

Okay, so you've mastered the punctuation and the connectives:  
Now please write something interesting

DO MORE OF:

1. Read more feisty, interesting journalism. And, as you do so, note why they are interesting – what they do, how they punctuate, the words they choose. I've given some examples overleaf.
2. Build your vocabulary. Great writing will have a precision to it, a formality, occasionally punctuated by colloquialisms. Learn the '80 words you should know' list
3. Find alternatives to 'I' and 'me'. You can express your opinion more subtly without signalling that it's your thought. 'The writer is wrong at this point' carried more authority than saying 'I think the writer is wrong'
4. Use more facts, quotations, anecdotes, description; give less assertion
5. Use drop paragraphs: these are paragraphs at the start of an article that capture our attention with a story – eg 'Are sports stars good role models?' could begin like this:

Giles Mason sits in the changing room, pulls off his shirt, and looks in the mirror. He has played football now for some twelve years, with the dream of one day being a professional player at a recognised club. Here he sits, full back at Cambridge United. He looks in the mirror and wonders if this is what this is what it was all leading up to. Then, as his manager barks at the team from the doorway, he pulls on a clean shirt, checks that the corporate logo is showing, double-checks his hair, and stands up to return to the pitch for the second half. Something inside of him is dying.

DO LESS OF:

1. Accepting clichés. If you can predict the finish of these phrases then they are clichés. Avoid them like, er, the plague:
  - The good old days
  - Turkeys voting for Christmas
  - Flat as a pancake
  - Team player
  - Pull your punches
  - Crack of dawnMr B says you should feel ashamed if you use a cliché – it's using someone else's ready-made phrases. It's lazy. If I ever used a cliché, I would feel sick in my stomach and imagine my father turning in his grave (etc)
2. Accepting the first word that comes into your mind.
3. (Except in dialogue), using exclamation marks. It's like wearing loads of bling.

## 3 SAMPLES

The internet has peeled back our culture and shown how cruel and selfish we really are  
By [MELANIE PHILLIPS](#), Daily Mail

Are girls getting meaner? The headmistress of an independent school certainly thinks so, and she claims that the cause lies in Facebook and celebrity culture.

The head of St Mary's Calne in Wiltshire, Dr Helen Wright, has said that sites such as Facebook encourage teenagers to believe 'bitching is good' because they are desensitising girls to the effects on others of what they might say or do.

Girls are being led to believe that making or breaking friendships is like making 'friends' on Facebook, where they are made or dropped at the click of a button.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2140550/The-internet-peeled-culture-shown-cruel-selfish-really-are.html#ixzz1uyJKisoh>

Jay Rayner: Deli West One, London  
Observer

Recently we learned that if you eat too much red or processed meat you can slice up to 20% off your life expectancy. Presumably, then, eating processed or cured red meat is the gastronomic equivalent of a cocaine and heroin speedball. Given my love for salt beef and pastrami, I find this completely thrilling. As I slip into a saggy, grey-bearded middle age the nearest I come to doing anything dangerous is carrying two cups of coffee upstairs while stepping over bits of Lego with my bare feet. That's a life lived on the freakin' edge.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2012/apr/08/jay-rayner-deli-west-one-review>

Alison Phillips: Families need real help not just a token gesture of parenting classes

Going to parenting classes is to become as normal as a line dancing class, according to David Cameron.

We'll take your wayward teenager by the hand and let's dosey doe.

Or more likely, dosey don't drop litter, don't answer back to adults, don't hang around street corners intimidating passers-by and don't get tanked up on cheap booze in the park.

There, that's the youth problem sorted out, let's move on.

Except, of course, raising kids isn't quite that simple and certainly not something that can be solved with a pathetic offering of £100 in parenting class vouchers.

The PM's new scheme aims to crack down on yobbery by letting parents of pre-school children pick up the vouchers from Boots to access information on behaviour, routine, diet and good manners.

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/night-copy/families-need-real-help-not-833068>