

## Lessons Learned from former students

Things learned

By XXXX Vol. 1

Well, here are the 21 things that I learned this week! It pretty much covers everything from ledes to transitions to endings.

1. Don't substitute descriptions for names. (I did it for the exact reasons you said not to ).
2. One idea to a sentence. (This will take some getting used to, but I am fine with starting sentences with "ands" and "buts."
3. Vary my paragraph lengths. No more than four sentences to a paragraph. But one-sentence paragraphs should be reserved for effect.
4. Effect is the noun, affect is the verb. If I use impact, I'm in big trouble.
5. Transitions are important to the reader -but I have to make them flow.
6. Hyphenate all compound adjectives.
7. Be clear to the reader in word usage.
8. Never use vague words, such as "situation" when I could be more specific.
9. Never use newspeak words, such as "facility" or "facilitates."
10. Never use TV endings that border ( or cross the border) on editorializing.
11. Put attribution at the end of the sentence because it is the least important (and most boring) part of the idea. This holds true unless I am introducing a speaker, in which case that begins a new paragraph.
12. Keep all of one source's information together. If I have to break up his or her quotes, I must remind the reader who he or she is again.
13. Use a comma after introductory phrases for clarity .
14. Avoid "there is/are" sentences -they are passive and can be constructed in a better way.
15. Use two-syllable words instead of three-syllable words. And use one-syllable words instead of two-syllable words.
16. Have a quote within the first three paragraphs to give a human voice early in the article.
17. Have the nut graph of the piece in the first four paragraphs to give the reader an idea of what is to come in the rest of the article.

18. Whenever possible, try to wrap the story up with an ending that is parallel to the lede. But it is better to end with a summary quote than force an ending.

19. When looking through notes, pick out a quote that would be suitable for the first quote in the article and one that could be the wrap-up quote.

20. The nut graph is different from a news peg. Every article has a news peg.

21. "Between" is used with two things. "Among" is used with more than two.

22. Use logic when making organization choices. Be prepared to justify my logic.

Lessons Learned example with details

## **Lessons Learned**

**By Student XXX**

**April 22,**

1. Names of organizations or institutions, such as "SU," should be spelled out on a first reference.
2. Always check the full name of a university major. Don't assume that you know the correct name for sure. It is "broadcast," not "broadcasting" journalism.
3. Avoid redundant words or phrases.  
Example:  
Not: 5.5 percent of the total of 15,500 SU students  
But: 5.5 percent of the 15,500 SU students
4. When you are presenting statistics and are not using bullet points, try to keep the sentences simple, factual, short and to the point.  
Example:  
Not: In a historical perspective, this number illustrates the significant improvement in the integration of individuals with disabilities in social life in the United States.  
But: That compares to .... 30 years ago.
5. Remember to express a single idea in a single sentence.  
Example:  
Not: But in the last 30 years, important civil rights legislations, technological improvements and a rising interest in disability as a social factor rather than medical condition, figuratively and literally opened the doors to higher education for people with disabilities.  
But: But in the last 30 years, the doors to higher education figuratively and literally opened for people with disabilities. A number of factors contributed to the change: important civil rights legislations; technological improvements; and a rising interest in disability as a social factor rather than medical condition.
6. Reduce generalities to a minimum. Use specific facts, examples and details.  
Example:  
Not:

Today, students with disabilities like Coughlin are trying to make the most of their life at college. At Syracuse University, they use new technologies to fully reap the benefits of higher education.

But:

Today, students with disabilities like Coughlin make the most of their college life. At Syracuse University, they take classes and exams together with able-bodied individuals. Today, computer reading and writing software allows blind students to write and hand in readable assignments to their non-Braille-reading professors. Advanced aero-dynamic wheelchair design allows students with mobility impairments not only to move from class to class, but also to compete in wheelchair races and even basketball.

7. Use commas around example-giving phrases like “such as...”

Example:

Less noticeable disabilities, such as dyslexia and other learning disorders, also started to surface.

8. Don't use “past changes.” It's redundant.
9. If you have to use one of two words, always use the simpler: use “disabled people” instead of “disabled individuals.”
10. Avoid using too many phrases like “today,” “now,” etc. Use them only when they are necessary.
11. Use quotes to support more general conclusions, analysis or facts.
12. Paint a more detailed picture of each of the major characters in the story.
13. Don't use unfamiliar acronyms without explaining their meaning in advance.
14. Try to rephrase academic jargon. Make the article accessible to the reader.
15. Make the piece livelier by including more scenes.