

1. Five C's of Good Broadcast Writing

- **Conversational** - you're telling your viewers a story; written for the ear; write the way you talk.
- **Clear** — say what you mean; avoid clauses, commas and *which*; they make sentences confusing and hard to read.
- **Concise** — avoid unnecessary words; no sentence more than 14 words; good SOT about 8 seconds
- **Catchy (not cute)** — makes for more interesting writing.
- **Cliches** — don't use them; not interesting and a sign of lazy writing.

2. Active Voice

- Uses active voice for flow and to sound more immediate. Passive voice can slow the story's flow and add unnecessary words.

Active: *The Ford Foundation has awarded a 500-thousand dollar grant to Midcity University.*

Passive: *Midcity University was awarded a \$500,000 grant by the Ford Foundation.*

Active: *Students need good study skills to succeed in college.*

Passive: *Good study skills are needed to succeed in college.*

Active: *The researchers compared the behavior of two groups of children.*

Passive: *The behavior of two groups was compared (by the researchers).*

3. Abbreviations and Acronyms

- As a general rule, avoid use of abbreviations and acronyms.
- Only use abbreviations when they will be read as written; such as Dr. for Doctor.
- Only use an acronym when you're sure the audience is familiar with it.
- Write acronyms in the script the way you want it read.

Acronym: *FAA would be written in the script as F-A-A*

Acronym: *UMPD would be written U-M-P-D*

4. Contractions

- Style is more informal than print. We use contractions because that's the way we speak.
- Exception: when, to avoid confusion or misunderstanding, not using a contraction adds to the clarity of the sentence.

Example: *"that's" not "that is" ; "they're" not "they are"*

Example: *Joe Politician says he IS NOT running for governor.*

5. Present Tense

- Uses present tense whenever possible to sound more immediate, current and timely.

Example: *says* Print: *said* | Example: *is* Print: *was*

6. Attribution

- Attribution goes FIRST so the listener can better assess the credibility of the source.
- Attribute opinions or information that is controversial or disputable.
- When the person's name is not commonly known and the position is the important factor, a title can suffice.
- Only names that are widely recognized should be included in a lead.
- Place titles before names when using both; keeps sentences short and simple to read smoothly and without pauses.
- Delaying the name can sometimes make a story flow more smoothly and help viewers with one piece of information at a time and can alert viewers to pay attention.
- Attribution first because THAT'S THE WAY WE TALK.
(My classmate says the instructor was drunk ... not, the instructor was drunk, according to my classmate.) Sometimes there's a dramatic reason to hold back the attribution. "But Denny Hecker was lying, according to his long-time mistress."

Example: *Minneapolis Mayor R. T. Rybak says the police budget must be cut.*

Print: *The police budget must be cut, Minneapolis Mayor R. T. Rybak said.*

Title suffices: *The lab coordinator says food or beverages are not allowed in the lab.*

Widely recognized name: *Brett Favre says he will retire after this season.*

Title and name: *Lab coordinator Wally Swanson says food or beverages are not allowed in the lab.*

Delay the name: *A student is in serious condition following a bike accident on Washington Avenue today. Police say Joe Student ran a red light and was hit by a car.*

7. Numbers and Symbols

- Viewers can remember one or two. After that it's a jumble.
So, tell them what you want them to remember.
- Round off numbers unless exact number significant; better viewer comprehension and retention.
- Write out numbers one through eleven.
- Use numerals for 12-999. • Write out words after 999. • Spell out symbols such as \$ and %.
- Write out numbers if they start a sentence.

Example: *School is out for more than 76-thousand city students.*

Print: *School is out for 76,212 city students.*

Example: *Revenue grew by 10 percent, to 50-million dollars.*

Print: *Revenue grew by 10% to \$50 million.*

100,000

1,013

\$14,502,311.39

10,000

12%

3%

1,100

1/3

100-thousand

One-thousand-and-13, or About one thousand

About 14-and-a-half million dollars

Ten-thousand

12 percent

Three percent

Eleven-hundred

One-third

8. Write Into and Out Of Sound Bites

- Set up what will be said; don't use exact same words.