

# Writing Prose

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## Chapter I

# General Considerations

### A. Why We Write

We write primarily to communicate — what we question, what we believe, what we know. We also write to discover what we think. Just as expression without thought is empty, so is thought incomplete without expression. But communication is not the only end we try to realize when we write. We write to gain power by defining reality as we see it; we write to signal our membership in a community, to embrace some people and exclude others; we may sometimes even write to obscure. We write to conform to verbal etiquette; we write to define our identities by assuming a particular voice. At times we write to amuse, to enjoy the play of language, and to share our delight in language with others.

This booklet focuses on the primary goal of writing prose: clear communication. But at times it touches on these less overt social, political, even moral purposes in writing. If you wish to become a good writer, you must be self-conscious about these purposes as well.