

## Who or that

The Craft of Writing · By Simon Townsend · 1 min read

---

You need to know the subtle difference between who and that. The best explanation I've read is in The New York Public Library Writer's Guide to Style and Usage. I think I paid A\$56 (US\$28) when on special at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) This fantastic 800-page guide says:

Who and that are both used when referring to persons. The pronoun who is used to refer to an individual, and that is used to refer to a group of people:

- The exact number of American soldiers that participated in the Vietnam War has never been calculated.
- A politician is a man who understands government, and it takes a politician to run a government. A statesman is a politician who's been dead 10 or 15 years. (Quote from President Harry S Truman)

---

Reprinted from The Wonderful World of Journalism. Written in the spirit of Simon Townsend's journalism craft advice. Visit [simontownsendjournalist.com](http://simontownsendjournalist.com) for the full archive.