

UNIT

1

BASIC OF GOOD WRITING

STRUCTURE

- Essential of good writing
- Kind of media writing (Writing to Inform, Describe, Persuade, Motivational, Theoretical, Promotional)
- ABCD / Basic of Media Writing (Accuracy, Brevity, Clarity, Discernment)
- Rules of spelling and punctuation

• LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to understand :

- What are the essentials of good writing
- Main types of media writing
- Basics of media writing including Accuracy, Brevity, Clarity, Discernment
- What are the primary rules of spelling and punctuation

• ESSENTIAL OF GOOD WRITING

There are two kinds of people: Those who think they can write, and those who think they can't. And, very often, both are wrong.

The truth is, most of us fall somewhere in the middle. We are all capable of producing good writing. Or, at least, better writing.



Why does good writing matter? Isn't the best content marketing very often something short, snappy, and non-text? Text is the backbone of the Web, and it's often the backbone of any content you watch or listen to, as well. Following are some benefits of good writing:

1. Good writing anticipates reader questions.

Good writing serves the reader, not the writer. It isn't indulgent. "The reader doesn't turn the page because of a hunger to applaud," said longtime writing teacher Don Murray. Rather, good writing anticipates what questions readers will have as they read a piece, and (before they ask them) it answers them.

That means most good writers are natural skeptics, especially regarding their own work. They relentlessly think of things from their reader's point of view: What experience is this creating for the reader? What questions might they have?

George Orwell said the "scrupulous writer" will ask himself at least four questions in every sentence: "What am I trying to say? What words will express it? What image or idiom will make it clearer? Is this image fresh enough to have an effect? And he or she will probably ask himself two more: Could I put it more shortly? Have I said anything that is avoidably ugly?"

Here's where marketing can really help add value in a business context, by the way, because "simple" means "making it easy for the customer." It means being the advocate for them. As Georgy Cohen writes, "The marketer should be identifying (and ruthlessly refining) the core messages and the top goals, then working with the web professionals to create a website supporting them."

2. Good writing is grounded in data.

Data puts your content in context and gives you credibility. Ground your content in facts: Data, research, fact-checking and curating. Your ideas and opinions and spin might be part of that story—or they might not be, depending on what you are trying to convey. But content that's rooted in something true—not just your own opinions—is more credible.

3. Good writing is like good teaching.

Good writing strives to explain, to make things a little bit clearer, to make sense of our world even if it's just a product description.

"A writer always tries to be part of the solution, to understand a little about life and to pass this on," says Anne Lamott.

4. Good writing tells a full story.

Good writing roots out opposing viewpoints. As Joe Chernov says, "There's a name for something with a single point of view: It's called a press release." Incorporate multiple perspectives when the issue lends itself to that. At the very

least, don't ignore the fact that other points of view might exist; to do so makes your reader not trust you.

So make sure he or she knows you're watching out for them. To quote Hemingway: "The most essential gift for a good writer is a built-in, shockproof, shit detector."

5. Good writing comes on the rewrite.

That implies that there is a rewrite, of course and there should be.

Writing is hard work, and producing a shitty first draft is often depressing. But the important thing is to get something down to start chipping into something that resembles a coherent narrative.

As Don Murray said, "The draft needs fixing, but first it needs writing." Or Mark Twain: "Writing is easy. All you have to do is cross out the wrong words."

6. Good writing is like math.

I mean this in two ways: First, good writing has logic and structure. It feels solid to the reader: The writer is in control and has taken on the heavy burden of shaping a lumpy jumble of thoughts into something clear and accessible.

It might not follow a formula, exactly. But there's a kind of architecture to it. Good writing has more logic to it than you might think.

Second, good writing is inherently teachable—just as trigonometry or algebra or balancing a balance sheet is a skill any of us can master. Journalism professor Matt Waite writes in his essay, *How I Faced My Fears and Learned to Be Good at Math*: "The difference between good at math and bad at math is hard work. It's trying. It's trying hard. It's trying harder than you've ever tried before. That's it."

I think the same is true about writing. Ta-Nehisi Coates, a senior editor at *The Atlantic*, spent a year teaching writing to MIT students. He later wrote, "I felt that the rigor of math had better prepared these kids for the rigor of writing. One of my students insisted that whereas in math you could practice and get better, in writing you either 'had it' or you didn't. I told her that writing was more like math than she suspected."

7. Good writing is simple, but not simplistic.

Business—like life—can be complicated. Products can be involved or concepts may seem impenetrable. But good content deconstructs the complex to make it easily understood: It sheds the corporate Frankenspeak and conveys things in human, accessible terms. A bit of wisdom from my journalism days: No one will ever complain that you've made things too simple to understand.

“Simple” does not equal “dumbed-down.” Another gem from my journalism professors: Assume the reader knows nothing. But don’t assume the reader is stupid.

If you think your business-to-business concept is too complex to be conveyed simply, take a look at the very first line of The Economist’s style guide: “The first requirement of The Economist is that it should be readily understandable. Clarity of writing usually follows clarity of thought. So think what you want to say, then say it as simply as possible.”

8. Good writing doesn’t get hung up on what’s been said before.

Rather, it elects to simply say it better. Here’s where style is a differentiator—in literature and on your website.

Mark Twain described how a good writer treats sentences: “At times he may indulge himself with a long one, but he will make sure there are no folds in it, no vague nesses, no parenthetical interruptions of its view as a whole; when he has done with it, it won’t be a sea-serpent with half of its arches under the water; it will be a torch-light procession.” He also might’ve said: “Write with clarity and don’t be indulgent.”

That doesn’t mean you need to be a literary genius, of course. It only means you have to hone your own unique perspective and voice.

9. A word about writers: Good writers aren’t smug.

Most of the really good writers still feel a little sheepish calling themselves a “writer,” because that’s a term freighted with thick tomes of excellence. But like many achievements in life—being called a success, or a good parent—the label seems more meaningful when it’s bestowed upon you by others.

Following are the ten basic elements of good writing. These are timeless essentials, known well before Shakespeare. Keep them in mind for every sentence you write, and I guarantee your writing will stand out among the clutter:

1. Words

It sounds obvious, right? Writing must have words. And yet it’s the most common mistake rookie writers make: not writing.

It’s happened to all of us: you have an idea, you turn it over your head for days you think about a million ways of setting it down. A week later there’s still not a word in your .doc file.

The solution is easy: write. Write about anything. Write badly if necessary – don’t worry, you’ll get better at it. Writer’s block is a myth, and as Dan Poynter said, if you wait for inspiration to write you’re not a writer, you’re a waiter.

You're a writer. Make words happen.

2. But not too many words

You might have heard the famous story of the time Hemingway was challenged by a drinking buddy to write an entire story in six words.

At once, Hemingway took a napkin and wrote this down: "For Sale: Baby Shoes. Never Worn."

What a lot of people forget is that the Hemingway's story is not powerful despite its length, but because of it.

Brevity is eloquence. Weed out unnecessary words – adjectives and adverbs tend to be the main offenders, –sentences, paragraphs and ideas from your writing. Keep your prose clean.

3. Sentences

Sentences are very often misunderstood. Writers often pepper punctuation marks over a string of words and call it a sentence. But a sentence is not just a bag where you keep your words organized.

Rather, a sentence is the basic unit of meaning.

What this means in practical terms is that each sentence should convey one idea and one idea only. If you include more than one idea, you bog it down. If you include less – well, then it's not really a sentence.

Further, it is also important to put an end to your writing as soon as you reach its natural conclusion. Add any secondary details you deem necessary to the middle of the text, where the main questions haven't been answered yet. Or even better: do away with them.

4. Flow

Between the all-important beginning and ending, your most important job is to keep things flowing. Make sure every sentence relate to the next. Use carrier words like "and," "but," "also," "in addition." The path must be as smooth as possible.

5. Active voice

Active voice is vigorous, direct, succinct and less convoluted than the passive. Unless you're shooting for a flabby and insecure style, avoid the passive as much as possible.

6. No 'core competencies' and no 'sinergies'

A 'core competency' is a strength. Never say 'core competency' when you can say 'strength.'

The same goes for ‘thought-leadership,’ ‘synergy,’ ‘alignment,’ or even classics like ‘literally’: the purpose of these buzzwords isn’t to make things clearer, but to obscure ideas. They’re used when a writer has nothing of substance to say and he needs to hide this fact by making himself look like an expert.

Use the simplest vocabulary. Let your message shine by itself.

7. A message

The best writer in the world will be out of a job if he or she has nothing to say. Every word you write should be there to support the message, and not the other way around. The best writing is noted for the ideas it conveys, not because of the writing itself.

8. None of the above

There’s a time and a place for breaking every rule. If you find yourself in such a time and a place, congratulations! Just be aware of the rules you’re breaking, and why you’re breaking them. Rule-breakers are the ones pushing the world forward – but only if they break rules out of knowledge, and not out of ignorance.

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS OF BUSINESS WRITING

I Thou shalt not use words like 'thou' nor 'shalt'.
(metagobolised)
(metagobolised - adjective - perplexed, confused.)
Or anything else that isn't Plain English – even if your topic is complex. KISS: Keep It Simple, Simon.

II Answer thy reader's biggest prayer first.
Lead with your 'big news.' You don't always have to tell a story. Cut to the chase, then 'backfill' with readers' likely questions. If they stop reading before the end, at least they'll get your main point.

III Waffley writing is an abomination unto readers.
Be brief. Like this.

IV Selfishness is sinful.
Step into your reader's sandals and stay there. Make it about them, not you.

V Know thy reader.
It's about psychology, not fancy words. The better amateur psychologist you are, the better writer you'll be.
Learn more about how to engage, motivate and persuade people. The book 'Influence' by Cialdini is a good start.

VI Thou must believe!
If you're not sold on your argument, your readers won't be. Make a strong case. Consider both logical and emotional angles. And remember to quantify: Specifics sell.

VII God rested on the seventh day; readers want to rest every day.
Make life easier for them by doing the 'work' for them. More people will then read more of your writing. For example, use bullets, graphics, summaries and key-points lists.

VIII Correctness is next to Godliness.
Mistakes are unholy. Check your grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc. You don't want to look *dum*. - Like that.

IX Lift thine eyes to the sky.
Or anywhere but your page, once you've finished writing. Proofreading is crucial. Put it aside to get fresh eyes. Never write, polish, and send immediately.

X Read the word.
Actually, read lots of them – quality words written by fine writers. It programs your brain to produce the same. (Read to your kids, too, if you have them; it'll change their lives.)

Don't send your readers to Hard-to-Read-Hell!

If we talk about good business writing then good business writing is at the heart of successful marketing. Without it you will be at the best, misunderstood, at worst, totally ignored. Follow these simple guidelines to ensure your business writing hits the spot.

Write the way you talk

Write readable sentences by writing the way you talk. There is a misconception that good business writing is complex and flowery. It is simply not true. The only people who can ignore this advice are lawyers by virtue of the fact that it is their intention to make everything more complex than it need be, especially as they are paid by the hour to explain to you what they have written!

Use ordinary words

Don't try to be too clever; don't use a long word where a short one will do.

Variety

Vary your punctuation and sentence length to add life and movement to your writing.

Use the personal pronoun

Use "I" or "we" wherever you can.

Make your point

Make your main point early and make it easy to find. Don't introduce new ideas until you have thoroughly explained the first.

Intention

Make your purpose for writing clear. Say what you have found, address the issue or problem and make a recommendation or provide a solution. Tell the reader very clearly what you want them to do. Never make the assumption that the reader will make the mental leap between the information and what you want them to do about it.

Structure

Help your reader get to the point by revealing the structure of the document. Allow them to have control over what they discover and when.

White space

Leave plenty of white space. This can be created by using headings, lists, bullet points and short paragraphs.

Use font types wisely

If in doubt, stick to the classic fonts. Don't litter your writing with bold, italics CAPITALS or underline; it makes the text harder to read.

Wherever possible, remember:

- Use the active voice
- Use ordinary words
- Construct clear, simple sentences
- Concrete not abstract – use examples, metaphors and details
- Personal
- Informal, conversational style
- Make every word count or get rid of it
- Use just enough punctuation to assist the reader
- Watch your grammar – don't switch tense.
- Say what you mean and mean what you say
- Don't use jargon – if you have to, explain it the first time you use it
- Strive to express yourself clearly
- Get to the point fast, or at least allow the reader the option to if they choose to

But most of all have fun with it. Never be afraid to reflect your own personality in your writing and it is okay to break a few rules now and again!

• KIND OF MEDIA WRITING

Writing for the media can be difficult, especially for beginners. Practicing the following skills will help you improve the quality of your work.

Knowledge of AP Style

Most media outlets use AP style—the style established and constantly updated by the Associated Press—as the foundation for basic news and media writing. AP style provides consistency in writing across media outlets and publications. You should purchase the latest edition of the AP stylebook and familiarize yourself with it because you will be required to write in this manner for messages intended for media outlets. The stylebook is available both online and in hard copy. In general,

AP style has evolved to ensure that media writing is accurate, impartial, and clear to the audience.

Knowledge of grammar and punctuation

Audiences hold media and strategic communication professionals to a high standard when it comes to knowledge of grammar and punctuation. To assist you in learning how to write for the media, here are a few basic grammar and punctuation rules:

- Use simple sentences that follow the subject, verb, object order (example: Maria attended the press conference).
- Use active, not passive voice. Active voice helps with clarity and concise writing. (Passive voice: The press release was completed by Brian. Active voice: Brian completed the press release.)
- Understand word choice and meaning:
 - affect, effect
 - its, it's
 - they're, their, there
 - accept, except
- Be aware of comma uses:
- Set off modifiers (words or clauses that provide further description)

Ex.: The publicist, who works for Ogilvy, arrived late to the meeting.

- Separate an introductory phrase or word

Ex.: While studying, I listened to music.

- Before a conjunction

Ex.: I want to go, but I have to study.

- When writing a series of items (three or more)

Ex.: She bought shoes, food, and a movie.

Ability to simplify information

As a media or strategic communication professional, you will need to synthesize and make sense of a great deal of information for your audience, often under a strict deadline. This takes strategy, good storytelling skills, and the ability to focus on the essential information. Audiences respond better to information that is presented in a logical order that supports the overall narrative.

Focus on accuracy and details

When you write for the media, you represent not only your personal brand but also the broader organization for which you're producing content. Precise writing and transparency give newsrooms credibility; misinformation can severely diminish the integrity of the media outlet. Selecting appropriate sources and verifying information obtained from those sources referred to as fact checking, can help minimize inaccurate writing. Accuracy also means using proper grammar and language appropriate to the audience.

Ensuring accurate reporting and writing can be challenging. Fast-paced media environments make it tremendously difficult to thoroughly gather information and fact check it in a short amount of time. *For example, in 2013, during coverage of the Boston Marathon bombings, reports of five additional explosives found in the area were later found to be false. In addition, the New York Post ran a photo on its front page of two men that it alleged were the suspects that federal investigators were searching for at the time. The men were innocent, and while the Post apologized for the error, the men later sued the media outlet for defamation.*

Outstanding attention to detail is necessary in order to catch errors in content, grammar, and punctuation. Taking the time to slowly review your message will save you from the consequences of misinformation or careless errors. Similarly, a big part of the writing process involves editing and revising your work, either by you or by an editor. Few writers can produce material that cannot be improved or does not need to be altered for style or content reasons.

Objectivity

Objectivity is one of the principles of journalism, according to the code of ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists. Media writing should provide well-rounded analyses and stories that include all major perspectives. If you present one organization's point of view, you should also quote one of its competitors or discuss the contrarian perspective for balance. With the exception of opinion columns and blogs, writers should not express their personal opinions on a story or event. Instead, they should write objectively, presenting the facts and leaving it up to the audience to decide how to feel about the information.

Some professionals believe that objective journalism does not exist because humans are innately biased creatures. It is true that a writer's biases can become apparent in his or her writing. However, media professionals should aspire to absolute objectivity. To achieve this, it helps to have a third party read your article or message to minimize biased writing.

Clarity

Media professionals generally write for a large, mainstream audience. Clear and concise writing makes it easier for a wide variety of groups to understand the

core message. Complex sentence structures and jargon that you might find in traditional academic writing are not appropriate for diverse populations. Use simple sentences to get your point across.

Working in media is both exciting and challenging, and no two days are the same. Although the rise of new publishing platforms means the journalism world is evolving at a rapid pace, we still rely on it to inform, educate and entertain us, influencing the way people look at the world and encouraging them to change their views for the better. However, media writing has developed into a number of styles and forms, which is why we're going to take a closer look at the different types of media writing below.

The different types of media writing

News

News writing is a particular style of prose that is used to report on the basic facts of a particular event. Whether for newspaper publication or broadcasting, it answers the five Ws in the first few sentences or lines. This structure, which focuses on the, who, what, when, where, why and how, is also known as the inverted pyramid (the most important information is communicated first).

News writing is both precise and direct, so it's rare you'll find any jargon – it's a very formal style. As a rule of thumb, news writers won't use long words or phrases when short ones will do, nor will they use the same word more than once in a sentence or paragraph if it can be avoided.

Feature

Feature writing presents newsworthy events through a narrative, but it differs from news writing in the respect that it relies on creativity and an element of subjectivity to emotionally connect with readers. Its purpose is to entertain, which is why it covers a lot of 'soft' news – think art, entertainment, sport and lifestyle.

Feature stories also build on news that has already been reported, aiming to humanize the person behind the story while offering more depth and insight. Examples of features include profiles, spot features and live-in stories. Spot features run alongside breaking news events, so are often produced to a tight deadline, whereas live-in stories are more in-depth, providing a closer look at a particular place that readers wouldn't usually experience. Reporters spend a lot of time at the places they're writing about, which can include A & E departments, hospices, police stations and homeless shelters.

Reviews

Reviews are a staple of media and journalism, and the aim is to offer an opinion or recommendation to readers. Unlike news writing, you can be subjective

and adopt a more informal tone; creating a good rapport with your audience is essential if they're going to take your views into consideration.

More specifically, the role of a reviewer is to inform, describe, analyse and advise, covering almost any topic, product or event. Some common examples include TV shows, films, restaurants, concerts, books and products. The Guardian newspaper is renowned for its reviews, covering everything from stage and culture to TV and radio.

Columns

A column is a recurring article or piece most commonly found in newspapers and magazines, and the writer is free to express their own opinion in the space allocated to them. What separates a column from news pieces and reviews is that it is typically written by the same journalist on the same theme or subject each time, making it a regular feature in popular tabloids and broadsheets.

There are many different types of columns, including advice, fashion, food, gossip, sport and music. Good columnists write the way they talk without sacrificing good grammar and English usage. While it's important to be informal and friendly, columnists don't have a lot of space to communicate what they want to say, so it's best to avoid jargon and including too much material or detail. Victoria Coren Mitchell and Mariella Fostrup were voted two of the most popular columnists in 2019.

Investigative

Investigative writing often uncovers political corruption, serious crimes or corporate wrongdoing, so it requires a writer to spend many months researching and planning their story before publication. Due to the sensitive nature of investigative journalism, it's important for writers to maintain high standards of accuracy at all times, with any claims backed up by evidence they have verified themselves.

Investigative writers will usually receive tips about stories, and will spend time developing hypotheses and planning additional research before deciding to investigate them fully. An excellent example of investigative writing is the Boston Globe's Pulitzer prize-winning story covering the Catholic Archdiocese of Boston's sex abuse scandal.

Digital / Online

Online news consumption around the world is growing exponentially, and while the basic principles of writing apply, including accurate reporting, fact-checking, and proper grammar and spelling, it requires writers to craft copy that best suits this medium.

Concise and clear writing is particularly important in the digital space, mainly because internet users want information fast and in an easily-digestible manner. However, headlines also need to be considered carefully. Why? Because straightforward headlines work better online than indirect headlines, and they will not be picked up by search engines at all if they don't include any keywords.

Sports

“Sports writing is a form of journalism or creative nonfiction in which a sporting event, individual athlete, or sports-related issue serves as the dominant subject.” – Richard Nordquist

Described perfectly by Richard Nordquist, this type of writing has increased in importance as sport has grown in power, wealth and influence. Although sportswriters don't cover the 'serious' topics explored by investigative or news writers, they are an essential element of any media organisation. Some sportswriters specialise in one particular sport, while others cover matches and events within any given area.

A great example of sports writing is David Foster Wallace's article about Roger Federer in The New York Times.

Editorial

An editorial is an article, usually opinion-based, that is written by a senior member of a publication's editorial staff. Although it can be about any topic, it usually covers an issue within society and is backed up by evidence and facts to build credibility. Many writers find editorials difficult to master, but having passion or knowledge about a certain subject often makes it much easier.

• ABCD/BASIC OF MEDIA WRITING (ACCURACY, BREVITY, CLARITY, DISCERNMENT)

Journalism or news writing is a prose style used for reporting in newspapers, radio, and television. When writing journalistically, one has to take into account not only one's audience, but also the tone in which the piece is delivered, as well as the ABCD of news writing: Accuracy, Brevity, Clarity and Discernment.

Accuracy

If a story isn't accurate, it firstly betrays public trust. Public trust is of the utmost importance because the public relies on unbiased news in order to make intelligent choices in the voting booth.

Secondly, inaccurate information could be potentially libelous. Libel is defamation by written or printed words, pictures, or in any other form besides

spoken words or gestures. It is a serious offense and could severely affect your career as a journalist.

To make sure you stay accurate, always check and double check any numbers, spellings of names, who said what, and other basic facts of your story. In order to have a good story and in order to be a good reporter, accuracy is key.

If a writer has to pick one principle that should never be violated, this should be the one. To fall down in this area is to discredit your entire writing effort. As a Journalist, you will be working with facts. These facts will involve persons, places and things. They will involve names, ages, titles, rank or ratings, addresses and descriptions. You will work with facts that are both familiar and unfamiliar to you.

You cannot afford to be casual in your approach to facts. Your readers will often judge the Navy on what you say and how you say it. An easy way to lose the public's respect and confidence is by being careless in your handling of facts. When you send a story to a newspaper, the editor depends on you for accuracy in every fact.

The Navy news release heading that appears on every story you distribute means the information it contains is reliable and has been approved officially by the Navy. A mistake in a news story implies that the Navy is careless and undependable. Datelines tell when and where the story is written and should appear on all stories written for release. In the text of the story, when and where may refer to the dateline.

Attribution relates to accuracy. It means that you name the person who makes any statement that may be challenged. Good quotations live a story, give it color and aid in development of coherence. Attribution also ensures that the reader does not get the impression the statement is the writer's personal opinion. However, attribution should never be used in a story merely to flatter a person by publicizing his or her name.

Brevity

The question is often asked, "Should I be brief in my writing or complete?" By all means, be brief, but not at the expense of completeness. The key is to boil down your writing and eliminate garbage. A compact piece of writing is frequently much stronger than a lengthy story. An example is Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. This speech has outlived a flock of long harangues by later statesmen. One of the reasons for its survival is its brevity.

Get straight to the point. If you can do without words, then cut them out. Your lead should draw your reader in and you should end with an interesting finish. Don't just finish when you run out of information.

Clarity

Clarity means that you should have all of your facts and have them organized before you start writing. Your story should leave no question unanswered and should avoid jargon (in other words, make the topic accessible for readers of all levels, not just experts).

Nothing is more discouraging than reading an article and then realizing that you do not know what you read. A similar frustration arises when you are trying to follow directions on assembling a toy, particularly when the instructions read, "...even a 5-year-old can assemble this toy," and you cannot do it, because the directions read as if they were written in a foreign language. Assume that if there is any chance of misunderstanding, readers will misunderstand. Reread what you have written looking for points that could lead to readers' misunderstanding.

Discernment

Discernment is defined as the ability to notice the fine-point details, the ability to judge something well or the ability to understand and comprehend something.

Writers need discernment as they need to both have and understand truth in order to speak and write it. That means they have to be well acquainted with God's truth to recognize it—and its counterfeits. If they don't have truth, then what do they have to say? Thus, as a journalist, you need to speak truth correctly and accurately.

You need to speak against falsehood. Many believers are afraid to speak against falsehood because they're afraid they're going to come under attack.

Further, you should also think will you focus on indie publishing or traditional publishing? What about picking an agent? Picking a publisher? What genre suits your gifts? What are you passionate about? How will you choose your timing and strategy for marketing? You need discernment to make good decisions about all those things. You need to be able to rely on that discernment even when things don't go as expected. And they often don't. But second-guessing isn't helpful.

Apart from accuracy, brevity, clarity and discernment, there are some other principles of media writing also which are as follows:

Coherence

An article that skips illogically from topic to topic and back again in a jumbled, befuddled manner lacks coherence. Coherence means sticking together, and that is what stories and articles should do. Facts should follow facts in some kind of reasonable order. It may be logical order, chronological order, place order or order of importance, depending on the subject, but order of one kind or another is vital. Outlining will often help.

Emphasis

Make sure your writing emphasizes what you want it to. You assure this in news writing by putting the most important fact first (the lead, discussed later). There are other types of arrangements for emphasis that are used in feature stories or in editorials. More information will be presented on this later in this chapter.

Objectivity

To report news accurately, you must keep yourself detached from the happenings and present an impersonal, unbiased, unprejudiced story. This is why you never see a good reporter at an accident running around saying, "Isn't this horrible? I feel so sorry for the family. Why, just the other day I was talking to ol' Jed, and now he is dead." These may very well be your feelings, but you must attempt to keep aloof in order to give an objective report. It is not your job to influence people directly, but rather to tell them what is going on. You direct their thinking only to the limited extent that you make them think for themselves by an unbiased presentation of the facts.

Unity

A news story should deal with one basic topic. There may be many facts and ins and outs to the story, but it is still one story. If you set out to write a story on the services and activities available at the enlisted club, and end up with a biography of the club manager, the story lacks unity. The simple solution frequently is to write two stories, rather than trying to combine a mass of information into one.

Rules of spelling and punctuation

No doubt, English is a notoriously difficult language. Its roots are Germanic, but words from other languages have been added through the centuries - from the Viking invasions and the Norman Conquest all the way up to the trending internet colloquialisms of the present - and then set into a grammar influenced by Latin. There are a lot of rules and exceptions to rules. It's not surprising that writing in a clear and effective style can be a challenge.

There are certain rules of spelling and punctuation which needs to be followed in media writing and practices. One of the most important of them is spelling and punctuation.

Spelling

The availability of spell checkers in word processing programs greatly reduces the likelihood of spelling errors – except for homonyms. A homonym is a word that is pronounced the same as another, but is spelled differently and has a different meaning.

Here are some examples of homonyms:

- affect (to have an influence on), effect (a result). Affect is generally used as a verb (to affect) while effect is generally used as a noun (the effect).
- capital (seat of government) and capitol (a building)
- lie (recline) and lye (used in making soap)
- principal (head of school) and principle (a truth, law, rule, or standard)
- scene (setting) and seen (past participle of see)
- whine (complain) and wine (an alcoholic drink)

Punctuation

Punctuation helps convey the precise meaning of a sentence – and in fact can even change the meaning, as in this well-known example:

- A woman, without her man, is nothing.
- A woman: without her, man is nothing.

Here is a brief description of how punctuation is used:

- A comma tells the reader to pause and assimilate information. They are also used to separate the items in a series.
- A semi-colon links independent clauses that are closely related in meaning when they are not linked by a conjunction.
- A colon introduces a list or a summation. It can also be used to link an idea that has been introduced in an independent clause.
- End punctuation – period, question mark, and exclamation mark – denotes the end of a sentence.
- Parentheses enclose words that are not directly related to the main thought of the sentence but provide important information, or to provide examples.
- A dash signals a sudden change of thought or break in a sentence. Dashes can also be used in place of parentheses to emphasize information.
- Quotation marks indicate direct speech. All punctuation marks are enclosed within the quotation marks except for semi-colons, colons, and question marks when they are not part of the quotation.
- An apostrophe indicates that letters are missing from a contraction, or shows possession (i.e., that one thing belongs to another). The word (its) spelled without an apostrophe is a possessive; spelled with an apostrophe (it's) is a contraction of it is. Similarly, whose is a possessive pronoun,

and who's is a contraction of who is. Do not use an apostrophe to form the plural of numbers or letters (the 1990s, a box of PCs).

• SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

- There are two kinds of people: Those who think they can write, and those who think they can't. And, very often, both are wrong. Good writing anticipates reader questions, is grounded in data and is like good teaching.
- Words, sentences, flow, active voice and a message are some of the main elements of a good writing.
- Good business writing is at the heart of successful marketing
- Most media outlets use AP style—the style established and constantly updated by the Associated Press—as the foundation for basic news and media writing.
- Audiences hold media and strategic communication professionals to a high standard when it comes to knowledge of grammar and punctuation.
- As a media or strategic communication professional, you will need to synthesize and make sense of a great deal of information for your audience, often under a strict deadline.
- Objectivity is one of the principles of journalism, according to the code of ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists.
- When writing journalistically, one has to take into account not only one's audience, but also the tone in which the piece is delivered, as well as the ABCD of news writing: Accuracy, Brevity, Clarity and Discernment.
- Apart from accuracy, brevity, clarity and discernment, there are some other principles of media writing also like coherence, emphasis, objectivity and unity.
- No doubt, English is a notoriously difficult language. There are a lot of rules and exceptions to rules. It's not surprising that writing in a clear and effective style can be a challenge.
- The availability of spell checkers in word processing programs greatly reduces the likelihood of spelling errors.
- Punctuation helps convey the precise meaning of a sentence – and in fact can even change the meaning.

Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

1. To complete the function of the written word, we require:

- A. two persons B. one person
- C. four persons D. three persons

Ans. A

2. In business, the purpose of writing is mainly to:

- A. both inform and persuade
- B. inform
- C. persuade
- D. entertain

Ans. A

3. Informative writing focuses primarily on the:

- A. writer
- B. reader
- C. latest news
- D. subject under discussion

Ans. D

4. Technical accuracy of language means:

- A. correctness of grammar, spelling, and punctuation
- B. simplicity
- C. active voice
- D. direct narrative

Ans. A

5. The principles of effective writing include:

- A. brevity, clarity and accuracy
- B. brevity
- C. accuracy

D. clarity

Ans. A

6. Errors in language, grammar or visual representation of facts take away:

A. Clarity

B. Correctness

C. Crispness

D. Conciseness

Ans. B

Fill in the blanks:

7. Name three important elements of media writing.....

Ans. Words, sentences, flow

8. Accuracy is defined as.....

Ans. One should provide all the information accurate.

9. Brevity is defined as.....

Ans. One should be brief, but not at the expense of completeness.

10. Clarity is defined as...

Ans. Clarity means that one should have all facts and have them organized before start writing.

• ANSWER IN BRIEF

1. What are the essentials of good writing?
2. What do you understand by types and kind of media writing?
3. Explain about Accuracy, Brevity, Clarity and Discernment of media writing.
4. Provide some light on rules of spelling and punctuation in media writing and practices.