

# Introduction to News Writing and Reporting

## Lecture 7

Writing Style – Accuracy, Brevity, Simplicity

Lecturer: Baya, Trevor.



Figure 1: “Woman journalist writing notes — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 6 Sept. 2025.

# What You'll Master

By the end of this lecture, you'll command the essential skills that separate professional journalists from amateurs.

01

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## Define Writing Style

Understand journalism's distinctive communication methods and their significance in effective news delivery.

03

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## Achieve Brevity

Apply concise writing techniques using short sentences, active voice, and elimination of redundancy.

02

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## Master Accuracy

Learn fact-checking, source verification, and techniques that maintain credibility and trustworthiness.

04

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## Embrace Simplicity

Balance clarity with completeness while adapting style across print, online, broadcast, and social media.



# Understanding Writing Style

Writing style in journalism is the distinctive way a journalist communicates information, combining language, tone, structure, and clarity to present news effectively. It's more than grammar and vocabulary—it encompasses how a story is organized, how facts are prioritized, and how the audience is guided through information.

A professional writing style ensures news is understandable, credible, and engaging, regardless of medium or audience. It involves choice of words, sentence construction, tone, readability, and overall voice.

## Example

**Strong:** "The mayor approved the new plan"

**Weak:** "The new plan was approved by the mayor"

The first conveys clarity and authority through active voice and precise verbs.

**Figure 2:** "Man writing notes with many papers — illustration," Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 6 Sept. 2025.

# Why Writing Style Matters



## Clarity

Ensures readers quickly understand essential information without ambiguity or confusion.



## Credibility

Accurate and precise language enhances trustworthiness of both journalist and news outlet.



## Engagement

Coherent, readable style keeps readers interested and encourages full story completion.



## Efficiency

Structured, concise writing allows rapid comprehension in today's fast-paced news environment.



## Adaptability

Strong style adjusts to different platforms—print, online, broadcast, social media—while retaining professionalism.



**Figure 3:** “Close-up of woman reading news — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 6 Sept. 2025.

# Accuracy is the cornerstone of journalism

Without accuracy, there is no credibility. Without credibility, there is no journalism.

# The Foundation: Accuracy

Accuracy refers to the correctness of facts, figures, names, dates, quotations, and context presented in a news story. It involves presenting information exactly as it is, without distortion, exaggeration, or misrepresentation.

## Why Accuracy Matters

- **Credibility and Trust:** Readers rely on journalists for truthful information. Errors damage reputations and erode public trust.
- **Legal Responsibility:** Inaccurate reporting can lead to defamation claims and ethical violations.
- **Informed Public:** Accurate news enables informed decisions about social, political, and economic issues.
- **Professional Reputation:** Journalists known for accuracy are respected and valued in the media industry.

## Common Challenges

- Rushed reporting under tight deadlines
- Misinformation from unverified sources
- Complex data misinterpretation
- Bias and assumptions distorting facts

## Consequences of Inaccuracy

- Loss of audience trust
- Damaged reputation
- Spread of misinformation
- Legal repercussions

# Ensuring Accuracy: Proven Techniques

Accuracy is not automatic—it's achieved through rigorous verification, careful sourcing, and disciplined reporting practices.



## Fact-Checking

Review all facts, names, dates, statistics, and claims before publication. Verify numbers and dates against official documents or reliable records.



## Source Validation

Assess credibility, expertise, and reliability of sources. Distinguish between primary sources (direct witnesses) and secondary sources (commentaries, reports).



## Reliable Documentation

Consult official records, press releases, reports, and statistics. Ensure all factual statements are traceable to credible sources.



## Cross-Verification

Confirm information with multiple credible sources. Avoid relying on a single source, particularly for controversial or complex information.



## Quote Verification

Ensure quotes are exactly as spoken, accurately attributed, and in context. Avoid paraphrasing that changes intended meaning.



## Continuous Review

Re-read drafts carefully to identify errors, inconsistencies, or ambiguities. Engage in peer review or editorial checks.

# The Power of Brevity

## What is Brevity?

Brevity is the art of expressing ideas clearly and concisely, using the fewest words necessary. It doesn't mean omitting critical information, but rather eliminating redundancy and filler.

## Why Brevity Matters

- **Reader Engagement:** Concise writing holds attention and encourages article completion
- **Efficiency:** Helps readers quickly extract essential facts
- **Clarity:** Reduces confusion from long, complicated sentences
- **Adaptability:** Short sentences suit digital platforms where readers scan content

### Wordy Example

"The city mayor, who has been in office for ten years, made an announcement today regarding the new public transportation plan."

### Concise Version

"The city mayor announced a new public transportation plan today."

Retains all essential facts while eliminating unnecessary words.

# Mastering Brevity: Essential Techniques



## Short Sentences

Limit each sentence to one main idea. Avoid complex sentences with multiple clauses.



## Active Voice

Use "The mayor signed the bill" instead of "The bill was signed by the mayor."



## Eliminate Redundancy

Remove phrases like "past history," "advance planning," or "end result."



## Precise Verbs

Replace weak constructions with strong, specific verbs that convey meaning efficiently.

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## Condense Information

Integrate related facts or quotes into single sentences without losing context. Avoid splitting information unnecessarily across multiple sentences.

## Edit Ruthlessly

Review drafts to remove filler words, repetition, or tangential information. Use checklists or peer review to ensure conciseness without losing essential meaning.

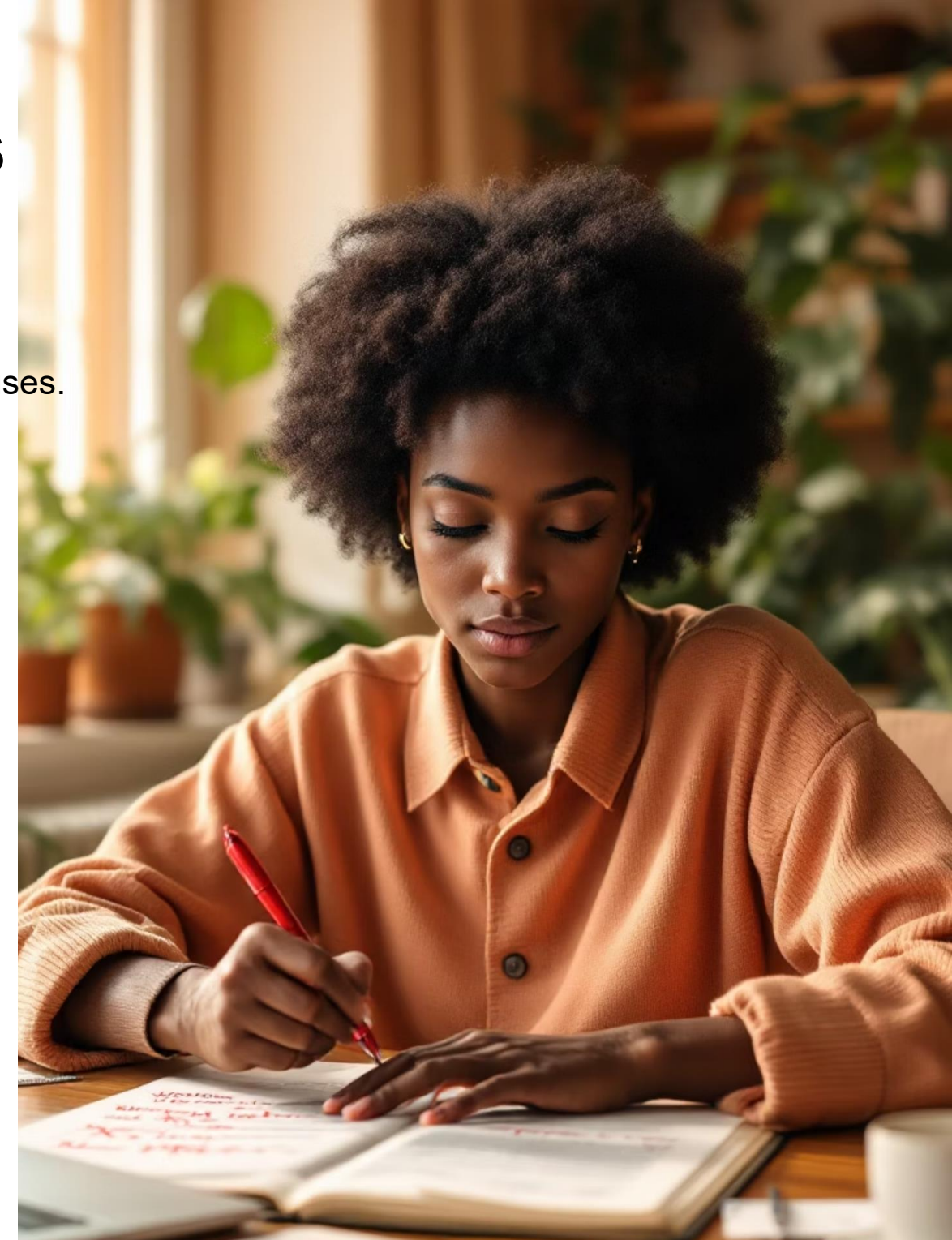


Figure 4: "Woman taking notes — illustration," Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 6 Sept. 2025.

# Your Writing Style Toolkit

Professional journalism combines accuracy, brevity, and simplicity to create compelling, trustworthy news stories.

## Accuracy First

Verify facts, cross-check sources, validate quotes, and review continuously. Your credibility depends on it.

## Brevity Always

Use short sentences, active voice, precise verbs, and eliminate redundancy. Respect your reader's time.

## Simplicity Throughout

Choose clear language, logical structure, and consistent tone. Make complex information accessible.

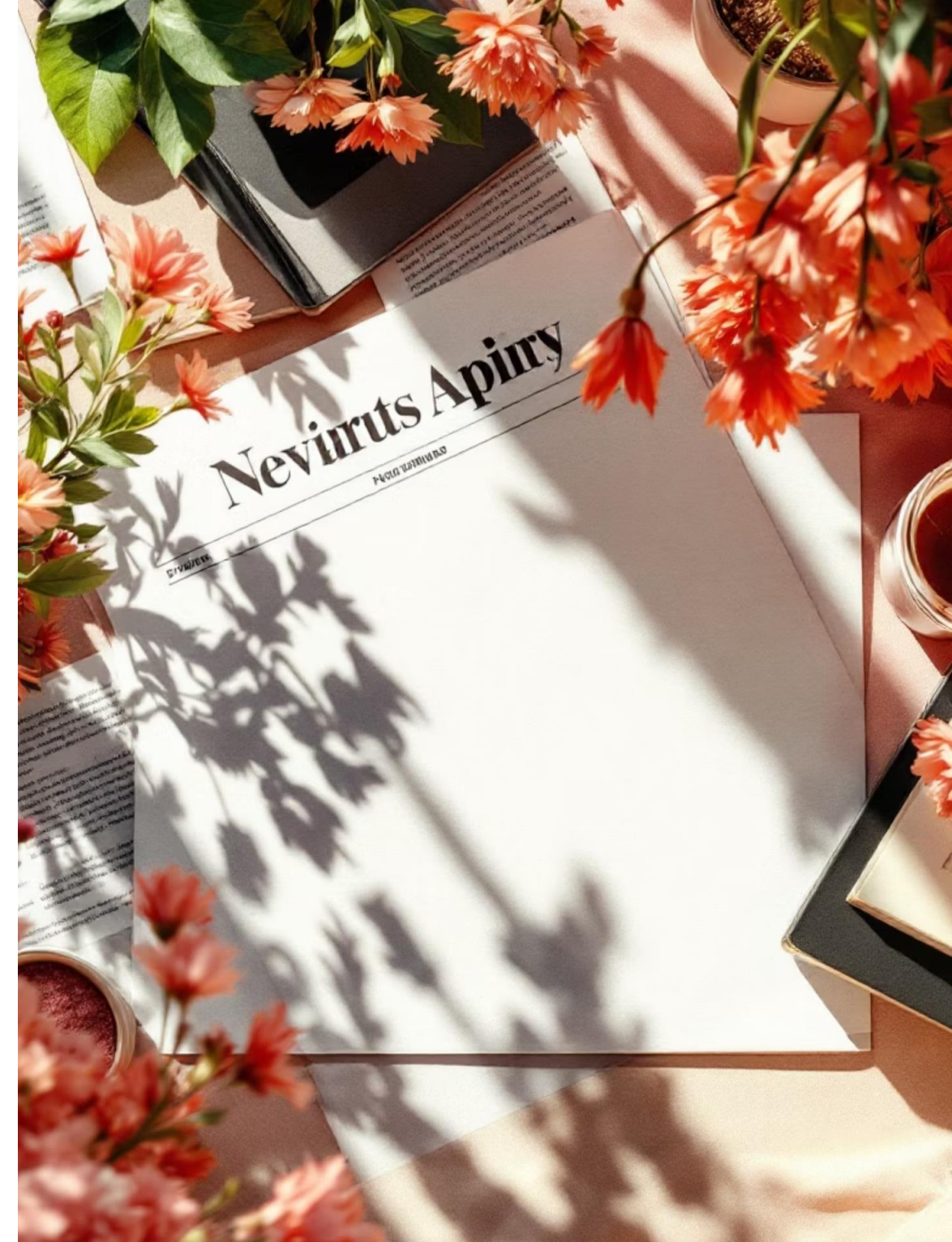
"The difference between the almost right word and the right word is really a large matter—it's the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning."

— Mark Twain

Master these principles, and you'll communicate effectively across all media platforms while maintaining the trust and engagement of diverse audiences. Your writing style is your professional signature—make it count.

# Simplicity in Journalism

Clear, straightforward language allows readers of diverse backgrounds to understand stories easily. Simple language enhances comprehension, avoids confusion, and ensures the core message is effectively communicated.



**Figure 5:** “Newspaper on a table with flowers — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 6 Sept. 2025.



**Figure 3:** “Close-up of woman reading news — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 6 Sept. 2025.

# What is Simplicity?

## Clear Language

Choosing words and sentence structures that are easy to understand for all readers.

## Avoid Jargon

Eliminating unnecessary technical terms and complex phrasing that may alienate audiences.

## Direct Expression

"The city launched a new bus route" instead of "The municipal authority inaugurated an additional vehicular transit corridor."

# Why Simplicity Matters



## Comprehension

Readers quickly understand the story without deciphering complicated language.



## Engagement

Simple, direct writing maintains reader interest and prevents fatigue.



## Accessibility

Ensures news is understandable to wider audiences, including those with varying literacy levels.



## Efficiency

Conveys essential facts without unnecessary explanation.

# Techniques for Maintaining Simplicity

01

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## Use Common Words

Replace obscure or technical terms with familiar vocabulary that everyone understands.

02

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## Keep Sentences Short

One main idea per sentence prevents confusion and improves readability.

03

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## Avoid Complex Phrases

Use direct expressions rather than convoluted structures that obscure meaning.

04

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## Clarify When Necessary

Provide brief explanations only when a technical term is unavoidable.

05

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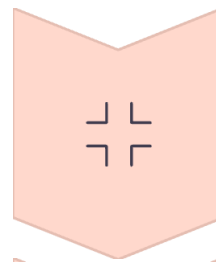
## Focus on Core Message

Each sentence should convey information directly related to the story's main point.



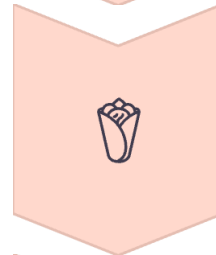
# Balancing Brevity and Completeness

A critical skill in journalism is finding the optimal balance between conciseness and comprehensive information. Effective news writing provides enough detail for understanding without overwhelming readers with unnecessary words.



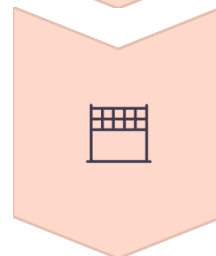
## **Brevity**

Presenting information concisely, focusing on essential facts.



## **Balance**

Ensures clarity, comprehension, and engagement simultaneously.



## **Completeness**

Including all necessary context and details to fully inform the reader.

**Figure 6:** “Balanced weights on a scale — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 6 Sept. 2025.

# Achieving the Right Balance

## Key Techniques

- **Prioritize Information:** Lead with the most important facts, followed by supporting details
- **Use Concise Sentences:** Express essential ideas clearly without unnecessary elaboration
- **Integrate Background Strategically:** Include only context necessary for understanding
- **Summarize When Possible:** Condense complex explanations while retaining accuracy
- **Segment Information:** Use subheadings and short paragraphs to organize details efficiently

## Common Pitfalls

**Over-condensing:** Important context or nuances may be lost.

**Over-elaboration:** Stories become long, complex, and difficult to read.

**Neglecting reader perspective:** Failing to consider what information the audience needs.



# Clarity in Expression

Clarity ensures readers immediately grasp the main points of a story without confusion or misinterpretation. It involves precise word choice, coherent sentence construction, and logical organization.



## Reader Comprehension

Ensures readers understand facts, events, and context accurately.



## Engagement

Clear writing maintains attention and prevents frustration.



## Credibility

Ambiguous writing can undermine trust in the journalist or news outlet.



## Professionalism

Demonstrates skill in organizing and presenting information.

Figure 4: “Woman taking notes — illustration,”  
Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 6 Sept. 2025.

# Techniques to Achieve Clarity

1

## Organize Ideas Logically

Present facts in a structured order—chronological, importance-based, or thematic.

2

## Use Precise Language

Avoid vague terms or ambiguous expressions that confuse readers.

3

## Keep Sentences Focused

Each sentence should convey one clear idea without overloading information.

4

## Use Paragraphs Effectively

Group related ideas together and signal shifts with topic sentences.

5

## Simplify Complex Information

Break down technical or dense material into digestible parts for the audience.

6

## Use Active Voice

Enhances readability and makes statements more direct and understandable.



**Figure 3:** “Close-up of woman reading news — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 6 Sept. 2025.

# Consistency of Style and Tone

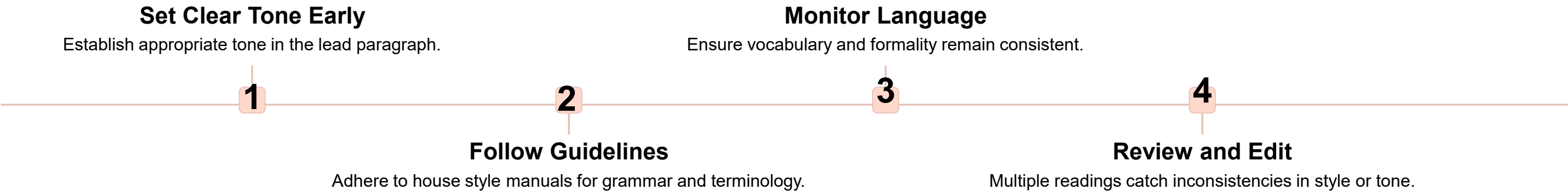
Consistency ensures that a news story presents information in a coherent, professional, and predictable manner. It maintains credibility and provides a seamless reading experience.

## Style

The journalist's approach to language, sentence structure, and presentation of information.

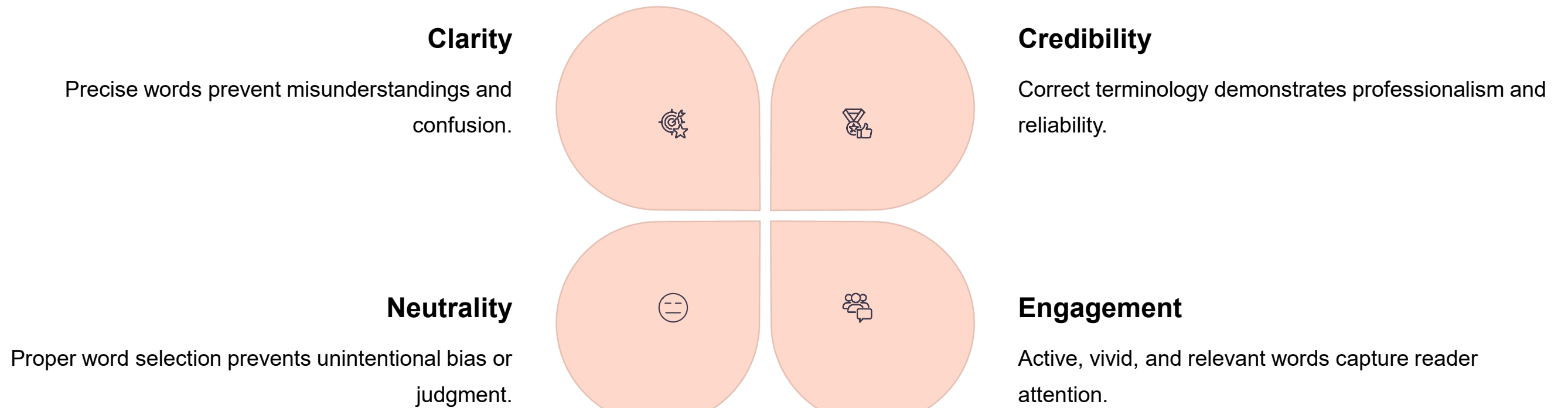
## Tone

The attitude or mood conveyed through writing—formal, neutral, serious, or conversational depending on the story.



# Appropriate Word Choice

Word choice involves selecting terms that are precise, clear, and suitable for the story's context. Effective word choice enhances clarity, engages readers, and maintains professional credibility.



**Figure 7:** "Infographic showing clarity, credibility, neutrality, and engagement — illustration," Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 6 Sept. 2025.

"The politician introduced amendments to the national budget to increase education funding" is precise and appropriate, while "The politician did some stuff about the budget" lacks clarity and professionalism.

# Mastering Journalistic Writing Style

Effective writing style in journalism combines accuracy, brevity, simplicity, clarity, consistency, and adaptability. Mastering these elements ensures news is communicated professionally, engagingly, and comprehensibly to diverse audiences across all platforms.



**Figure 8:** “Woman journalist writing notes — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 6 Sept. 2025.



**Figure 3:** “Close-up of woman reading news — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 6 Sept. 2025.

# Sentence and Paragraph Structuring

## Why Structure Matters

Well-structured sentences and paragraphs guide readers through stories and enhance readability. They reduce ambiguity, maintain logical flow, prevent reader fatigue, and demonstrate professional mastery of journalistic writing standards.

## Core Techniques

- Keep sentences concise and focused on single ideas
- Use active voice for directness
- Vary sentence length to create rhythm
- Start paragraphs with clear topic sentences
- Use transitions to connect ideas smoothly

# Building Effective Paragraphs

01

## Topic Sentence

Begin with a clear statement that introduces the main idea of the paragraph.

02


## Supporting Details

Follow with sentences providing facts, quotes, or examples that develop the topic.

03

## Transition or Conclusion

End with a sentence that reinforces the key point or bridges to the next paragraph.

 **Common Pitfall:** Avoid mixing unrelated ideas within a single paragraph, which causes reader disorientation and disrupts narrative flow.



# Eliminating Redundancy

Redundancy occurs when the same idea, fact, or meaning is repeated unnecessarily. Eliminating it improves clarity, maintains brevity, and increases the impact of every word in your story.

## Review for Repetition

Check for repeated facts, phrases, or ideas within sentences and paragraphs.

## Condense Similar Ideas

Combine multiple sentences conveying the same meaning into one coherent statement.

## Remove Filler Words

Eliminate words like "very," "actually," "basically" that add little value.

## Streamline Phrases

Replace wordy expressions with concise alternatives for maximum impact.

**Figure 8:** “Woman journalist writing notes — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 6 Sept. 2025.

# Before and After: Eliminating Redundancy

## Redundant

"The mayor personally made an announcement about the new plan himself."

"The report was completely finished and finalized."

"At this point in time, due to the fact that traffic is a problem..."

## Concise

"The mayor announced the new plan."

"The report was finalized."

"Now, because traffic is a problem..."

Concise writing respects the reader's time and attention while maintaining professionalism. Each word should contribute value, making stories more persuasive and compelling.



# Active vs. Passive Voice

## Active Voice

The subject performs the action of the verb, creating clarity and directness.

"The committee rejected the proposal."

**Benefits:** Clear identification of actors, shorter sentences, dynamic narrative, enhanced reader engagement.

## Passive Voice

The subject receives the action, useful for emphasizing objects or actions over actors.

"The proposal was rejected by the committee."

**When to Use:** Actor unknown, unimportant, or deliberately de-emphasized; sensitive or diplomatic reporting.

**Figure 8:** "Woman journalist writing notes — illustration," Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 6 Sept. 2025.

# Voice Selection Strategy



## Hard News

Use active voice for immediacy, clarity, and direct communication of breaking stories.




## Features

Prefer active voice but use passive strategically to vary rhythm and emphasis.



## Sensitive Topics

Apply passive voice when diplomatic tone or de-emphasis of actors is appropriate.

 **Key Principle:** Active voice is generally preferred in journalism for clarity, conciseness, and engagement. Reserve passive voice for strategic emphasis or when the actor is genuinely unknown or unimportant.

# Adapting Style for Different Mediums

Journalistic writing must be tailored to suit the characteristics, audience expectations, and technical constraints of different media platforms. Effective adaptation ensures clear communication and maximum engagement.



## Print Media

Allows detailed explanations and structured narratives. Uses formal tone, standard paragraphing, and emphasizes completeness alongside clarity for in-depth reading.



## Online/Digital

Readers scan content, requiring brevity and clarity. Use subheadings, bullet points, hyperlinks, and multimedia. Short paragraphs and concise sentences improve screen readability.



## Broadcast Media

Requires oral clarity and simplicity. Sentences must be concise and conversational. Avoid complex terminology; focus on key facts that listeners can grasp quickly.



## Social Media

Highly condensed and attention-driven. Prioritize catchy headlines, clarity, and immediacy. Integrate hashtags, mentions, and visuals while maintaining professional tone.

# Medium-Specific Techniques

1

## Assess Audience

Understand the medium's audience expectations, reading habits, and consumption patterns before writing.

2

## Adjust Structure

Modify sentence length, vocabulary, and paragraph structure to match platform requirements and constraints.

3

## Use Formatting Tools

Apply headlines, subheads, lists, and other formatting elements appropriate to the medium.

4

## Integrate Multimedia

Complement textual information with images, videos, infographics, and interactive elements where suitable.



Figure 8: “Boy and two girls reading news and watching a phone — illustration,” Gamma.app, Gamma Technologies, 6 Sept. 2025

# Core Principles of Effective Writing



## Accuracy

Verify facts, quotes, and figures to maintain credibility and trust.



## Brevity

Convey information concisely without omitting essential details.



## Simplicity

Use clear, accessible language to enhance understanding.



## Clarity

Structure sentences and paragraphs logically to prevent confusion.



## Consistency

Maintain uniform tone, style, and voice throughout the story.



## Adaptability

Tailor writing style to suit different mediums and audiences.

Mastering these principles allows journalists to produce stories that are informative, engaging, professional, and tailored to their audience, ensuring news is both credible and impactful.