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Writing For Mass Communications (Part 2)

Writing Goals

By

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You can read the first part of this series about 'writing for mass communications' [here](#). The points I'm sharing are from seminars I taught for radio and television news departments during my career as a news manager.

I. Writing Goals

a. Accurate

b. Fair

c. Clear

d. Easy To Understand

II. Writing for a diverse audience

- Informational — Some people are data/idea oriented. They want facts. They love details. They are ‘informational’ viewers.
- Relational — Other viewers are people/kinship oriented. They want to see how issues and events affect real people. They love personal profiles. They yearn to understand the emotional aspects of people in the news. They are ‘relational’ viewers.

The best television news stories have something for both audiences. Viewers get facts, details, data, and real people involved in relationships. The story content will dictate which side gets heavier attention, but information and relations should be in all stories whenever possible.

Ask yourself questions as you go out on stories. Ask about the ideas involved and how people deal with those ideas in relationships.

III. Exciting Writing

- **Grab** — Grab viewers from the top. Don't bury the lead. Write your lead first. Then write your last sentence. You will write better stories if you know where you are and where you are going. It is the same with any journey. Write the lead with short, snappy words. Don't bore viewers with long words and unnecessary details. Get to the point quickly. Write in present or future tense.
- **Explain** — Flesh out the lead. Prove your point. Throw out the boring stuff. Don't get bogged down with the stuff of dull newspaper reporting. Critique your recent work. Are you a good 'explainer?'
- **Best Video** — Use your best video off the top. Continue to use your best video to make the story clear to the viewer.
- **Marriage** — Marry your words and video from the beginning of the story. If your video fights your words, your words lose and so do your viewers. If your video and words are not enough to explain the point of the story, bring in graphics and on-screen fonts. Use every

tool at your disposal to make television work for every story.

- Flow — Make sure every word, phrase, sentence, and paragraph flows naturally to the next. Don't leave your viewers with unanswered questions. Don't make your viewers wonder what you mean.
- Show and Tell — Think of each story as 'Show and Tell.' If your story is a reader or VO, help the anchors 'show and tell' the story. Give them props when appropriate. Give them video that 'marries' every word they speak. Give them soundbites that are dynamic and easy to understand.
- Direct — Help viewers understand what the story means to them. Don't just tell them there's a problem. Tell them what they can do to solve the problem or how they can deal with the information. Show them where they can call or write to make a difference in their lives. Tell them how they can save money or protect loved ones. Show them how they can live a richer life or have a democratic say in their community. Point them towards answers and solutions. This is basic human communication. Also,

look for a way you end your stories. Do you give viewers direction?



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Next Time

Part three of “Writing for Mass Communications” — Building
A Story Checklist