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Title: Checkpoints: A dozen tips to power your PR writing

Public Relations Tactics

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Summary: The following outlines the top tips I share with those who want to improve their writing. You've possibly heard many of these; the key is diligently applying them to all of your writing.

Full Text: The following outlines the top tips I share with those who want to improve their writing. You've possibly heard many of these; the key is diligently applying them to all of your writing.

Outline, outline, outline. The ease of writing your document is directly proportional to the time you spend planning, organizing and outlining it. This takes discipline, but it's preferable to staring at that blank computer screen. The editing process will be considerably faster and your outcome more effective.

Grab attention in 10 seconds. That's how long you've got to interest your readers. Start with something compelling to grab their attention and don't let go.

Write tight 1

Eliminate every unnecessary word. If in doubt, take it out. Pretend you're paying \$1,000 for each word and cutting unnecessary verbiage puts money in your pocket.

Write tight 2

Make your editing mantra "Five words are better than six; four words are better than five." Each word eliminated powers your writing, making it more dynamic and persuasive.

Write tight 3.

In releases, try limiting yourself to one thought per sentence, two sentences per paragraph.

Leave it overnight. Edit your document as tightly as possible and leave it until the next day. Pledge to cut your copy by 10 percent. You'll be amazed by how much you can excise. Your refreshed eyes will also find errors they didn't see yesterday.

Get a proofing buddy. Often, your eyes see what your brain intended, and not what's on the page. Another proofreader will catch errors you've missed.

Watch repeat offenses. Review the last few documents your supervisor edited and note your repeat errors. Be conscious of them every time you write and check for them before handing in future documents.

Get active. Review every verb in your document to ensure that they're in the active, rather than the passive, tense.

Know their style. Indoctrinate yourself in the style of your target outlet. The more you emulate it, the faster you'll connect to the editor and the audience.

Get to the point. Short, simple, declarative sentences are best.

Avoid superlatives, overwriting and "adspeak." This is by far the greatest piece of advice that you'll get in your entire writing career.

Show it to someone not in the know. Share your document with someone unfamiliar with the topic. Does he or she understand it thoroughly and feel it flows logically? Your volunteer's comprehension will resemble that of your intended reader, so carefully heed any input.

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