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Dear Douglas Adams,

When I first encountered your quirky sense of humor, I was about eight. We were driving home one day, and stopped in at Barnes and Nobles. As I was peering around the children's section, I spotted *The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy*. It looked interesting enough, and it had one of the oddest looking covers I had yet seen at the age of eight. So I pulled it off the shelf, and began to read. From the beginning, I was laughing my head off. Arthur Dent getting his house bulldozed was just too funny to put into words, but still you managed it. Anyway, I took it to my parents, and begged if they would let me buy it. I didn't have to do much begging, as Dad was very enthusiastic about letting me buy it. In fact, we didn't just buy *The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy*, we also bought the second book in the trilogy. You know, this is the only trilogy I know that isn't actually a trilogy.

When we bought the two books, my dad said that we had to read them together as a family, and I quickly agreed. I was eager to get my hands on them. It took us about a year to finish the whole book, reading a chapter or so a night. I remember grabbing the book from my book basket, taking it to my parents, and practically saying "Please, please, can we read this, please?" And when we finished *The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy*, I continued to read all of your other books, even picking up *Life*, *the Universe*, and *Everything* from a second-hand bookstore in Arizona.

But this isn't the point of what I'm writing. I am not writing just to say "I love your books!" What I would like to say is that, after I read your book, *The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy*, I immediately noticed a change in my writing.

Up until then, I had been influenced by whatever caught my fancy that week. If I read a science fiction novel, boom! I was working on science fiction. Read a fantasy book, and I was discarding my science fiction book and writing about dragons and magic. Read a good mystery.... you get the idea. The problem was, I never finished these stories. And my efforts were always dull, because, I suppose, I hadn't found my voice yet. But after we finished *The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy*, I realized that I didn't just have to emulate what other authors did. I could write in my own style, and I set about discovering it. A style eluded me for a while, but eventually I found one. It turned out to be a very wacky one, too. Not long after that that, I actually finished a short story!

I don't mean to suggest that you and *The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy* were solely responsible for me finding my writing voice. But that book certainly helped me over some large obstacles, and helped me to enjoy writing in my own way. So for that, Mr Douglas Adams, I thank you for writing *The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy*.

From,  
Jack Wooldridge