself.