

basics of broadcast news writing

writing news copy

1 broadcast story forms

Anchor Reader
VO
VOSOT
Package

2 writing news copy

Conversational
Clear
Concise
Catchy (not cute)
~~Cliches~~

3 story structure

- written for the ear— make sure viewer get it the first time heard
- use images to illustrate the event
- structure is simple—short sentences
- one sentence one point
- vary sentence length
- each word in each sentence counts
- sentences flow logically into next
- attribute
- write in present tense: *says* not *said*
- contractions: *didn't* not *did not*

4 transitions

- cause and effect: *because, so, that's why*
- comparison and contrast: *but, on the other hand, however*
- groupings: *and, with, also, along with, in addition*
- size or quality: *more or most important, even, bigger, older*
- spatial relationships: *nearby, down the street*
- time relationships: *in the meantime, now, then, so far, yet, soon, while, just as*

5 tips for leads

- A lead should foreshadow your story, not give it away.
- Shorter is better — you can put that information in another sentence.
- “Famous” names only in the lead (no deputy assistant fire marshals, please).
- “Yesterday” is a great song, but it doesn't belong in the lead.

(Note: in broadcast news we use: yesterday, today and tomorrow.)

6 tips for the rest of the story

- Remember story structure. Climax (surprise) near the end of the story.
- Write to your video — but don't describe it.
- Strong video should start and end a piece, just as strong copy should.
- Active voice.
- Present tense, whenever you can.
- Attribution and titles first.
- Direct quotes — don't usually use unless in interview.
- What's the new information?
- Statistics and numbers - viewers can remember one or two. After that it's a jumble.
- Don't forget the power of a simple fact. Often a small factual detail is the most powerful prose.
- Adjectives - use sparingly. Give viewers nouns and verbs and facts — let them come up with the adjectives (opinions).
- Triplets, triplets, triplets.
- Video always trumps audio — that's what people remember.

7 words not to live by

- There are some words and phrases you should try to avoid, especially in this class.
- They are cliches, overused terms, or phrases you'd never SAY out loud in a conversation.
- **Tragic, tragically, tragedy (YOU WILL NOT USE IN THIS CLASS, EVER!)**
- Shocking
- Bizarre new twist
- Dead body
- Brutally murdered
- Fatally shot
- Slain
- Pay the ultimate price
- Completely destroyed
- Some tense momemts
- Fled on foot
- Remains tight lipped
- Pointing fingers
- Breathing a sigh of relief
- Up in arms
- Adjacent to
- Authorities
- Automobile
- Aircraft
- FireMEN, policeMEN, serviceMEN
- Intoxicated
- Incarcerated
- The white stuff
- **Blaze** (unless it's blaze orange or blaze a trail... if it's a FIRE you are talking about, **YOU WILL NOT USE IN THIS CLASS, EVER!**)