

# Assignment 1

Foundations of Journalism

Emerson College

Spring 2013

# Some Recurring Mistakes

- The reporter should be invisible.
  - No: I, We
  - Even you should be avoided.
- Don't use "When asked..."
  - Make the quote fit with the flow of your story.
- You can't generalize a large group based on two or three (or even 10) interviews.

# Some Recurring Mistakes

- Everything in your story should be backed up by the reporting.
- You must have a nut graf.
- Don't assume your reader knows what you do.

# Some Recurring Mistakes

- For straight news, past tense.
- Everyone needs a title.
  - Who is this person?
  - Why is he/she in your story?
- First and last name on first reference, last name thereafter.
- Just talking to people isn't always enough. Do some research.
  - It will also help you shape your reporting and questions.

# Some Recurring Mistakes

- Hard returns.
- Don't indent.
- Make sure that the information you're including is relevant to your story.
- Make sure your story follows/answers the reporting assignment.

# Some Recurring Mistakes

- Avoid asking questions in your stories.
  - They serve only as a rhetorical device since your audience can't answer.
  - Give your readers answers, don't ask them questions.
- When referencing a website, avoid using the URL unless the name and web address are the same.
  - Emerson's website (instead of emerson.edu), Yahoo! (instead of yahoo.com)
  - ESPN.com, CNN.com acceptable

# Some Recurring Mistakes

- Avoid assumptions and inserting opinions.
- Be mindful of word choices.
  - Positive, negative, neutral
    - You want to be neutral.
  - Do not use always, all, every, most.
    - You can't know what every student thinks.
- If you make assertions, you need to back them up.
  - Many students find the first week of the second semester to less daunting.
    - Segue into quote from Eric Jones talking how he knew where has classrooms were this go round.

# Some Recurring Mistakes

We will go grammar crazy next week, but in the meantime:

- Commas
  - With clauses
  - With lists, but not before “and”
  - In compound sentences.
    - Ask yourself if you can make that two sentences.
- No semicolons.
  - This is the case 99 percent of the time.
  - Make it two sentences.
- No exclamation points!



# Some Recurring Mistakes

- Colons aren't that common.
- Don't use two or three words when one will do.
  - Always be looking to cut words out.
  - Efficiency.
- Limit use of contractions.
- Avoid “it,” “this,” etc.
  - Say what it, this, etc. is/refers
- Don't end sentences with prepositions.
  - Of, from, about, on.

# Quotes/Attribution

We'll get into this again as well, but in the meantime:

- Attribution goes at the end of the first sentence in a quote or at the first natural pause.
- A quote should be its own graf.
- Proper structure
  - “I like peanut butter and jelly sandwiches,” Ortiz said.
  - “I’m a Mac person,” Emerson professor Maria Burns Ortiz said.
  - Exception, if the description is long...
    - “I don’t get enough sleep,” said Maria Burns Ortiz, ESPN.com social media columnist and mother of two young children.

# Quotes/Attribution

We'll get into this again as well, but in the meantime:

- Use said.
- Quotes should usually be two or three sentences at most.
- Put punctuation in quotes as needed.
- Don't use bland quotes. Paraphrase.
- Don't stack quotes.
  - You want it to be clear who is speaking.
  - “I like classes,” Jones said.
  - “I like my professors,” Smith said.

# Quotes/Attribution

We'll get into this again as well, but in the meantime:

- Transition between quotes so that there is a flow.
- Only use quotes that are relevant and illustrate what your piece is trying to convey.
- Until further notice do not use partial quotes.  
Paraphrase.

# Other Things We'll Cover

- AP Style
  - I don't expect you to know it yet, but you will soon live and breathe it.
    - The only majors that should be capitalized are proper nouns (i.e. languages)