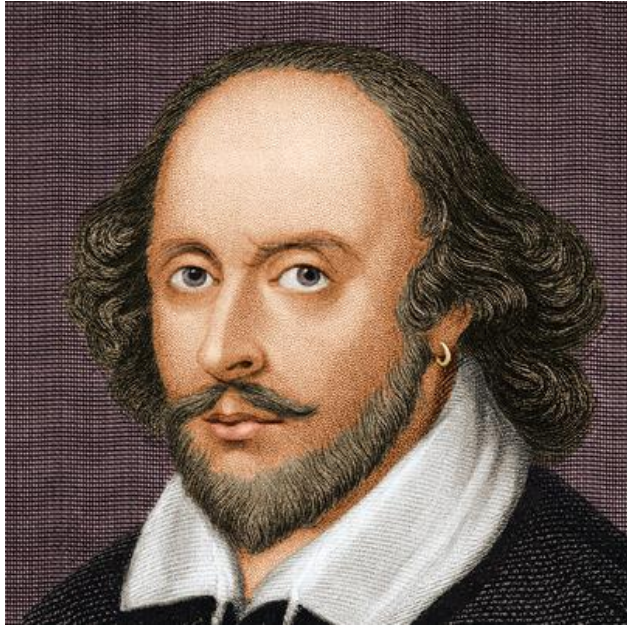


Chapter 2

BASICS



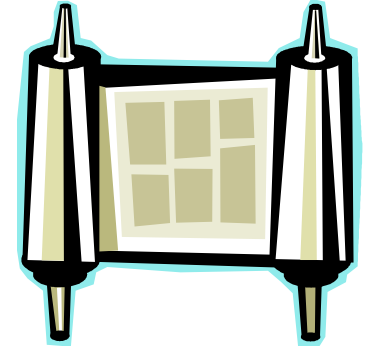


“Brevity is the soul of wit.” –
Shakespeare

What does this mean?

Thoughts on good broadcast writing

- How many people are you trying to communicate with when you broadcast?
- Who else must the writer keep in mind besides the viewer or listener?



Conversational

- Why should we write in a conversational style? What does “conversational” mean?
- Try to write each spot so the listener can understand it the first time; also so that the announcer can read it smoothly the first time.



(Conversational, continued)

- Use simple sentence structure (subject-verb-object, active voice).
- Avoid passive voice.

Active vs. passive voice

- What about contractions? (he'll, she'll, they'll, he's, she's, they're, etc.)
- Use them. They are/they're conversational. (which is more conversational?)
- Short sentences; everyday words.

(Conversational, continued)

Punctuation

Missing or incorrect punctuation can cause confusion for the reader and the listener.

[Punctuation](#)





(Punctuation, continued)

- What does punctuation do for the announcer?
- Difference in a comma and a period?
- Difference in a comma and a dash or an ellipsis?
- Difference in a dash and a hyphen?
- Why underline a word or phrase?

Pronouns

I, he, she, they, we, etc.

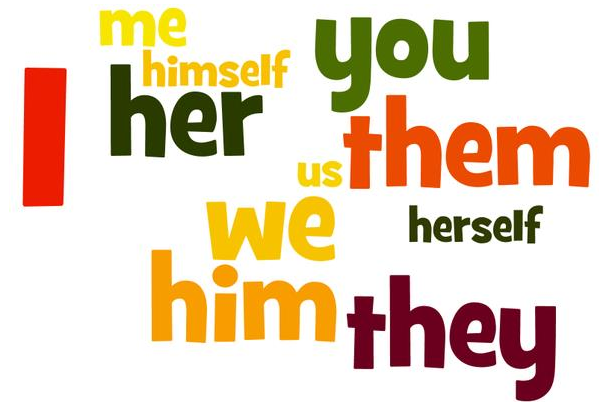
Be careful with pronouns; they can be very confusing to a listener.

[Unclear pronouns](#)

[More unclear pronouns \(pause during play\)](#)

Too many pronouns without clear antecedents (previous names) cause confusion.

“The candy dish was empty but we were tired of eating it anyway.”





Present tense

Use present tense as much as possible (“The president tells Congress he wants action.”)

Present tense emphasizes immediacy and freshness.

Usually, use “says” instead of “said” because what was said yesterday is usually still true today.

If a date and place are given, then present tense is NOT appropriate.

The following example is not perfect but may be helpful. [Present tense](#)



Abbreviations

- What about abbreviations?
- Generally, spell out the name, except for very well-known organizations.
- Differences in hyphenated abbreviations (Y-M-C-A) and acronyms (MADD).
- Spell out the names of states (“Texas,” not “TX.”)

Hyphenation of words

- Hyphenate words that are used together in front of another word as an adjective (“blue-and-gold jersey” ... “rock-and-roll music”)

Hyphenation

Symbols

- What about symbols?
- Spell out the word ... “dollars” instead of “\$” ... “percent” instead of “%” and so on.

Web addresses

- What are the problems with web addresses?
- They are almost always too complicated. Anything more complicated than “Dallas-Cowboys-dot-com” is too complicated (note how this is written).
- Spell out “point” or “dot.”
- Show web addresses as a graphic in TV commercials.





Numbers

- In general:
- Spell out: zero to eleven.
- Numerals: 12-999.
- Spell out: thousand, million, etc. NOT HUNDRED.
- Examples: eleven-thousand; 12-thousand; 999-thousand.
- Exceptions: telephone numbers, addresses, etc.
- You may want to express numbers in the range from one-thousand to ten-thousand this way: 25-hundred (rather than two-thousand, 500); 48-hundred (rather than four thousand, 800).

(Numbers, cont.)

- Round-off large numbers. Why?
- If you use telephone numbers, give them at least twice. Why?
- What's a better way to give location than a numerical street address?
- Provide a landmark (“across Highway 50 from Memorial Stadium”) rather than an address (“3218 Highway 50”).





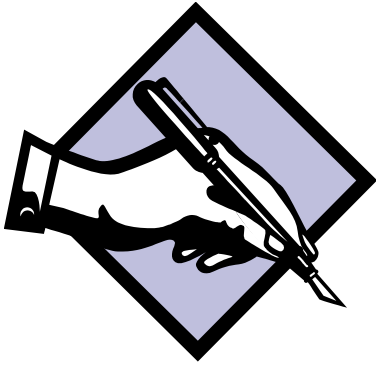
Phonetic pronunciations

- What should you do about difficult-to-pronounce and unfamiliar words or names?
- Provide phonetic pronunciation: “Dirk Nowitzski (no-VIT-skee).”



Cliches and superlatives

- What are clichés?
- Worn-out sayings. “Friendly service” ... “unbelievable bargains.”
- When we talk about clichés, we’re mainly talking about broadcast advertising clichés.
- What are superlatives?
- The “biggest,” the “best,” the “coldest.”
- What are the problems with using superlatives?
- What about questions that listener or viewer can answer with “yes” or “no”? (“Do you ever wish you could work seven days a week?”)



Additional rules in brief

- Generalizations – better to be specific.
- Avoid “if.” (“If you want to want the most dependable car on the market ...”)
- Avoid negatives.
- Negative: He did not fail the exam.
- Affirmative: He passed the exam.