

Chapter 4 Notes Journalism Today

The Effectiveness of Words

- Writers sometimes do not understand the words they use
- Good writers use the effectiveness to make a story spectacular
- Pay attention to the meaning of words before you use; do they pertain to the story?

Be Precise

- To communicate effectively, reporters must be precise, particularly in their selection of words
- News executives allow profanity only when it is essential to a story's meaning
- Editors and news directors prefer the word "woman" to "lady"
- Many ban the use of contractions (don't, can't, isn't)
- Journalists who fail to use words correctly can confuse or irritate their audience, undermine their credibility and cause their audience to question the accuracy of their stories
- Confusion sometimes arises because words look or sound alike

Use Strong Verbs

- Verbs can transform a drab sentence into an interesting - or even horrifying - one.
- Strong verbs help readers or listeners envision the events described in the stories - they paint a vivid picture for readers
- Strong verbs describe one specific action
- Weak verbs cover a number of different actions

Avoiding Problems in Your Writing

- Words to Avoid
 - Adjectives and Adverbs --> Tend to be less forceful, specific and objective than nouns and verbs
 - Most adverbs and adjectives waste space by stating the obvious
 - Cliches - Words or phrases that writers have heard and copied over and over
 - Some cliches are so closely associated with news writing that they are called "journalese", a term that identifies phrases reporters use to dramatize, exaggerate and sometimes distort the events they describe.
 - Slang
 - Technical Language and Jargon
- Other problems to avoid
 - Avoid Stating the Obvious: Platitudes
 - Avoid First-Person References
 - Journalists should not use the words "I", "me", "we," "our" or "us"

- Journalists should remain neutral bystanders
- Avoid the Negative - Sentences should be cast in positive rather than negative form
- Avoid an Echo - Redundancy or the unnecessary repetition of a word
- Avoid Gush - Writing with exaggerated enthusiasm
- Avoid Vague Time References - Do not use "yesterday " or "tomorrow" in print news stories to refer to a specific day, and use "today" and "tonight" to refer to events that occur within seven days before or after the day of publication
- Use of the Present Tense - Many events have already occurred
- Avoid Excessive Punctuation
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