

JOURNALISTIC WRITING STYLE PART 2

When reporting or writing a journalism story, you must remain objective. However, it is still important to tell an engaging narrative. This resource offers writing tips and style explanations to help guide journalism students in their writing.

ETHICS AND LEGALITY

1. **Sensitivity:** When reporting on sensitive topics such as death, human suffering, or interpersonal relationships, choose your words carefully and frame the story tactfully. Always ask permission if you want to write a story about someone. In certain situations, it may be appropriate to leave people anonymous.
2. **Libel:** Never publish a piece containing false and hurtful information, especially if that information may put a person's job, reputation, or well-being at risk.
3. **Ethicality:** Never exaggerate a story or add extraneous or fabricated elements to it. Do not tamper with quotes or embellish them.

OBJECTIVE BUT CREATIVE

1. Make sure your story is **clear** and **concise** so that the reader stays engaged and their attention does not wander.
2. Use **captivating** language and occasionally use anecdotes or interesting quotes to grab the reader's attention, as long as they are accurate and applicable to the central theme of the story.
3. Personal **opinions** about others should not be present in a journalist's writing. Avoid first-person pronouns. When stating an opinion, identify it as such.

ALL ABOUT QUOTES

1. Never edit a quote to make it look like a person said something different from what they meant to communicate.
2. Use parentheses when changing the tense of a word or providing context. Doing this may be necessary to help the quote make sense within the context of your story.
3. Use ellipses if you omit words for the sake of brevity.

4. Avoid printing long, complicated quotes that have a lot of punctuation.
5. Sometimes it is better to paraphrase what someone said, while still providing credit, rather than copying the entire quote.
6. Try to avoid using exclamation marks, bolding, and italics to emphasize tone. Instead, describe the tone of the person's voice.

Example

Incorrect: "The fire was absolutely *devastating*," the witness said.

Correct: "The fire was absolutely devastating," the witness said, choking back a sob.

VITAL STORY CHARACTERISTICS

1. **Accuracy:** This is the most important quality of a story. Printing inaccurate information can ruin a journalist's reputation. It is worth the extra effort to double-check, keep an open mind, and read the writing of other journalists. Ensure that you are only using reliable sources.
2. **Clarity:** Journalists must make sure they understand both their story and their subject. Keep the writing simple, and do not use words or jargon that the average person would not understand. Provide sufficient context. Remember that your readers will not know any of the details. Analyze your flow and transitions to make sure you have an obvious timeline.
3. **Brevity:** Avoid redundancy and weed out extraneous words or story elements.

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