



Common Writing Errors Journalists Make

When writing stories for online or in print, here are 10 of the most common mistakes journalists make. Be careful that you are checking your work for these errors before you submit it.

1. Misspelling people's names. Make sure you check spelling, especially of names and preferred pronouns.
2. Using confusing or vague pronouns. Make sure the pronouns you use are clearly referring to the person/object you intend for them to refer to.
3. Re-writing another reporter's story and taking credit. Do original research. If you must refer to another article, make sure to make an attribution.
4. Not using graphics or using too many graphics in a story. Graphics that illustrate ideas or concepts can enhance stories that have a lot of data or information. Conversely, stories that rely too much on graphics can detract from the article.
5. Writing a story about too many things. A story with a split focus or multiple angles confuses readers. If you find there is enough material to write two or more articles, you should choose one angle and write a story for each one. If there is information that is useful, but doesn't warrant a separate article, consider creating a sidebar.
6. Using wrong idioms. Look up the meaning of idioms if you decide to use them to ensure you are using them correctly.
7. Using too many numbers. If you're writing a story with a lot of numbers, make sure readers understand why you are including them. When writing stories about budgets, give context for the numbers. For example, if taxes are going up for residents, give an example showing how much taxes are increasing.

8. Including too much or too little detail. Include relevant and necessary details only. Readers can be overwhelmed if you include too many facts. On the other hand, readers can be left with questions if there are not enough details.
9. Taking quotations out of context or inaccurately quoting sources. Keep your interview notes and recordings to back up what quotations you use in your articles. Make sure not to twist the meaning of what the interviewee is saying. Inaccuracy will hurt your credibility as a journalist.
10. Writing headlines that are clickbait. While writing headlines that grab readers' attention is important, make sure the headlines are accurate. Don't manipulate the headline just to be catchy at the expense of accuracy.