

20 THINGS TO HELP YOU WRITE BETTER RIGHT NOW

1. Pepper your prose with action verbs. It's a potion for motion.
2. Adverbs and adjectives often add up to not much -- especially if they're all about you.
3. Enthusiastically embrace the motto of the great state of Missouri: Show, don't tell.
4. Make sure those anecdotes are on point. Believe it or not, the effectiveness of your anecdote is not based on the quality of your anecdote.
5. Omit needless description. Sometimes a tattoo is just a tattoo, and don't judge a person by the cover of their books. Think sense of place, character building and establishing credibility.
6. All good tricks have a limit, or ... alliteration is all right but too many tongue-twisters are totally torturous.
7. Direct sentences work. As opposed to ... Although we often feel compelled to begin sentences with long clauses that either examine the importance or put into context the point of what we're about to say ... Uh, what was I going to say?
8. Short sentences make the reader stop and reflect. Long sentences typically are most effective when trying to give readers information.
9. The power in your sentences and graphs resides at the end -- and that, combined with No. 8, is one reason why we use so many dashes to create punchlines.
10. Sound check. 1-2-3-4. Read your story aloud and really pay attention to when you're pausing, when you're out of breath and when something just doesn't sound right.
11. All's well that ends well. Or ... We pay lots of attention to Once Upon a Time, but not nearly enough to And They Lived Happily Ever After.
12. Better to be clear than clever. And that goes for all you inside jokesters, Final Jeopardy snobs, Webster's wannabes and would-be English professors.
13. Eliminate jargon. Or ... Wow, now my sources will really respect me, though I'm kinda bummed that they are the ONLY ones who actually seem to read my stories.

14. Meanwhile, in other developments, a discussion about transitions led to a conversation about understanding themes, organizing by issue, mimicking phrases and where to attribute quotes.
15. Don't wait until you write your story to begin writing your story. Picking the right words takes time and thought.
16. Make the most of what you've got, whether it's contextualizing through superlatives or giving your little gems an opportunity to shine.
17. Report for descriptive details and scene re-creation. Emotionally evocative and descriptive writing is far less about word choice than the self-indulgent act of reporting for your writing.
18. Re-report your quotes. If someone didn't say something quite right the first time ... ask them again.
19. Choose quality over quantity – and that goes for sources, issues and, yes, story length.
20. Don't be afraid to share. Your next-desk neighbor actually might help you.

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Interviewing

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Specific information learned from an interviewee must be quoted directly or paraphrased (without quotes). Statements must be attributed to the person who told you it. Where did you learn your information?

“The college is building a new residence building on campus in order to keep up with the increasing student population” cannot stand-alone.

1. Research before you do an interview.
2. When you call someone for an interview, make sure they understand you are from the *Record*.
 - The best interviews are done *in person*. You don't necessarily need a tape recorder unless you think it may be sensitive information or it helps you check your quotes. Dress up more than jeans and a t-shirt for an interview to gain respect.
 - The second best way to interview is *over the phone*.
 - *Email* interviews are the worst but are sometimes necessary if you need to quote multiple people. Email interviews are OK when the person prefers it or when you just need very basic information.
3. Write down the questions you have for the person so you are prepared.
4. When you're interviewing, write quotes down *word for word*. Try to take down as many direct quotes as possible.
 - Look for good quotes. Good quotes are often ones that contain emotion. (Try to make someone laugh or cry with your quotes) When you get quotes, use full sentences. Avoid using brackets and ellipses.
 - Whether or not you agree with a person, it is important to be unbiased in an interview. Do not provide an opinion even if they ask for one.
 - When you're interviewing a student, find out their major and name spelling.
5. Finally, verify the quotes you plan to use with the people either during your interview or by email later.

Tips:

- Don't believe everything you're told.
- Ask open-ended questions that invite a lengthy answer and can bring out anecdotes and opinions. Don't ask questions that let your source give one-word answers.
- Leave the door open for another interview. Ask the subject if he or she would mind if you made contact later personally or by phone for a follow-up.
- Write/type your notes and/or article right away after conducting an interview so you can get the information down and organize it more easily.
- Talk to as many people as possible! Always try to get another angle, another opinion, a different side. The more people you talk to, the more complete your article will be.
- In general, don't quote your roommates or friends. It's lazy reporting. If you're desperate, go to the Stupe, SAGA and talk to people. Call people on the phone.
- Don't just interview all seniors, all freshman, all women etc. Get variety. Wheaton students don't bite.
- Do not wait until the last minute to call people, especially professors and administrators. It is a large pet peeve of everyone. Students should be the last people to call since you can call them at night.