Mal Warwick is a prolific writer. He writes fundraising letters for a living, and this is his fifth book. Since you've probably read his other works, you might be tempted to skip this one. Resist the temptation. Even the ideas he has presented before read well in this book. His rules for writing fundraising letters are classic and powerful. Writers ought to refer to these guidelines constantly when working to make a good product.

The book's style bears many similarities to Warwick's fundraising letters. Short, single-thought sentences, which sometimes are not complete sentences. Headings. A smooth flow from subject to subject.

You may find yourself reading the book the same way you would read his letters. Although there is no postscript to read first, as there are in fundraising letters, you will want to start by reading two chapters near the end of the book. These are the chapters that provide tips for overcoming writer's block (extremely useful) and lists of envelope teasers. Then, just like a fundraising letter, you skip to the lead—the introduction—and skim the subjects, going back to read those that interest you most. This format makes the book particularly user-friendly for veteran writers of fundraising letters.

Warwick begins his lesson at the very beginning, with the elements of writing. To him, crafting words into lucid ideas is the essence of writing, of getting results, and of raising funds. He then narrows the focus a little by discussing how to write to get results.

Successful fundraising letters depend on building relationships, Warwick emphasizes. This is really the key to his skill as a fundraiser—the recognition that a dialogue between an organization's supporters and its administrators is critical, and the ability to cultivate that dialogue. Expertly, he shows how to accomplish this feat using nothing but the written word.

In detail, Warwick reviews one direct-mail package. He deftly keeps subjectivity to a minimum, relying on results and focus group comments.

**Strong Leads for Fundraising Letters**

1. Thank you . . .!
2. I'm writing you today . . .
3. You are among the first . . .
4. You may be surprised to learn . . .
5. Did you know that . . .?
6. Don't you wish . . .
7. It's no secret that . . .
8. You've probably said to yourself . . .
9. Think about it for a moment.
10. Let's face it.
11. You won't believe it.
12. I know you'll be interested to know that . . .
13. Let's be frank.
14. Have you ever wondered . . .?

From *How to Write Successful Fundraising Letters* by Mal Warwick.
Crafting words into lucid ideas is the essence of writing, of getting results, and of raising funds.

When he is subjective, he makes it clear that he is.

Warwick is comprehensive, covering every facet of direct-mail fundraising. He even reminds us, in no uncertain terms, of the importance of sending thank-you letters to donors. He shows how an organization’s entire mailing effort is jeopardized when prompt acknowledgments are not sent.

One shortcoming is Warwick’s failure to note that the best way to get “high-dollar” contributions ($1,000 and up) is face to face. However, if the ask is going to be made by letter, then his examples are impressive.

Novice direct-mail writers could use this book best by immersing themselves in one section at a time. For veterans, there is little here that Warwick has not told us before, but it serves as an excellent review of information every fundraiser should know.

Crafting words into lucid ideas is the essence of writing, of getting results, and of raising funds.

When he is subjective, he makes it clear that he is.

Warwick is comprehensive, covering every facet of direct-mail fundraising. He even reminds us, in no uncertain terms, of the importance of sending thank-you letters to donors. He shows how an organization’s entire mailing effort is jeopardized when prompt acknowledgments are not sent.

One shortcoming is Warwick’s failure to note that the best way to get “high-dollar” contributions ($1,000 and up) is face to face. However, if the ask is going to be made by letter, then his examples are impressive.

Novice direct-mail writers could use this book best by immersing themselves in one section at a time. For veterans, there is little here that Warwick has not told us before, but it serves as an excellent review of information every fundraiser should know.