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**NOTES&THEORIES**  
DISPATCHES FROM THE SCIENCE DESK



## A manifesto for the simple scribe – my 25 commandments for journalists

Former Guardian science editor, letters editor, arts editor and literary editor **Tim Radford** has condensed his journalistic experience into a handy set of rules for aspiring hacks



Tablets of stone: 'I realised that when stories I had tried to write turned out wrong, it was because I'd broken one of my own rules.' Photograph: Allstar/Cinetext/Paramount

*I wrote these 25 commandments as a panic response 15 or more years ago to an invitation to do some media training for a group of Elsevier editors. I began compiling them because I had just asked myself what was the most important thing to remember about writing a story, and the answer came back loud and clear: "To make somebody read it."*

*Ultimately, there's no other reason for writing. Journalists write to support democracy, sustain truth, salute justice, justify expenses, see the world and make a living, but to satisfactorily do any of these things you have to have readers. Fairness and accuracy are of course profoundly important. Without them, you aren't in journalism proper: you are playing some other game. But above all, you have to be read, or you aren't in journalism at all.*

*I wrote down what was in my mind and once I'd started numbering things, I had to go on. I got past 10, and then 20, and stopped guiltily at 25. I then didn't have time to reduce the text to a formal Ten Commandments. The 25 things got distributed among the Elsevier editors the next morning and then some time later I got asked to talk to some staff at Nature, so I used the same set of prompts, and one or two people asked me for copies.*

*I gave it the not-very-serious subtitle of "manifesto for the simple scribe" and at around the same time, I realised that when stories that I had tried to write turned out wrong, it was because I'd broken one of my own rules. So I decided I might have*

*written something quite useful, after all.*

- 1.** When you sit down to write, there is only one important person in your life. This is someone you will never meet, called a reader.
- 2.** You are not writing to impress the scientist you have just interviewed, nor the professor who got you through your degree, nor the editor who foolishly turned you down, or the rather dishy person you just met at a party and told you were a writer. Or even your mother. You are writing to impress someone hanging from a strap in the tube between Parson's Green and Putney, who will stop reading in a fifth of a second, given a chance.
- 3.** So the first sentence you write will be the most important sentence in your life, and so will the second, and the third. This is because, although you – an employee, an apostle or an apologist – may feel obliged to write, nobody has ever felt obliged to read.
- 4.** Journalism is important. It must never, however, be full of its own self-importance. Nothing sends a reader scurrying to the crossword, or the racing column, faster than pomposity. Therefore simple words, clear ideas and short sentences are vital in all storytelling. So is a sense of irreverence.
- 5.** Here is a thing to carve in pokerwork and hang over your typewriter. "No one will ever complain because you have made something too easy to understand."
- 6.** And here is another thing to remember every time you sit down at the keyboard: a little sign that says "Nobody has to read this crap."
- 7.** If in doubt, assume the reader knows nothing. However, never make the mistake of assuming that the reader is stupid. The classic error in journalism is to overestimate what the reader knows and underestimate the reader's intelligence.
- 8.** Life is complicated, but journalism cannot be complicated. It is precisely because issues – medicine, politics, accountancy, the rules of Mornington Crescent – are complicated that readers turn to the Guardian, or the BBC, or the Lancet, or my old papers Fish Selling and Self Service Times, expecting to have them made simple.
- 9.** So if an issue is tangled like a plate of spaghetti, then regard your story as just one strand of spaghetti, carefully drawn from the whole. Ideally with the oil, garlic and tomato sauce adhering to it. The reader will be grateful for being given the simple part, not the complicated whole. That is because (a) the reader knows life is complicated, but is grateful to have at least one strand explained clearly, and (b) because nobody ever reads stories that say "What follows is inexplicably complicated ..."
- 10.** So here is a rule. A story will only ever say one big thing. If (for example, and you are feeling very brave) you have to deal with four strands of a tale, make the intertwining of those four strands the one big thing you have to say. You may put twiddly bits into your story, but only if you can do so without departing from the one linear narrative you have chosen.
- 11.** Here is an observation. Don't even start writing till you have decided what the one big thing is going to be, and then say it to yourself in just one sentence. Then ask yourself whether you could imagine your mother listening to this sentence for longer than a microsecond before she reaches for the ironing. Should you try to sell an editor an idea for an article, you will get about the same level of attention, so pay attention to this sentence. It is often – not always, but often – the first sentence of your article anyway.
- 12.** There is always an ideal first sentence – an intro, a way in – for any article. It really helps to think of this one before you start writing, because you will discover that the

subsequent sentences write themselves, very quickly. This is not evidence that you are glib, facile, shallow or slick. Or even gifted. It merely means you hit the right first sentence.

**13.** Words like shallow, facile, glib and slick are not insults to a journalist. The whole point of paying for a newspaper is that you want information that slides down easily and quickly, without footnotes, obscure references and footnotes to footnotes.

**14.** Words like "sensational" and "trivial" are not insults to a journalist. You read what you read – Elizabethan plays, Russian novels, French comic strips, American thrillers – because something in them appeals to your sense of excitement, humour, romance or irony. Good journalism should give you the sensation of humour, excitement, poignancy or piquancy. Trivial is a favourite insult administered by scholars. But even they became interested in their subject in the first place because they were attracted by something gleaming, flashy and – yes, trivial.

**15.** Words have meanings. Respect those meanings. Get radical and look them up in the dictionary, find out where they have been. Then use them properly. Don't flaunt authority by flouting your ignorance. Don't whatever you do go down a hard road to hoe, without asking yourself how you would hoe a road. Or for that matter, a roe.

**16.** Clichés are, in the newspaper classic instruction, to be avoided like the plague. Except when they are the right cliché. You'd be surprised how useful a cliché can be, used judiciously. This is because the thing about journalism is that you don't have to be ever so clever but you do have to be ever so quick.

**17.** Metaphors are great. Just don't choose loopy metaphors, and never, never mix them. Subs on the Guardian used to have a special Muzzled Piranha Award, a kind of Oscar of incompetence, handed to an industrial relations reporter who warned the world that the Trades Union Congress wildcats were lurking in the undergrowth, ready to dart out like piranhas, unless they were muzzled. George Orwell reports on the case of an MP who claimed that the jackbooted fascist octopus had sung its swansong.

**18.** Beware of street cred. When Moses ordered his commanders to slay the Midianites he wasn't doing it to show that he was well hard. When he warned Pharaoh to let his people go he wasn't saying "give us room to breathe, man, and Pharaoh's, like, no way feller!" The language of the pub or the café has its own rhythms, its own body language, its own signalling devices. The language of the page has no accent, no helpful signalling tone of irony or comedy or self-mockery. It must be straight, clear and vivid. And to be straight and vivid, it must follow the received grammar.

**19.** Beware of long and preposterous words. Beware of jargon. If you are a science writer this is doubly important. If you are a science writer, you occasionally have to bandy words that no ordinary human ever uses, like phenotype, mitochondrion, cosmic inflation, Gaussian distribution and isostasy. So you really don't want to be effulgent or felicitous as well. You could just try being bright and happy.

**20.** English is better than Latin. You don't exterminate, you kill. You don't salivate, you drool. You don't conflagrate, you burn. Moses did not say to Pharaoh: "The consequence of non-release of one particular subject ethnic population could result ultimately in some kind of algal manifestation in the main river basin, with unforeseen outcomes for flora and fauna, not excluding consumer services." He said "the waters which are in the river ... shall be turned to blood, and the fish that is in the river shall die, and the river shall stink."

**21.** Remember that people will always respond to something close to them. Concerned citizens of south London should care more about economic reform in Surinam than about Millwall's fate on Saturday, but mostly they don't. Accept it. On 24 November

1963, the Hull Daily Mail sent me in search of a Hull angle on the assassination of President Kennedy. Once I had found a line that began "Hull citizens were in mourning today as ..." we could get on with reporting what happened in Dallas.

**22.** Read. Read lots of different things. Read the King James Bible, and Dickens, and poems by Shelley, and Marvel Comics and thrillers by Chester Himes and Dashiell Hammett. Look at the astonishing things you can do with words. Note the way they can conjure up whole worlds in the space of half a page.

**23.** Beware of all definitives. The last horse trough in Surrey will turn out not even to be the last horse trough in Godalming. There will almost always be someone who turns out to be bigger, faster, older, earlier, richer or more nauseating than the candidate to whom you have just awarded a superlative. Save yourself the bother: "One of the first ..." will usually save the moment. If not, then at least qualify it: "According to the Guinness Book of Records ..." "The Sunday Times Rich List ..." and so on.

**24.** There are things that good taste and the law will simply not let you say in print. My current favourites are "Murderer acquitted" and (in a report of an Easter religious play) "Paul Myers, who played Jesus Christ, emerged as the star of the show." Try and work out which one has the taste problem, and which one will cost you approximately half a million per word.

**25.** Writers have a responsibility, not just in law. So aim for the truth. If that's elusive, and it often is, at least aim for fairness, the awareness that there is always another side to the story. Beware of all claims to objectivity. This one is the dodgiest of all. You may report that the Royal Society says that genetic modification is a good thing, and that depleted uranium is mostly harmless. But you should remember that genetic modification was invented by people who were immediately elected to the Royal Society for their cleverness, by people already in there because they knew how to enrich uranium fuel rods and deplete the rest. So to paraphrase Miss Mandy Rice-Davies (1963) "They would say that, wouldn't they?"

*Tim Radford will be talking about his career tonight in conversation with Alok Jha at Imperial College London, 6-7pm*

• This article was amended on 21 January 2011. The original referred to Dashiell Hammet. This has been corrected.

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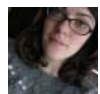
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**C**



[alicerosebell](#)

19 January 2011 1:46PM

This is so lovely, it's been passed around UK Science Writers for years. One emailed it to a friend recently with the note "Keep it safe and hug it to sleep every night". I think that sums up the affection with which it is held by the community.

So thanks for publishing it so we can all share.

I should also say that the event at Imperial this evening was inspired by Tim's contribution to [Ed Yong's On the Origin of Science Writers thread](#). Any budding science writers would do well to have a look at it.

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[footienut](#)

19 January 2011 2:21PM

Beware of all definitives.

Superlatives - no?

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[jeromeknewton](#)

19 January 2011 2:25PM

Duly printed and placed in the "Writer's folder". Lovely piece.

Recommend? (4)

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[PeleMcAmble](#)

19 January 2011 2:26PM

This comment has been removed by a moderator. Replies may also be deleted.



[Bluthner](#)

19 January 2011 2:28PM

Most women I know, including my mother, you'd have to do a LOT worse than merely bore them silly to get them to reach for the ironing...

Recommend? (18)

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[billthecat](#)

19 January 2011 2:37PM

Exterminate will always be better than kill; it's the syllable index count by which you belittle your more pedestrian opponent. The Witch used to increase the index at will in order to verbally annihilate Kinnock.

Recommend? (7)

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[EdYong](#)

19 January 2011 2:41PM

I'm thrilled that these are finally being published openly. They're words that all writers should live by, especially since, as if to illustrate his own point, Tim wrote his writing tips with such joyous poetic flair.

Recommend? (4)

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[matthewsheffield](#)

19 January 2011 2:58PM

Although it was interesting, and I finished the article, isn't telling journalists how to write against the spirit of the rules of writing interestingly for the general newspaper reader?

-The next post isn't allowed to say just "No".

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[feanelwa](#)

19 January 2011 3:16PM

*"Here is a thing to carve in pokerwork and hang over your typewriter. 'No one will ever complain because you have made something too easy to understand.' "*

Kill it, quick, before it gets away. It is a total lie. Thousands of people will spit bricks because some idiot journalist glossed over a really important fact. Look, here: ptooiie. Ptooiie. Donk donk. STOP DOING IT.

Recommend? (30)

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[footienut](#)

19 January 2011 3:25PM

I watched BBC Horizon on Monday night and was incensed in how the commentator clearly was not listening to a word the scientists were telling him. I can't remember the specific instances, but in trying to paraphrase what some boffin was saying, the commentary completely missed the point.

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[cutta](#)

19 January 2011 3:36PM

But surely if, say, Peter Sutcliffe was accused of shoplifting and found not guilty, then "Murderer acquitted" would be fine.

Recommend? (19)

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[SarfOfTheRiver](#)

19 January 2011 4:02PM

How about you send this piece to political and economic journalists. They are complicit in the the greatest lie of a generation.

Venal, arse licking and useless bastards.

Recommend? (6)

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[Flap](#)

19 January 2011 4:05PM

Here's one very simple tip often ignored by science reporters: if you're writing about research and publishing online, provide a direct link to the paper/papers you are writing about! It's not hard, and means anybody can follow up your report quickly and easily (and check you didn't get things wrong...).

Recommend? (37)

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[Benulek](#)

19 January 2011 4:13PM

Words like shallow, facile, glib and slick are not insults to a journalist.

They should be.

Recommend? (26)

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[Thackur](#)

19 January 2011 4:15PM

Beautifully put. As a sub, I maintain all journalists should be ceremonially issued with (or perhaps bludgeoned with) a copy of Orwell's "Politics and The English Language" (source of the metaphorical singing fascist octopus mentioned...).

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[thrillerman](#)

19 January 2011 4:26PM

strikes me most of these commandments would apply to fiction writing too 0 are you reading, Will Self?

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[bowlface](#)

19 January 2011 4:52PM

One of the best things I've written about journalism in a long time, and one of the most encouraging too - so rarely found these days. It's no surprise it's trending on Twitter like wildfire.

I took the liberty to blog regarding the celebration of 'trivial', [here](#)

Recommend? (2)

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[bowlface](#)

19 January 2011 4:53PM

Obviously, when I say 'written', I mean read - clearly too enthused with all the journalistic advice!

Recommend? (2)

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[jamesoverseas](#)

19 January 2011 5:33PM

I thought the rules were;

1) Your readers only care about things they have personal experience of: A dodgy pedestrian crossing light which could potentially lead to a car accident in Islington has the same news value as a multiple fatality pile up in Scotland, which equals a passenger jet falling out of the sky in Iran.

Note: Geopolitics is something your readers don't understand or have much experience of. Why write about the building of the NordStream pipeline; it may be the biggest geostrategic change in Europe since the fall of the Berlin wall, but it's not as interesting as whether two Big Brother contestants are shagging or not. A revolution outside of Europe is only of interest if you can find some holiday makers who have had their flight delayed.

2) Moderation and serious appraisal don't sell. Your readers don't understand statistics (and lets face it, university was a long time ago, and you failed your stats module, hence why you're writing about science rather than doing it) - this is a great opportunity to abuse the phrase "significant risk" - you can take a small piece of fairly dull, but worthy research and if you're lucky start a major scare. This is the holy grail of all journalists. Scares sell, and they follow a set formula, so there's a lot of payback for very little work. Of course, 10 years down the line there may be a resurgence in diseases we thought we'd wiped out, but hey, a future article already writing itself...

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[Snowdroppy](#)

19 January 2011 5:50PM

What a good luck that I am not a journalist. Stopped reading at point 12.



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[RyFish](#)

19 January 2011 6:00PM

are you reading, Will Self?

No, I'm not reading Will Self and am unlikely ever to do so.

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[FrostAndFire](#)

19 January 2011 6:12PM

"No one will ever complain because you have made something too easy to understand."

I will. Stop dumbing everything down. Some of us like to understand at greater depth and are capable of actually thinking.

Recommend? (28)

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[sql](#)

19 January 2011 6:15PM

I wrote these 25 commandments as a panic response 15 or more years ago to an invitation to do some media training for a group of Elsevier editors.

I am thrilled.

Moses had the sense to quit after ten.

Recommend? (4)

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[ahumanist](#)

19 January 2011 6:22PM

this is a good read, i suppose it´s been published for readers because it´s unlikely to be read by journalists and subs ...

the only bit i would take issue with is number 20 "english is better than latin". there are innumerable - sorry, lots of - good, short, expressive words from latin in our language, words such as "fuck" ... certainly, shorter words are usually better, but sometimes the longer word can make the point more emphatically, remember shakespeare "the multitudinous seas incarnadine ..."

Recommend? (3)

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[brigadeer](#)

19 January 2011 6:31PM

<< 1. When you sit down to write, there is only one important person in your life. This is someone you will never meet, called a reader. >>

For all the merit of the rest of the article this opener is naive and delusional.

To have reached the stage of being a working professional journalist, in science or in any other field a long and thorough selection and elimination process will have been successfully navigated.

During his training years the neophyte will have learned that all idealistic thoughts of truth, fairness, democracy, logic, etc., get buried in the need to survive in the real world, or else he is on borrowed time. All his work will be passed through a process similar to peer review. except that the peers are replaced by the guy who is writing the pay checks. It is he who ultimately decides whether or not the journalists work supports and/or enhances the 'face' the organisation wishes to present to the world.

Readers are truly important, but unfortunately they only ever get to read what someone else with their own agenda wishes them to read.

Recommend? (5)

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laura2185

19 January 2011 6:44PM

*"Here is a thing to carve in pokerwork and hang over your typewriter. 'No one will ever complain because you have made something too easy to understand.' "*

"This is so lovely, it's be [sic] passed around UK Science Writers for years. One emailed it to a friend recently with the note "Keep it safe and hug it to sleep every night". I think that sums up the affection with which it is held by the community.

So thanks for publishing it so we can all share."

So this single commandment is to blame for all those asinine science articles we've been getting for so long? I *will* complain about the oversimplification in science journalism.

People who read the science section want to be informed, not patronised.

*"You are writing to impress someone hanging from a strap in the tube between Parson's Green and Putney, who will stop reading in a fifth of a second, given a chance."*

Oh wait, I see. You're writing for people who live in London and have frighteningly short attention spans.

Recommend? (14)

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laura2185

19 January 2011 6:48PM

*"So aim for the truth. If that's elusive, and it often is, at least aim for fairness, the awareness that there is always another side to the story."*

Yes, there is always another side to the story. But if it's one crackpot in his basement against the rest of the world's scientists, do try to make that clear for once instead of giving equal weight, and therefore equal validity, to each view.

Recommend? (34)

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[gloxinia](#)

19 January 2011 7:10PM

I enjoyed this list.

But, surely, in rule 24, you meant to write "Try TO work out which one has the taste problem...". That would be consistent with rule 15.

Recommend? (3)

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[alicerosebell](#)

19 January 2011 7:25PM

@laura2185

Making something easy to understand and over-simplifying to the point of patronising them it is entirely different.

Also, no one said that just because it was passed around writers mean everyone's lived by every word. Journalists, like scientists, like to disagree.

Recommend? (7)

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[SimonB29](#)

19 January 2011 8:43PM

Have you passed this around your pompous Guardian hack^H^H^H^H colleagues?

Recommend? (2)

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[JoeBauwens](#)

19 January 2011 8:47PM

No one will ever complain because you have made something too easy to understand. Really? I've mastered the art of explaining the theory behind global warming in under two hundred words (with a joke). This invariably produces howls of protest from the deniers.

Recommend? (3)

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[iaoutfls](#)

19 January 2011 9:04PM

As to point 20, I was unaware Moses spoke any form of English, but if he did it is no wonder Pharaoh did not listen to him...

Recommend? (2)

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[languageandgenes](#)

19 January 2011 9:08PM

- \* Manifesto for the Guardians of freedom.
- \* Thou shalt not lie.
- \* Thou shalt not deceive.
- \* Thou shalt not corrupt the language.
- \* Thou shalt not be an ignorant bigot.
- \* Thou shalt always tell the truth.
- \* Thou shalt not be arrogant.
- \* Thou shalt not practice hubris.
- \* Thou shalt not bear false witness against the people.
- \* Thou shalt not kill the language.
- \* Thou shalt not peddle propaganda.
- \* Thou shalt be humble.
- \* Thou shalt not be duplicitous.
- \* Thou shalt not practice hypocrisy.
- \* Thou shalt not feign knowledge, for a fool seeks recognition.

The wise understanding.

\* Thou art mortal.

Thou art relative.

Thou art uncertain.

Beware of dogma and prejudice.

\* The Guardian shalt ditch the libdems,  
and shalt support labour.

Thou shalt be true to thy historic politics.

Recommend? (3)

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[languageandgenes](#)

19 January 2011 9:45PM

Rule 3 "So the first sentence you write will be the most important sentence in your life,..."

\* Thou shalt not deceive.

Rule 14 " Words like shallow, facile, glib and slick are not insults to a journalist."

\* Thou shalt not practice hubris.

Rule 17 " Metaphors are great."

\* Thou shalt not kill the language.

Rule 18 " Beware of street cred."

\* Thou shalt not peddle propaganda.

The Guardian should be following some of these manifesto tips, and stop concealing the libdem view under the guise of news.

People must know the truth what this government is doing to our democracy.

It's killing democracy for an unregulated market system rooted in greed, selfishness and exploitation.

Wouldn't truth be a wonderful thing.

Recommend? (0)

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[AttrocityArchives](#)

19 January 2011 9:51PM

As has been said: we must eschew obfuscation.

Recommend? (4)

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[mrwilliams](#)

19 January 2011 10:53PM

I had just asked myself what was the most important thing to remember about writing a story, and the answer came back loud and clear: "To make somebody read it." ...

Ultimately, there's no other reason for writing.

Umm... To report on news in an accurate way which educates and informs??

Have you considered a job with The Sun?

Recommend? (2)

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[amberjack](#)

19 January 2011 11:22PM

**O.** Know something about science.

Recommend? (5)

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[jno50](#)

19 January 2011 11:26PM

You can salivate without drooling. Having Latin and Anglo-Saxon (and French and much else besides) in the language's family tree means lots of words to choose from, with endlessly enjoyable subtle differences.

18 is the one that Guardian writers should have waved under their noses; far too much self-consciously trendy talk on some pages (I recall the readers' editor grumbling about having to look up milf, and wondering if it really needed to be used). Most of the rest are observed pretty well.

Recommend? (2)

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[barfiller2](#)

19 January 2011 11:51PM

"One of the first ..." will usually save the moment.

As an editor I always cut this kind of meaningless construction.

One of the first six, or first 10,000? One of the greatest guitarists in the world -- a list of

three or 250? One of the few people to have . . .

Recommend? (6)

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[allanel](#)

20 January 2011 12:08AM

Thanks, Tim. Here's one to add when you revise your list: Keep your promises.

Somewhere, in your title, a heading or your first line perhaps, you make a promise to your reader. If you don't keep that promise you will lose your reader.

Recommend? (0)

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[amberjack](#)

20 January 2011 12:27AM

**barfiller2:** The one that *really* has me spitting feathers is "One of the only...". Grrrr.

Recommend? (4)

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[Clunie](#)

20 January 2011 12:29AM

I think the list's excellent - I don't think that making something easier for the layperson (and I am one) to understand needs to mean dumbing it down. And surely if you're writing for a non-expert/specialist publication you know you're writing primarily for laypeople and should want and be able to explain things in terms we'll understand so we can follow it. Otherwise you'll just be preaching to the choir.

In my experience I've generally found that the most awesomely brilliant people want to make and are capable of making the complex comprehensible, while it's those who want to prove their brilliance rather than tell readers/listeners the facts who have to make things too difficult to follow. And the latter - again in my experience - tend not to be as intelligent as they believe and want everyone else to believe.

I'd also agree with those above suggesting that fiction writers, as well as journalists of every variety, would do well to follow the same rules ( as well as sticking closely to Elmore Leonard's [Ten Rules](#) and being mindful of Orwell's Politics and the English Language).

Recommend? (5)

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[JamesRichard](#)

20 January 2011 1:37AM

I am originally from south London

I am interested in economic reform in Suriname, which is needed to deal with - large scale cocaine transshipment

- rainforest conservation
- rights for indigenous peoples
- corruption and economic crime

I am not at all interested in how Millwall is doing this Saturday. Or any other Saturday  
Recommend? (7)

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[BangaloreBoy](#)

20 January 2011 3:43AM

Two things:

1. Would someone give me -- or even point me to an online resource for an example (a few examples would be better because I am rather thick) of "making it easier to understand" vs. "dumbing it down" vs. "oversimplification" vs. "simplification"?
2. @JamesRichard on 20 January 2011 1:37AM

I am originally from south London

I am interested in economic reform in Suriname, which is needed to deal with

- large scale cocaine transshipment
- rainforest conservation
- rights for indigenous peoples
- corruption and economic crime

I am not at all interested in how Millwall is doing this Saturday. Or any other Saturday

**I wish I had (more) students with your mindset in my classes! Brilliant response!** Kudos.

Recommend? (0)

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[toys19](#)

20 January 2011 5:18AM

I got bored before the first sentence ended...

Sorry only joking, good little article thanks

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[lakey](#)

20 January 2011 9:47AM

Brilliant. A lovely read, full of good humour and sense, and well put together.

Top marks.

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[GrahamRounce](#)

20 January 2011 9:53AM

"asked myself the most important thing about writing a story, and the answer: "To make somebody read it." Ultimately, there's no other reason for writing.

Well, there you go. That's journalists for you. People reading it is important, but it'll surprise you that it's not most important.

The most important thing is getting the facts across, clearly and with integrity. If that's compromised, it would be better if nobody read it.

Or do you just mean from the point of view of you staying in a job?

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[matstuff](#)

20 January 2011 10:30AM

1. Would someone give me -- or even point me to an online resource for an example (a few examples would be better because I am rather thick) of "making it easier to understand" vs. "dumbing it down" vs. "oversimplification" vs. "simplification"?

For example: "enzymes catalyse intracellular reactions" vs "enzymes speed up the biological processes in cells"

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[JamTones](#)

20 January 2011 11:04AM

Brilliant piece... now I know where I'm going wrong. Printed out and pinned up next to my computer! The great thing about journalism is that you can always improve...

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[ronmoron](#)

20 January 2011 12:55PM

Nothing sends a reader scurrying to the crossword, or the racing column, faster than pomposity

Crossword it is then.

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