

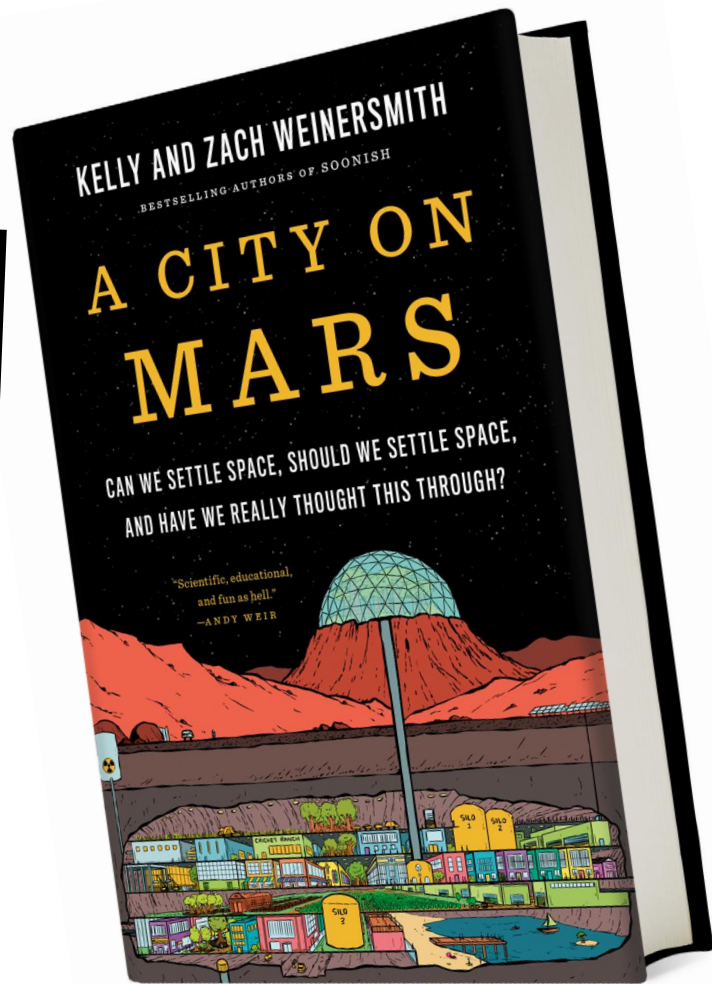
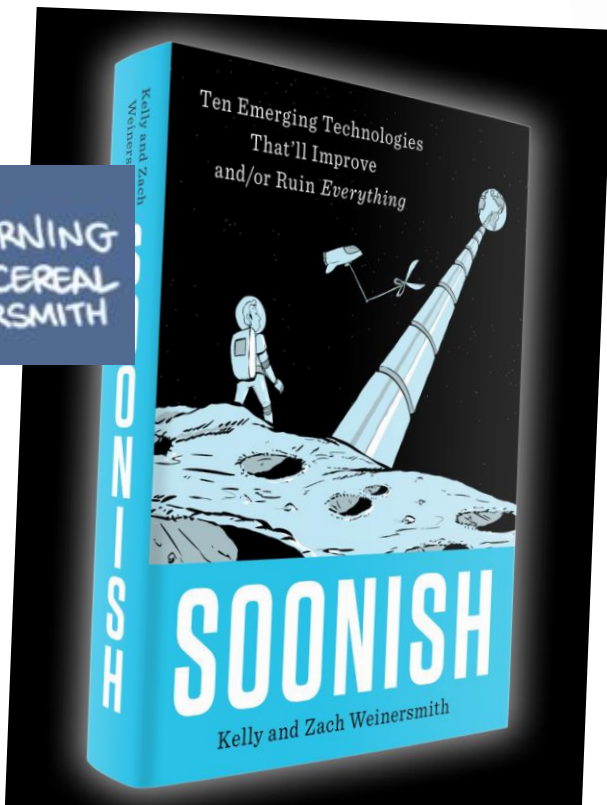
On Writing Pop Science

In which Zach Weinersmith has opinions

Who Am I?

SMBC

SATURDAY MORNING
BREAKFAST CEREAL
BY ZACH WEINERSMITH



Rule 1: STOP USING ANALOGIES

- You are almost always better off just explaining the thing
- Only use if there is no alternative and you HAVE to include the thing
- Only use if the analogy is deep
- Beware trying to be clever over writing well!

Rule 2: Stop writing about things nobody cares about

Things nobody cares about:

- Your lunch
- A conference you went to
- The transportation you took
- The nice scientist you had a nice chat with
- Your life in general

Rule 2: Stop writing about things nobody cares about

Things people MIGHT care about

- Your lunch **AT A REALLY WEIRD PLACE WITH REALLY WEIRD FOOD**
- A conference you went to **WHERE ALL SCIENCE WAS SOLVED**
- The transportation you took **THROUGH THE AMAZON**
- The nice scientist you had a nice chat with **WHO WAS EINSTEIN**
- Your life in general **IF YOU GREW UP IN ANTARCTICA AND HAD TO WRESTLE PENGUINS FOR A CHANCE TO BE A PARTICLE PHYSICIST**

Rule 3: Do your research for every single sentence

- Expertise in topic A does not make you an expert in topic B
- This is especially true when the topics are completely unrelated

Rule 4: Stop Using Tired Old Anecdotes

- There's usually much better stuff, but you have to read
- If you want to hear an obscure funny story about David Hilbert, stop me

Rule 5: Don't Present Research Simply Because You Did That Research

- Unless it is extremely fascinating or funny AND quite short, it must contribute to the thrust of your book.

Rule 6: Be Sure Every Sentence is Doing Something

- Literally every sentence.
- Could a chapter be a section? A section a paragraph? A paragraph a sentence? A sentence... removed?

Rule 6: You Being Inspired Does NOT Mean Your Audience is Inspired

- Often the opposite
- Remember, your audience isn't telepathic - all they have is your words
- Writing is a craft

Rule 7: You Can Violate Everything I Said if Your Writing is Really Good

Question: How Do You Get Good?

- Massive natural talent?
- Read everything, and steal
- Care
- You must be more interesting than your audience

Conclusion: A Good Writer Should be Frightened and Miserable

Any Questions?

- Comics?
- Writing?
- Space settlement?
- Subjects I don't know anything about?