Broadcast Writing

- Write like we speak-- with contractions, more limited vocabulary (no Thesaurus!)
- For the ear not the eye (ear processes information differently and gets only one pass at the info)
- Use simple sentences (usually <20 words to manage breath), but vary sentence length to create rhythm
- Keep Subject-Verb-Object together-- In that order!
- Commas are evil (avoid modifying phrases and dependent clauses)-- One main idea per sentence
- All keep the line of action clearer for the ear to hear

Broadcast Writing

- Use ACTION verbs to propel copy
- Avoid linking verbs ("to be"-- is, was, are, has) that only indicate a state of being and connect subject to object but do not show ACTION
- BAD-- "Scientists are in town to discuss the latest research…" ("are" is a lazy linking verb)
- BETTER-- "Scientists are discussing the latest research"--they're doing something!
- BEST-- "Scientists research the latest…"

Broadcast Writing

- Use present tense whenever possible to indicate immediacy and universality-- if a source "said" something at a press conference that is still on-going and true, you should still use "says"
- "Says" is your friend-- it is neutral in tone and words such as "contends," "states," "implores," etc are NOT synonyms because they carry additional baggage. Says, says, says…….
- Titles and Attribution always first in broadcast. Helps audience understand context of WHO is saying upcoming comment before they hear it

Broadcast Writing

- Use active voice (instead of passive voice)
- PASSIVE-- “The man was bit by the dog.”
- ACTIVE-- “The dog bit the man!”
- S-V-O in that order without any clauses in between makes your writing active and tight
- S- (“The dog”) -V (“bit”) -O (“the man”).
- Keep subject first in sentence, not last.

Broadcast Writing

- PASSIVE-- “Even though your writing won’t be seen by the audience, it may be seen by people in the newsroom.”
- ACTIVE-- “The audience won’t see your writing but people in the newsroom will.”
- HINT-- Watch out for the preposition “by” as it may mean your subject is buried at the end of the sentence. Put it first and see how many fewer words you use to say the same thing with active voice!

Broadcast Writing

- Finally, remember to use your pictures and sound
- Don't always need reporter track (RT)
- Let your stories breath with lots of nat sound pops-- brings audience to location with you
- Write your anchor intro first-- then your package. Same with lead in to sots-- take first part of a sot and use that as an lead in to the more colorful part.
- Second most important sentence in any package is the last—make sure it brings the story full circle (back to the top) and sums up the piece
- Use these tips to tighten up your writing and you will regularly fit all you need into 1:15 package!