## Contents

Preface / vii Why You Should Not Stop Reading Here /  $\imath$ 

- 1 Writing Is a Trade / 3
- 2 Writing Is Thinking / 6
- 3 Rules Can Help, but Bad Rules Hurt / g
- 4 Be Thou Clear, but Seek Joy, Too / 15
- 5 The Rules Are Factual Rather Than Logical / 19
- 6 Classical Rhetoric Guides Even the Economical Writer / 22
- 7 Fluency Can Be Achieved by Grit / 24
- 8 Write Early Rather Than Late / 26
- 9 You Will Need Tools / 30
- 10 Keep Your Spirits Up, Forge Ahead / 35
- 11 Speak to an Audience of Human Beings / 39
- 12 Avoid Boilerplate / 41
- 13 Control Your Tone / 46
- 14 A Paragraph Should Have a Point / 52
- Make Tables, Graphs, Displayed Equations, and Labels on Images Readable by Themselves / 55
- 16 Footnotes and Other "Scholarly" Tics Are Pedantic / 58
- 17 Make Your Writing Cohere / 60
- 18 Use Your Ear / 63
- 19 Write in Complete Sentences / 65
- 20 Avoid Elegant Variation / 66

- 21 Watch How Each Word Connects with Others / 69
- 22 Watch Punctuation / 73
- 23 The Order Around Switch Until It Good Sounds / 78
- 24 Read, Out Loud / 81
- 25 Use Verbs, Active Ones / 83
- 26 Avoid Words That Bad Writers Love / 86
- 27 Be Concrete / 92
- 28 Be Plain / 94
- 29 Avoid Cheap Typographical Tricks / 98
- 30 Avoid This, That, These, Those / 101
- 31 Above All, Look at Your Words / 104
- 32 Use Standard Forms in Letters / 108
- 33 Treat Speaking in Public as a Performance / 111
- 34 Advice for Nonnative English Speakers / 114
- 35 If You Didn't Stop Reading, Join the Flow / 117
- "Scholars Talk Writing: Deirdre McCloskey,"

  Interview by Rachel Toor from the *Chronicle*of Higher Education / 119

House Rules: Teaching Materials / 127

Appendix: Applying *Economical Writing* to Become Your Own Best Editor, by Stephen T. Ziliak / 135

References / 141

Index / 145

Books by Deirdre Nansen McCloskey / 153