

Media Writing

- **Brevity is the soul of wit:**
 - Convey information in as few words as possible.
 - You don't always need to say "that." Look for times when the word can be omitted without sacrificing clarity.
 - Avoid redundancies such as "future plans." Plans imply future.
 - Avoid using passive voice. Try to use Subject-Verb-Object sentence construction. (See companion handout: *Writing Emphatically: Active and Passive Voice.*)
- **Forget what your English teacher told you:**
 - You don't need to dress your sentences up with fancy adjectives.
 - Don't make the ending feel like the conclusion of a paper. End with a quote, or just let the story trail off.
 - Paragraphs can and should be only one or two sentences long.
 - Feel free to start your sentences with "and" or "but" in order to keep your sentences concise.
 - Always use "said." Not expressed, inferred, pined, screamed or anything else.
- **Set aside your English-class handbooks, and pick up the AP:**
 - When in doubt, turn to the latest edition of the AP (Associated Press) stylebook.
 - Remove the last comma in a series (red, white and blue).
 - In print, numbers one through nine are spelled out. Numbers 10 and above are expressed with numerals.
 - In broadcast, numbers one through eleven are spelled out.
 - Time of day: 10 p.m., *not* 10:00 pm or 10 o'clock.
- **Keep your reader in mind:**
 - Get a quote in up high. You want the human element to come into the story as early as possible.
 - Eye-tracking studies have revealed that readers usually focus on a story for three seconds before switching to something else (Poynter Institute). So your lead (first paragraph) has to grab your reader.
 - Remember Joseph Pulitzer's three pillars of journalism: accuracy, accuracy and accuracy.