

WRITING TIPS

1. **Write tight.** Restrict sentences to 25 words. Vary the length of your sentences. Remove clutter or every word that serves no function.
2. **Get to the point.** Avoid clauses, particularly introductory clauses. Readers want the news fast. Stick to subject-verb-object as often as possible.
3. **Keep it simple.** Convey one idea per sentence. Put no more than two figures in a paragraph.
4. **Use power verbs.** Underline all the verbs in your copy. Replace “is” and “are” constructions with verbs that convey momentum. Skip the adjectives and adverbs.
5. **Take time to think.** Ask: What is at stake? Who is affected? Why should they care? What’s the best way to tell this story? What’s next?
6. **Identify people angles.** No matter the story, you can always find someone who cares about the outcome. If you identify that person, you have the potential for human drama – even on routine assignments.
7. **Avoid jargon.** News sources, especially government officials, talk in gobbledygook only they understand. Translate into simple English. If you don’t understand something, ask for a layman’s explanation.
8. **Eliminate clichés.** A cliché is any phrase or comparison that is overdone and overused. They seldom impart information. They bore readers. No one wants to read something that they’ve read many times before.
9. **Select the right word.** Never use a big word when a small one will do. Single syllable words are the most powerful. Write to inform. Write clearly.
10. **Use active voice.** It is usually clear, emphatic and expressive. It gives life to stories. Verbs preceded by “was” or “is” are signs of passive voice construction. An example: The building was struck by lightning (passive). Lightning struck the building (active).