Hi, my name is Evan Thomas. I’m Editor at Large at Newsweek Magazine and I’m here to talk to you about improving your writing. I’ve written a lot. Uh, I’ve been a journalist for 30 years. I’ve worked for Newsweek for 20 years. I’ve written dozens of cover stories. I’ve written six books; nonfiction uh, history and biography. Uh, I write all the time. I write every week and I know that writing can be a miserable lonely hard business.

Writing is hard, but you got to do it uh, especially if you’re going to go into business. You write all the time in business. Uh, you write memos. You write speeches. You write reports. It's kind of a neglected art. There's a lot of bad writing that goes on in business, but it's important. It's important to get it right. It's a mark of your professionalism and uh, it will really affect your standing in business and whether, whether you rise.

One way to look at it is to put your shoe on the other food and think of yourself as a reader. Think as a reader, when you read something that's turgid or dull or complex or uses a lot of technical terms or jargon that you can't figure out, or some instructions. Say you're installing your DVD player and you can't figure it out. Think of how frustrating that is. Well that's, that's because it's bad writing and that's the way your clients will feel and your bosses will feel. They'll be
frustrated if you don't write clearly.

So it's important to write clearly and this is the important thing. You must write simply and clearly. This is what good writing is all about. It's about clarity and simplicity. I don't mean being simple minded. Often you have to deal with very complex ideas uh, and, and, but you must write about them in a simple clear way. What it means is that you've thought through the difficult tangled idea. You've unraveled it for the reader; you've made sense of it uh, and readers, believe me are going to be, are going to be grateful for it.

Now I know that sometimes you get mixed signals here. Your teachers and sometimes your bosses will write pretty complex dull turgid stuff themselves. A lot of academic writing, a lot of the text books you read in school are pretty, especially in college, are pretty overly complex and dull. And, and you may think well gee my teacher wants me to write that way because that's the way my teacher writes. No. Wrong. You must write clearly. Believe me if you write clearly and simply your clients will appreciate it, your customers will appreciate it, and your bosses will appreciate it.