

25 TOP WRITING TIPS FOR MAKERS

Welcome to the 25 Top Writing Tips for Makers ebook.

In this ebook I will be sharing with you 5 top tips on 5 different writing topics that you might encounter as a maker.

All the tips and strategies are based on things I have used working with makers to enhance their written communication about their work. Many of these ideas form the basis of talks or lectures I give and can offer you a slightly new way of approaching a piece of writing.

I hope you find the tips useful and inspiring!

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ARTIST'S STATEMENTS

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1. Choose your voice: 1st person or 3rd person dilemmas

Uncertain which point of view is most appropriate? It's not necessarily true what they say, that the 3rd person is more professional. Whether you choose to write your statement in the 1st person 'I' or the 3rd person 'she/he' depends entirely on what is right for your work and for your audience.

Ask yourself: *how visible am I within my work? How visible does my audience want me to be? Which approach suits the nature of my work and the values I work to?*

Still a bit unsure? Try reading my blog post 'Artist Statement dilemma: 1st person or 3rd person' or '4 tricks for writing an awesome artist's statement in the 3rd person'

2. Cover the basics: the 3 sentence statement

A great way to start your artist's statement is to try distilling it down to 3 sentences:

1. who are you? What do you do?
2. what materials, processes, techniques do you use in your work?
3. why do you make this work? What influences you?

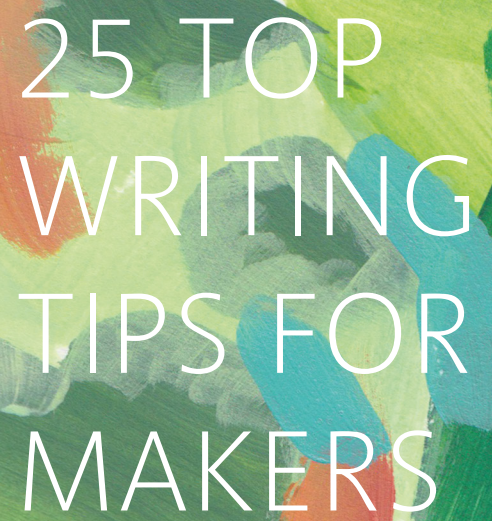
3. Extend the terrain: questions every maker should answer

Once you've got the basics down you'll want to fill out the statement. Try answering these questions:

- what aspect of your work is your defining feature?
- what is the narrative behind your work?
- what are the values behind your work?
- how does it feel to interact with your work or to use it?
- what lifestyle or experience do you hope your work allows people to create or have?

4. Avoid the obvious: how to sound authentic

When we are asked to write about our work we often fall into clichés or obvious phrases, using generic language that could describe any maker's work. Try not to begin sentences with 'My work is inspired by...' or 'I am exploring...' and avoid general statements like 'Taking nature as my starting point...'



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You want to highlight the differences, draw attention to the aspects of your work that set you apart. Make a list of keywords that are relevant to your practice. Then build on that list with descriptive words that are as sensory, emotive and dynamic as the work itself. By being as specific as possible, by using language that reflects the work you do as accurately as possible, you will create a distinct piece of writing.

In my post 'Does your writing reflect your work' we look at other ways you can craft your authentic voice.

5. Consider alternatives: writing may not be the way!

In every piece of writing you want to find your authentic voice. The best way to begin is to write what you would say in the most natural way to you. The easiest way to do this is not to write at all!

- ask someone to interview you about your work.
- use the questions above and add your own.
- record the conversation and listen to it, transcribing the bits that work for you.

We are all much more confident talking about what we do than writing about it, so use that to your advantage. You will probably say exactly what you need, in the most perfect way, without realising it!

If you're not terribly confident with writing, or find it hard to even start, I have some tips and strategies that may help you:

What kind of writer are you?

Starting Writing

The non-writing approach to writing

Other great online resources

I'm sorry to say that there isn't that much out there about writing an artist's statement from the perspective of craft makers. There's lots on How to Write an Artist's Statement for fine artists but they don't always cover the right stuff.

MARKETING

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1. Uncover your usp: it's what makes people want to know more

Writing promotional text is all about enticing your reader to want to know more, or to prompt them to act – to visit you at an event, to check out your online shop, to buy from you. So, the information needs to be exciting and relevant. To begin, ask yourself:

- what is it about your work that stands out?
- how do the materials you use, the way you create your work make you different?
- where does the work originate – what are the ideas and inspiration behind it?
- what is your style? Do you have a distinctive look or do you help to create certain environments with your work?
- is there something about your work that people don't know? Something surprising?

2. Understand your audience: hone in on the right people

Knowing your audience is one of the fundamental aspects of good communication. Only when you know who you are writing or making for can you tailor your work to their needs. For each piece of marketing text consider who the audience is at that moment. It could be:

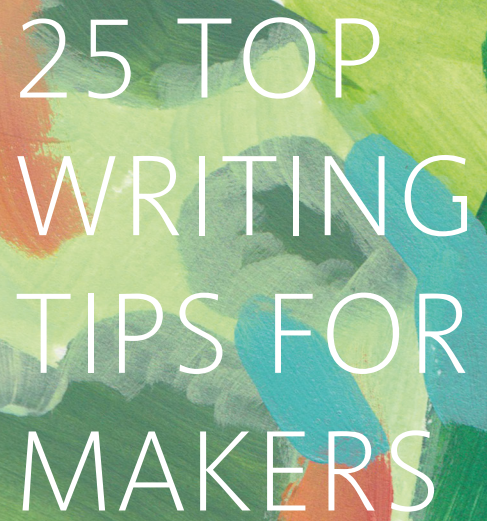
- customers/followers/mailling list – people who already know, like and trust you
- people who organise events or run galleries or shops – people you are hoping to connect with
- the general public – people who may not know your work at all but you'd like them to

Each audience will come with their own knowledge and understanding about the work you make, the creative sector you work in. The way you explain or tell the general public about your work will be different to the way you let your newsletter readers know what's going on.

Always ask yourself:

- how much does this audience already know?
- what language is appropriate? (how technical etc)
- why would this audience be interested? What is their motivation for reading?

In this post 'Who is your audience' I ask more questions to help you focus in and understand your audience better.



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3. Solve a problem: how your work benefits your audience

Marketing isn't just about sending out information into the world. It's about connecting. From your perspective you need to let your audience know that you are attending a show, launching a new collection, holding a workshop but don't forget to put yourself in your audience's shoes. People are more likely to engage with you if they feel that their needs are being met, that the opportunity is too good to miss. They will not be excited by the bare facts – they want to feel that you are aware of what they are looking for.

Try creating a list of problems that your work solves. It could be to do with the use or function of the work – that your objects help people do things better or it could be that your work brings joy and pleasure into the lives of people when they use them. It could be that the event or selling opportunity you are presenting solves the dilemma of where/how people are going to find the perfect gift for a holiday or special occasion.

How many problems, issues or dilemmas can you find that your work helps to solve?

Now tell people about it!

4. Tailor your tone: right audience + right words = just right

As I've mentioned already, each audience will come with its own assumptions and knowledge about what you do. It's important to meet the expectations of your audience and not to assume too much about what they are bringing with them. Once you feel you know which audience your piece of marketing is aimed at, you should start to consider how they like to be talked to.

- does your audience like a more formal, descriptive approach? Perhaps they already know how your work is made but they are interested in when things are happening, how they can get involved.
- perhaps you are reaching out to an audience who doesn't know you but has specific and expert knowledge of the sector (like a gallery owner, magazine editor or blogger) in this case they will expect a certain level of information about what you do, possibly quite technical and detailed. But they will also be interested in the narrative and the story behind the work, they will want to hear your voice.
- when you are writing for the general public, their knowledge of your work might be quite limited, so it's worth keeping things simple and clear. But also making it personable and relatable. Conversational and informal styles work well here.

My top tip for finding the right tone for your work is to think about



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how your work looks and feels. Your writing should reflect this. So if your work is bright and jolly can you make the writing a bit more fun and relaxed? If you create very precise and elegant work then your words should similarly be as polished and pared-back.

5. Hook your reader: a simple structure to follow in any situation

The marketing model AIDA is a great tool when you come to plan and write your marketing texts. By following these steps you can ensure that you've covered everything.

Attention

It's important that you grab your reader's attention. So be careful to craft snappy subject lines or headlines. Don't take ages to get to the best part – the most interesting element – put it up front.

Interest

We all hope that everything we find interesting our audience does too, but we can't assume that's the case. If the information you're sharing isn't thrilling how can you add interest? Images, quotes or testimonials, gifs or videos – what other methods of communicating might pique your audience's interest? And don't forget to keep things short – don't overload people with information. Break it up and keep it simple. If you need to share more direct them to your website or social media where you can explain it.

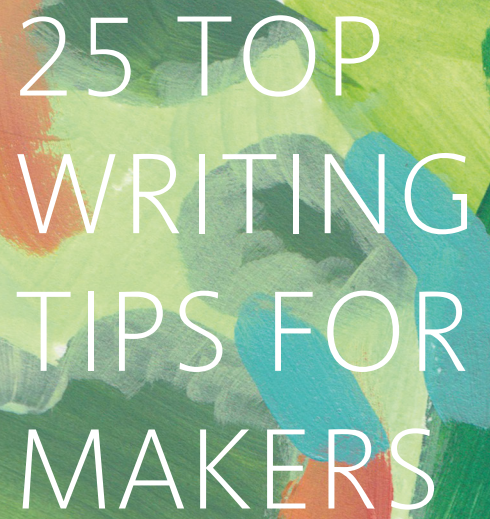
Desire

Once you've got their attention and generated interest, you need to help your audience want to get involved. They need to feel this opportunity is irresistible. That's where your problem-solving list will come in handy. Creating desire is also about helping your audience get to know you and your work better, so that they start to build a positive relationship with you. This is where sharing your story and your values can play an important role – share with your audience, help them to feel part of your world.

Action

The goal of any piece of marketing text is to get your audience to act. What do you hope to achieve with your marketing? Write down the actions you hope your audience will do. How can you help them do that?

- if you want people to buy something have you made it easy – is there a direct link to your shop, have you given all the product information so there are no unanswered questions?
- if you want people to visit you at an event have you included a map, directions, maybe even suggested fun things to do in the area – all things that make it easier to come along.
- if you want people to get in touch with you: have you included your details, have you made it easy for them to find you on social media.



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If your audience has to go away and find other information or go through more steps to act they probably won't do it. Give them all the tools they need right there and then.

Other great online resources

The Design Trust is my go-to recommendation for most things. Try: How to write an intro email that opens doors. (With a template and Dos and Don'ts)

SOCIAL MEDIA

1. Be strategic: which social media platform is for you and why?

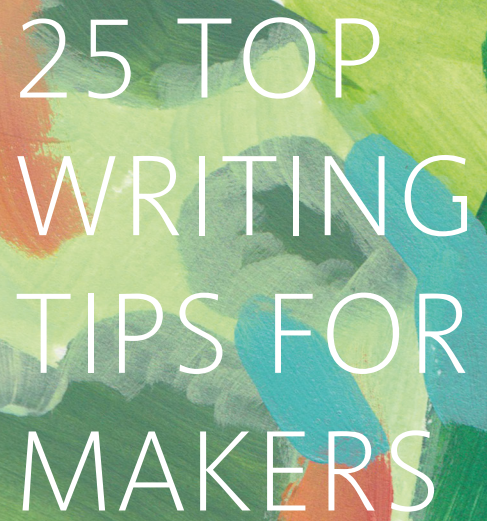
Not every social media platform does the same job. It's vital that you choose the one(s) that work for you, your work and the way you want to interact with the world. Ask yourself 'What are you trying to achieve with your posts?' Do you hope to:

- engage with your audience?
- find opportunities/collaborations?
- start a dialogue or conversation with your audience, your peers?
- build a community or support network?
- learn about your audience or people you wish to work with in the future?
- educate others/provoke action?

How do the different platforms allow you to do these things? Which ones are most appropriate? Which ones have tools or inbuilt analytics that might help you achieve these things? Where is your audience most likely to be?

2. Connect with CARE (content, audience, relevance, evaluation)

It's always important to know why you are posting on social media. Your influence extends far out into the world. Although your followers will hopefully be a friendly and engaged group of people, they may tire of endless self-promotion.



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Think about what content you post. Make sure you understand who it's for and why it's relevant to them. And don't forget to evaluate: use the analytic tools to see which posts were most popular, which encouraged most engagement or sharing. Learn what your audience likes to hear about and what they don't.

3. Plan your posts: have a strategy and a schedule

You don't have to be as active on social media as you imagine to maintain a good connection with your audience. But it can help to have even the loosest schedule so that you are letting people know about the important things and staying in touch.

If you have events or activities coming up- make a plan. Work out what you need to say and when. Gather all the images you will need ready. Think about how you might want to stagger posts across your platforms so that you aren't bombarding people with repeated information each time.

Make the most of free scheduling software to get posts ready. This can be really helpful if you know you won't have time to do much social media while you are making for a show or during an exhibition.

4. Tell it 10 ways: repetition, repetition, repetition

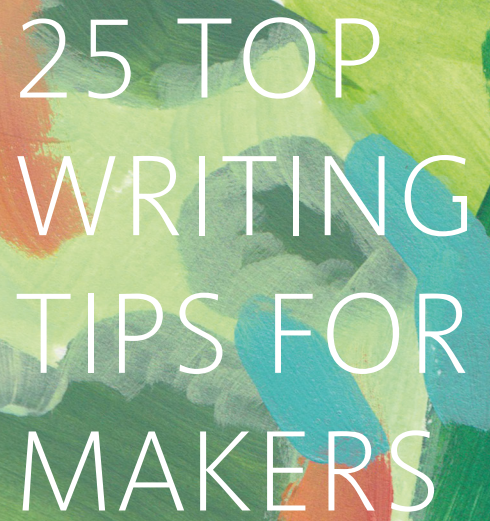
Before a show or event it's vital that you remind your audience of the key information. Repeated exposure to the details means people are more likely to take note. But how to post regularly in the run up without the posts sounding same-y? Tell it 10 ways. This is a technique I use, and I recommend to makers, which is to take the basic information, the key points and find 10 different ways of sharing this information.

Write 10 different Instagram, Twitter or Facebook posts. Start off with the bare essentials – the dates, times, locations etc- then try building in some descriptive elements to add variety.

See this post: 'Tell it Ten ways: tips for writing social media promotion' for more information

5. Hashtags are your friend: how to use them to really connect

Hashtags are amazing things. I find it fascinating to see what happens when I use a new hashtag, or one that isn't necessarily craft or creative industries related – who will see my post? What things are they interested in? Hashtags can help us connect with a much wider audience if we use them strategically.



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Chances are that you have a list of hashtags you use regularly. But why not do a bit of research and test out some new ones?

- see what other people are using: people working in your field or sector but also people involved in other lifestyle or niche interest groups
- join in with organised social media events, like March Meet the Maker, using their hashtag will make you visible to a wide range of people
- sign up to or follow people who do their own hashtag research and make recommendations.

Don't forget how useful it can be to create your own hashtags. Whether for an event or for your work in general. I know a lot of makers use their names as hashtags but why not try creating a hashtag that promotes a feeling or a value? This way you can easily trace the reach you're having, you can see when people interact with you or take up your ideas and run with it.

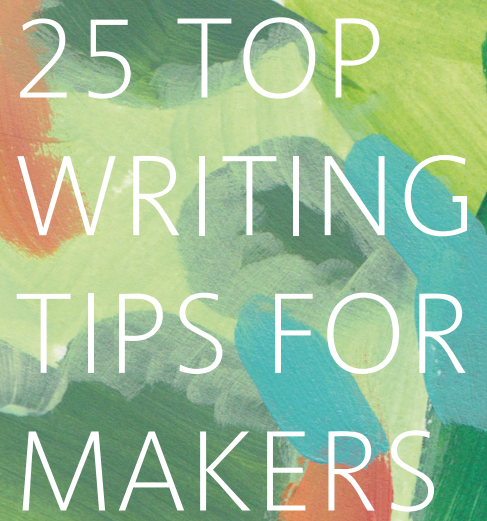
In 'Harnessing social media for motivation' I talk about how social media can be used as a positive tool in keeping motivated or beginning new work.

APPLICATIONS

1. Research, research, research

Things you need to find out:

- which show or event is most appropriate for your work?
- what kind of work does the event usually show? Are some disciplines over-subscribed?
- who will be judging or selecting the work? What can you learn about them, their background, their approach (often shows will have bios or info about the panel)
- what is the show's motivation? What do they want to achieve? How will you help them do that?



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2. Images are key...

Most shows will make their decisions based on the quality of the images in your application, so don't scrimp! Hire a professional photographer and get the best images you can afford. But, shop around. Look at the photographer's work

- what kind of objects are they used to photographing? Do they have lots of experience taking shots of work like yours? It's a very different thing photographing glass or ceramics compared to textiles or 2D work.
- how do they like to photograph work? Are they happiest creating product shots on white backgrounds or do they work best with lifestyle shots that create an impression of how your objects might fit within an interior or gallery space? Which is most appropriate for you, your work, for future uses (your website) as well as for this application?

3. ...but your text is going to work hard!

The text you write for your application will offer the judges more information, which can be helpful if they are uncertain or can't tell enough from your images or website. However, the main function your writing will have is as marketing for the show.

Most shows will expect the text you write to be your profile on their website or artist listings. They will use it in social media promotion and in their press releases. Members of the public will search for you before, during and after the show and find this piece of writing...so it has to be the best it can be!

Keywords are your friends! Write a list of the keywords that describe:

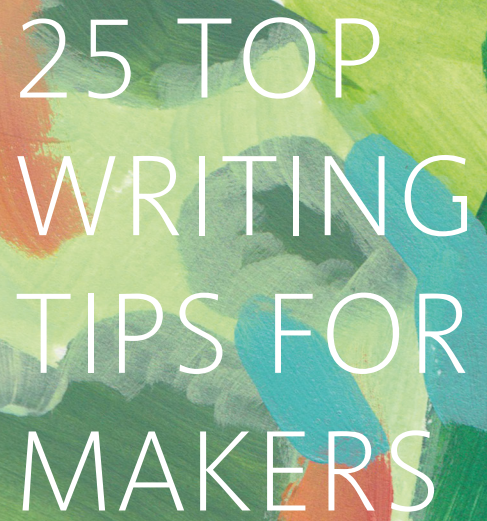
- the type of work you make
- the materials, processes, techniques
- the scale of the work (if your work is big make sure you mention it!)
- the function (e.g. homewares, garments)
- the expected setting/context (e.g. interiors, public spaces)

What words will people be using to search for you?

4. Set yourself apart

The reality is that for most shows/events the competition is fierce, especially for things like jewellery and ceramics. You need to make it easy for them to select you.

What makes your work unique? What sets you apart? You need to



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highlight the aspects of your work that differentiate you from the others. Here are some places to start to identify the differences:

- the materials, processes, techniques you use
- the finish/presentation
- the location (where you work, where inspires you)
- how you work with other people
- the way you run your business
- the values you promote
- the inspiration behind the work
- the experience of your customers
- your personal journey or story

Want to spend a bit more time thinking about your values and how they set you apart? In 'The importance of Why' I talk about the importance of understanding why you do what you do.

5. Craft your language

Don't be bland. Try not to use generic words that could be applied to anyone's work. Craft your writing so that it sounds like your making. What does your work look like, feel like? Your writing should reflect that.

Try to make any descriptive words or phrases you use dynamic, sensory, emotive and narrative:

- explore your objects – how does it feel to hold them, to use them? What do they look like, feel like, smell like? Find interesting adjectives – use a thesaurus if you want!
- put yourself in your customers' shoes: what does it feel like to use the object? To take it home and see it every day? What lifestyle or experience are you hoping to help them create?
- tell your story: is there a narrative behind the work? Where the ideas come from or from you as the maker? Share these insights.

What next? Once you're selected for a show or event you have the pleasure of meeting your audience face-to-face. Communicating about your work in person can be daunting, but I have a couple of blog posts about just this – 'Reclaim your authentic voice' and 'Tips for public speaking'. Good luck!

Other great online resources

There's a whole section on the Design Trust website that covers trade shows and events- definitely start there!

PRODUCT DESCRIPTIONS

1. Fundamental features: the who, what, where, when, how and why of your product

Before you begin to write your product descriptions, start by gathering the fundamental facts about the work:

- materials
- dimensions
- care instructions
- where it's made
- lead time (for bespoke or commissions)
- where/how you would use the object

2. Craft your keywords

When you're creating a list of keywords for your products put yourself in your customers' shoes:

- don't assume that they will know technical terms- you may need to include more general terms for materials and processes as well as specific ones
- what will they be searching for? Will they be looking for objects by function, by room in the house, whether they are gifts or things for themselves?
- consider using more general catch-all terms like 'handcrafted' or 'artisan'. Do a bit of hashtag research on social media to see which terms are being used at the moment for work like yours (look at shops, galleries and exhibitions as well as other makers)

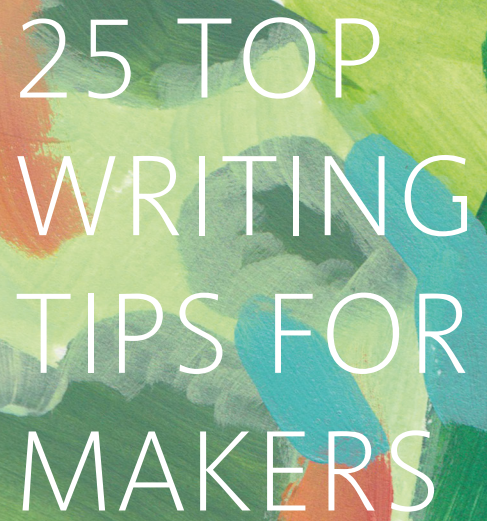
3. Be a storyteller: what is the narrative of your product?

Everyone loves to hear the story behind the work. What is yours? Is there a narrative that comes through in how you make your work? Where you make your work? Maybe you have had an interesting journey to become a maker, or have had a previous career? All these things are fascinating to your audience.

But don't worry if you can't find a narrative like that. You still have a personal approach, or perspective that is distinctive. Think about the values behind your work – what motivates you, what you care about, what fires you up. These can all be starting points for a great narrative.

For more ideas or inspiration take a look at these posts: 'Don't forget the big picture' and 'Why we make things and why it matters'

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4. Evoke an experience: employ sensory language to help people imagine

The things you make aren't merely objects. They are portals to experiences. When we see, engage with or use handcrafted objects we react emotionally. They make us think, they make us feel. They bring up associations with things we love, things we aspire to, with people and places and experiences we've had before. They offer us a glimpse of the world as we hope it can be, where we are the best versions of ourselves.

If you think that is hyperbolic just consider for a moment what it feels like when you see something you love, that instant feeling of joy and desire. When you try on a piece of clothing that is just perfect – how it fits, how the style reflects the real you, how it makes you feel confident, happy, comfortable or daring. Objects have this power. So why do you merely describe your work as if it is inanimate? As if it doesn't go out into the world and do things? Give your work life, give it emotion!

- what is the experience of using your work?
- how do you hope it makes people feel?
- how does it actually make people feel (can you use customer feedback or testimonials here?)

5. Sell don't tell: it's all about the benefits not the dimensions

Take a leaf out of the product designer's book. Think about what problem your work solves for your customer. It doesn't have to be earth-shattering or life-changing. It's enough that your work offers somebody the chance for a moment of pleasure during their day as they eat off, sit on, walk past, carry or admire your work.

Let your customers know where they could use your objects – what setting or event they'd be perfect for. Build up a picture of the lifestyle they want to create and how your work slots into that so easily. Make it easier for them to imagine using and living with your work. This is where great imagery can come into play – shots of your work in the right context, with other items, can help set the scene.

Other great online resources

Online US marketing service Small Craft Advisory has a straightforward post on 'How to write product descriptions that sell'

This post on the Design Trust website- 'How to get more traffic to my website or online shop. Top tips from 10 successful creatives & experts' covers product descriptions and so much more.



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This e-book was written by Melody Vaughan (they/them).

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Creative mentoring tending to cultures of care

Melody is committed to working with professional artists, designers & contemporary craft makers who want to build ethical and sustainable creative practices full of care.

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