

Writing Like a Journalist

Clear, simple and concise

Journalistic Writing

- We convey information clearly, correctly and concisely.
- We use clear and simple writing.
- We use quick and efficient writing.
 - This can be formulaic at times.
- We emphasize mechanics.
 - Grammar, spelling, punctuation, usage and style.

Clarity

- Make sure the sentences flow one to another.
- Don't use less common words.
- Avoid jargon, or at least explain it.
- Avoid vague statements, especially in leads.
- Keep modifiers near the word(s) they modify.
- Keep verb tenses consistent.
- Write at a sixth- to eighth-grade level.

Readability

- Sentences should be one or two sentences long.
- Sentences should be about 16 words long, more or less.
- Leads should be straightforward and uncomplicated.
- Avoid compound sentences.
- Avoid passive voice.
- Use adjectives and adverbs like seasoning – lightly to add flavor.
- Anticipate readers' questions: Use mental roleplaying.
- Explain numbers and statistics.

Correctness

- Check the math.
- Check the phone number, email address, Web address, etc.
- Use correct grammar.
- Don't express opinion. Readers rarely care what the writer thinks.
- Don't express opinion. Did I already say that? It's worth repeating.
- Get the facts right. Verify. Double-check everything if there is time.
- Opinions are not the same as facts. Make that clear in your writing.
- Use just the facts.
- Be neutral and/or balanced. Be fair.