**BROADCAST WRITING LANGUAGE TIPS & STYLE**

(Thanks to the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire for much of this)

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.

**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, and so “said” must be used. In some cases, including the time and place of an event is essential.*

**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.

SOT (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*.

SOT (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~~.**

SOT (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.”

**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.

*Does this sound conversational?**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.

*Much more conversational.* *Three sentences. All in future or present tense*

**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 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**

*In most cases, they 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),

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 known or used abbreviations: MR. MRS. MS.,

F-B-I, C-I-A, N-F-L.

**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-DOUBLE -A)

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

* No hyphenation for for acronyms like NASA or NOAA (which are pronounced as words)

**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.

**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