**CJ 241**

**BROADCAST WRITING LANGUAGE TIPS & STYLE**

We will go over most of this the first few weeks of class but here is a hard copy for you to refer to. While these rules may seem like meaningless extra work, what you need to keep in mind is that SOMEONE ELSE might be reading what YOU WRITE. Consequently it is imperative that style be uniform and consistent and that YOU be as clear and ACCURATE as absolutely possible.

And remember the two vital elements of broadcast news writing: what is the most important information and what ‘s happening NOW!!

**USE OF “SAYS/SAID”:**

(Broadcast-“says”)

THE PRESIDENT SAYS THE AMERICAN PEOPLE SHOULD BE READY TO ATTACK IRAQ.

*This will always be what the president SAYS until he SAYS something else.*

(Print-“said”)

“The American people must be ready if we attack Iraq,” the president said.

(Broadcast use of “said”)

***AT A PRESS CONFERENCE THIS*** *MORNING* THE PRESIDENT ***SAID*** THE AMERICAN PEOPLE MUST BE READY FOR AN ATTACK ON IRAQ.

*There is a time and place. Basically it was an action.*

**SENTENCE STRUCTURES AND WORD COUNT:**

**PRINT-**

Shockley Communications Corp. of Madison has reached an agreement to buy four Wisconsin televisions stations, including WKOW-TV of Madison, from Tak Communications Corp.

*All the information in one long sentence. Past tense.*

**BROADCAST-**

A MADISON T-V STATION WILL COME UNDER NEW OWNERSHIP SOON. SHOCKLEY COMMUNICATIONS OF MADISON SAYS IT WILL BUY FOUR WISCONSIN TELEVISION STATIONS. INCLUDED IN THE GROUP IS W-K-O-W T-V HERE IN MADISON.

*Three sentences. All in future or present tense*

**INTRODUCTIONS TO SOUND BITES (SOTS):**

*Introductions To Soundbites And Soundbites Should Not Be Redundant*

**[WRONG]**

PACKERS HEAD COACH MIKE McCARTHY SAYS IT WAS A BIG WIN.

SOTFULL (McCarthy)--“It was a big win. We needed this to get back on track because it’s hard in this league to come back after losing two in a row.”

**[BETTER]**

PACKERS HEAD COACH MIKE McCARTHY SAYS *THIS GAME WAS IMPORTANT*.

SOTFULL (McCarthy)--“It was a big win. We needed this to get back on track because it’s hard in this league to come back after losing two in a row.”

**[NEVER!!!]**

PACKERS HEAD COACH MIKE McCARTHY **~~HAD THIS TO SAY~~.**

SOTFULL (McCarthy)--“It was a big win. We needed this to get back on track because it’s hard in this league to come back after losing two in a row.”

**WHAT TO AVOID:**

(HEADLINE SYNDROME)

“A Cambridge fire KILLS four people.”

*When will they be dead?*

(LOSS OF “TO BE”)

“FARMERS ANGRY OVER LOW GRAIN PRICES”

*They ARE angry! Write and read in complete and correct sentences.*

(Passive-Past Tense: BAD)

“FOUR PEOPLE WERE KILLED IN CAMBRIDGE TODAY BY AN EARLY MORNING FIRE.”

*Direct object is at the beginning of the sentence.*

(Active-Past Tense:OK)

“AN EARLY MORNING FIRE KILLED FOUR PEOPLE IN CAMBRIDGE TODAY”.

*The direct object is in the correct place but it’s still past tense.*

**(BEST)**

“FOUR PEOPLE ARE DEAD AFTER AN EARLY MORNING FIRE IN CAMBRIDGE.”

**ALL CAPS**

*In broadcasting, all writing is done in upper case--and lines are double spaced. While the EZNews program will do this for you when writing the newscast scripts, do it for your package scripts as well. It’s good habit to get into. And it makes the copy easier to read.*

**NUMBERS**

*-Zero-eleven write out/after that use numbers…up to about ONE-thousand*

*-ALWAYS write out “thousand,” “million,” “billion” and “trillion.”*

*-ALWAYS write out large numbers according to above number rule and hyphenate.*

*-Numbers of degree (1st, 2nd, 3rd) are ALWAYS written out*

*-Also write out words that might be associated with the numbers (POINT):*

EXs: 10,500 = TEN-THOUSAND-500,

22.5 million = 22-POINT-FIVE-MILLION,

1,800 = 18-HUNDRED

35% = 35-PERCENT

23rd = TWENTY-THIRD; 5TH = FIFTH

**MONEY**

-*ALWAYS write out dollars and cents and hyphenate*:

EX: THE TELETHON RAISED SEVEN-THOUSAND-DOLLARS.

GAS PRICES ARE EXPECTED TO INCREASE 15-CENTS PER GALLON.

**AGES**

*- Are always placed in front of the person referenced*

*-Are always written out and hyphenated according to the numbers rule*

Ex: A 22-YEAR-OLD OSSEO MAN IS HOSPITALIZED TONIGHT….

Ex: TEN-YEAR-OLD STACY CHAPMAN WILL GO TO WASHINGTON….

(or “STACY CHAPMAN WILL GO TO WASHINGTON NEXT WEEK. THE TEN-YEAR-OLD…)

**ABBREVIATIONS**

*-They basically* ***DON’T EXIST*** *in broadcast writing. EVERYTHING should be written out****-“when in doubt, write it out!!”***

states/places-

-WISCONSIN not WI

official names on first reference/hyphenated on 2nd reference-

-CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL (C-D-C on second reference),

-NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE (N-F-L on second reference)

titles- STATE SENATOR not St. Sen./

-GOVERNOR not Gov./

-COUNTY COMMISSIONER not Co. Comm./

-DOCTOR not Dr./

-DEPARTMENT not Dept.

addresses-“..THE VICTIM LIVED AT 22-NORTH-MAIN-STREET IN DOVER.”

**EXCEPTIONS**--commonly know or used abbreviations: MR. MRS. MS.,

F-B-I, C-I-A

**HYPHENATION**

*-Used when you want the person reading to say each letter individually*

*-But also when using initials*

EXs: F-B-I, N-H-L, N-C-A-A (can also be written out (N-C-TWO-A)

N-A-A-C-P (or N-DOUBLE-A-C-P)

-Not necessary for acronyms like NASA or NOAA

**NAMES (PHONETIC SPELLINGS)**

-If a name is unfamiliar or just difficult to pronounce, write out a phonetic spelling next to or in place of the name using capitalization to indicate emphasis. If you think it necessary, you can use the phonetic spelling for every reference in the script.

EX: EDWARD SAID (sa-EED)

SHAWANO (SHAW-no)

MINOCQUA (min-NOCK-wa)

ARNAUD CLEMENT (ar-NOH kleh-MAWN)

ALWAYS ASK ABOUT PRONUNCIATIONS IF YOU ARE NOT SURE!!! Someone may know. It doesn’t hurt to ask. No one will think less of you.

**OFFICIAL TITLES AND NAMES**

*Make sure they are correct. The official name of a city governing body might be COMMON COUNCIL not CITY COUNCIL. The official name of a member of that body may be CouncilMAN and not CouncilPERSON. The proper title for one of your teachers may be PROFESSOR not DOCTOR.*

**READING TIPS**

**PRE-READ YOUR COPY (IF POSSIBLE)**

You should ALWAYS pre-read your news copy before a newscast. And you should to it OUT LOUD. This is a practice you will find in any broadcast newsroom in the country. It accomplishes two things

-1. allows you to time the copy you are reading. Remember you only have a certain amount of time available--the producer needs to know how long each story is so s/he can see how much time is left or if something else needs to be added.

-2. gets you used to hearing and pronouncing the words you will be reading--it just helps you get familiar with the copy

READING TIP-Concentrate on looking at and saying ONE WORD AT A TIME. Don’t look ahead or anticipate. Just look at and read ONE WORD AT A TIME.