

Wise advice

Wisdom and Inspiration · By Simon Townsend · 2 min read

Wise Advice Pin This Up Somewhere You'll See It !!

- When you've finished writing, check your article for logic, facts, syntax, grammar, flow, word usage, punctuation and spelling. One mistake . . . and your editor may cross you off his list of contributors.
- Be sceptical, but don't fall into being cynical.
- Get published. Without a fancy university degree you'll have to do it the old-fashioned way: get published.
- And keep reminding yourselves of the universal, immutable, everlasting rules of good writing.
- Your opinion may be welcome but your sermon isn't.
- Redraft, rewrite, edit and re-edit. Then edit again.
- Don't state the bleedin' obvious.
- You are not required to write a Walkley Award winner.
- Show, don't tell.
- Don't generalise but use specific images.
- Forget self-expression and communicate.
- Distrust adjectives and adverbs.
- Love strong verbs.
- Graze your dictionary and thesaurus just because you love words.
- Your loving mum and sister's opinion will never help you professionally.
- Write in the active voice, not passive.
- It's Elle Macpherson, not MacPherson. It is a terrible sin to mis-spell a famous person's name.
- This is a hyphen - and this is a dash -.
- Use as few words as possible, not as many as pop into your head.
- Don't tell stories in chronological order.
- Use effect and affect correctly. Also alternate and alternative, and brought and bought.
- And there, their and they're. It's "lay" sometimes and "lie" other times.
- People don't pass over or go to their reward . . . they die.
- Write about PEOPLE not just topics.
- Your emails should be as neatly well-written as your articles.
- It's Esky with a capital E and Coca-Cola with a hyphen.
- The slightly childish exclamation mark should be used maybe three times in your entire career.

- Use a 12-digit calculator and avoid the unquestioning reporting of PM Hawke's vow to plant a billion trees in five years. It took days for journalists to realise that was an impossible 547,645 plantings a day.
- It's "its" sometimes and it's "it's" other times, but get it right.
- Getting letters to the editor published is not journalism.
- Feel constantly starved for information and suck it up from radio, TV, publications and the internet.
- Online, read one article a day from each Times in London, LA and New York.
- On the back of your hand write the motto of Nike Just do it.
- Put the word only in the right place in a sentence (putting it in the wrong place is journalism's and advertising's most consistent error).
- Researching is merely researching, it's not writing.
- Manage your fear of rejection: it never goes away.
- Sewerage is not sewage but some journalism is.
- It's easy to avoid sexist writing.
- Don't lie to editors.
- Don't be vague. What's an "expensive" meal and is it still expensive if James Packer pays?
- You must love accuracy and that starts with 100% perfect spelling.
- Finally, develop a winning phone manner because on the phone is where you'll be spending a great part of your career.

-- Simon Townsend

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