

Principles of News Writing



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1. Use simple words and simple sentences:

- Principles of simplicity is the best tools to achieve clarity.
- Simplicity of style should definitely prove very useful for the students of journalism as well as the beginners in the field of journalism.
- It is much better to write five simple sentences using simple words instead of a long complex sentence adorned with difficult words.
- Therefore, news writing should be done in simplest possible manner.
- Complex words and sentences may confuse the readers.

2. Minimum words should be used:

- Quite an astonishing number of journalists use much more words than necessary in their reports. e.g., “Ram and Shyam indulged in an acrimonious (meaning-angry & bitter) battle today.” This sentence may be simply written as “Ram and Shyam had a fight today.”
- Simple writing has no substitute. A good news writer should always refrain from using flowery language. Superciliousness and vanity are best avoided while writing news.

3. Use of jargon should be avoided:

(JARGON- a special Word or expression)

- Every sociological unit or group has its own specific terminology that can be comprehended only by the members of that particular group. For example, only a cricket player or cricket enthusiast can understand the meaning of mid-wicket or googly and not a tennis player. Therefore, such technical jargon remains limited to the group to which it belongs.
- Typically, a good news writer should refrain from using them because their comprehensibility is limited and a common reader finds them very cumbersome. If their use becomes absolutely unavoidable then the reporter must also explain them in simple words for the benefit of general readers.
- A good news writer should endeavour to disseminate message among various target groups in an unobstructed manner. That is, good news should have the quality of universal comprehensibility.
- clichés should be consciously avoided as news containing these is considered of poor quality.

4. Avoid adjectives and adverbs:

- Use of adjectives and adverbs is unwarranted in news writing.
- A competent journalist should try to weave story around verbs and nouns.
- Use of adjectives usually diminishes the effectiveness of a correspondent's message.
- Adjective and adverbs limits our thought process whereas, use of verbs is synonymous with extensiveness of our thought process. Use of verbs augments writing skills of a journalist.

5. Coherence and Continuity:

- It is a well known maxim that a good writing is like good stitching. If a cloth is not stitched properly it would feel awkward while wearing.
- Similarly, if a good thought is not written in a proper manner it would become uninteresting and cumbersome for the readers.
- It would show a lack of coherence and attractiveness.
- Good journalists should diligently follow mental discipline and meticulously execute the brilliant writing crux otherwise their news will be rejected by the readers.
- Only the quality of a journalist's writing and not his/her reputation holds any importance for the readers.

6. Repetition should be avoided:

- Neither data nor facts should be repeated in news because they make unclear its real purpose.

7. Superfluous words should be avoided:

- Redundant words should not be given space in news copy. Journalists should try to inculcate spoken language rather than excessively formal language in the news copy. This would help them in establishing direct communication with their audiences.
- Words which are not used in day to day conversation should be kept out of news writing.
- Use of foreign words and phrases should also be avoided.

8. Objectivity:

- If news is not objective and has a specific purpose then it is not news at all.
- Objectivity is the soul of news writing.

9. Clarity:

- Anything written in news should be clear. News writing is not literary writing in which writer has freedom to use as many words possible in order to develop the plot.
- Journalists have an obligation to convey their messages in 'minimum possible time' (in case of electronic media) and in 'minimum possible space' (in case of print media) to the target groups.
- Lack of clarity in news would simply translate into lack of audiences.

Conclusion

If the above mentioned principles of news writing are assiduously followed by the practitioners of journalism; there is no doubt that they will be able to achieve their objectives. But this requires perseverance and incessant hard work. If you are willing to put in the efforts; the success will be yours.

LANGUAGE OF NEWS

1. Simplicity
2. Accuracy
3. Sequence and continuity
4. Quotes and attribution
5. Background

7. **Facts first** - Some stories involve both the announcement of facts (such as an increase in income tax) and comments on the facts themselves (from the Finance Minister, opposition leader and others).

You must always give enough explanation of the facts first to put the comments in context, otherwise you will confuse your reader or listener:

RIGHT:

Income tax is to rise by two percent next month.

The Finance Minister, Mr Barney Kina, said today the rise was needed to help to pay for increased spending on education.

WRONG:

The Finance Minister said today that an increase in income tax was needed to help to pay for increased spending on education.

Mr Barney Kina announced that income tax will therefore rise by two percent from next month.

TO SUMMARISE:

- Remember to read your story through thoroughly before handing it in. If you find any errors, correct them - *then read it through again!*
- Ask yourself the following questions:
 - Have you presented the facts in an orderly manner and provided links between different segments?
 - Where you have facts and comments, are the facts first?
 - If your story is a follow-up or part of a running story, have you provided sufficient background information?
 - Is everything you have written accurate?
 - Can you simplify any of the words or grammar to make the story easier to understand?
 - Have you used quotes to enliven the story? Have you attributed the facts and opinions to the right people?
 - Have you read it through again?

THANK YOU

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