

Writing for the Media (Day 1)

Topics covered:

- a) What is good writing?
- b) Writing for print media
- c) Freelancer
- d) Editorial
- e) Script Writing

a)What is good writing? Good writing makes an instant connection to the reader. It evokes emotion and inspires new and imaginative thoughts, even if it's discussing something as mundane as drywall techniques. It also tells a rich story with a clear beginning, middle, and an end. Good writing does not mean elegant prose or expansive vocabularies. It's simple, accessible, and punchy—it gets the job done efficiently, and leaves the reader satisfied, but still wanting more. The most important thing about good writing is that you won't always know it when you see it. The best writing is invisible, the kind of text that you enjoy but was scarcely aware you sat down to read it. There are a lot of rules to writing, especially in English. One must not end a sentence with a preposition. One must not use the same word twice in close proximity. A writer must restrict your adjectives to an absolute minimum. Good writers know these rules are often important for being understood. They also know the perfect time to break those rules to make a connection with the reader. Grammar and punctuation play an important role in writing, but they aren't the ultimate factors in winning your audience's engagement. The best writers write about topics they're already familiar with, and they write in their own voice. The best types of writing focus on one or two key issues. They don't jump from topic to topic, they stick with the thesis and carry it through to the end. The most overlooked factor of what makes a writer "good" is consistency. Anyone who has written something in their life can work hard and create a respectable piece of writing.

B) Writing for Print media : Articles written for print publications must present a concise but thorough account of events. Unlike radio or television reporting, which typically contains shorter and simpler sentences, print media can include a wider variety of sentence structure and word choices. However, the piece must still grab the reader's attention and keep him hooked. In news writing, the focus is on getting to the point quickly and conveying the most relevant facts, while feature writing can be longer and more creative in approach. Print journalism in the United States

typically follows the inverted pyramid model, in which the most pertinent information is placed at the top of the article. The less important a detail is, the farther down it is placed. The most engaging or crucial information must be immediately obvious to readers, who might browse headlines and leads to determine which articles they want to read. This style is most common in straight news stories. In long-form journalism and lengthy feature articles, on the other hand, writers might focus more on creating a piece that's engaging and holds the reader's attention from beginning to end. Journalists start by covering the basics, commonly referred to as the five Ws and H. This is short for who, what, where, when, why and how. For example, a story about a bank robbery would include a description of what happened, where the bank was located, when the robbery took place, who the suspect is, how much money he stole, and the means the robber used. In some stories you won't know the why, but if you do you should include it. For example, perhaps a school district is cutting back on student activities to save money. In this case it's important to explain that the district made the decision in order to cut costs.

Tips for news writing:

- a) Generally speaking, the introduction to the story, should be a single sentence of 35 to 45 words that summarizes the main points of the story, not a seven-sentence monstrosity that looks like it's out of a Jane Austen novel.
- b) The introduction should summarize the story from start to finish.
- c) Sentences should be kept relatively short, and whenever possible use the subject-verb-object formula. Backward constructions are harder to read.
- d) Always cut unnecessary words. For example, "Firefighters arrived at the blaze and were able to put it out within about 30 minutes" can be shortened to "Firefighters doused the blaze in 30 minutes."
- e) Don't use complicated-sounding words when simpler ones will do.
- f) Don't use the first-person "I" in news stories.
- g) News stories are generally written in the past tense.
- h) Avoid the use of too many adjectives. There's no need to write "the white-hot blaze" or "the brutal murder." We know fire is hot and that killing someone is generally pretty brutal. Those adjectives are unnecessary.
- i) Don't use phrases such as "thankfully, everyone escaped the fire unhurt." Obviously, it's good that people weren't hurt. Your readers can figure that out for themselves.
- j) Never inject your opinions into a hard-news story. Save your thoughts for a review or editorial.
- k) When you first refer to someone in a story, use the full name and job title if applicable. On all subsequent references, use just the last name. So it would be "Lt. Jane Jones" when you first mention her in your story, but after that, it would simply be "Jones." The only exception is if two people with the same last name are in your story, in which case you

could use their full names. Reporters generally don't use honorifics such as "Mr." or "Mrs." in AP style. (A notable exception is The New York Times.).

l) Don't repeat information.

m) Don't summarize the story at the end by repeating what's already been said..