

# COPYWRITING TIPS

- 1. Describe sights, sounds, smells, actions, reactions.**
- 2. Use direct quotes.**
- 3. Attribute all quotes.**
- 4. Use specific facts.**
- 5. Use vivid verbs.**
- 6. Use plain language.**  
Say “he said” instead of “he stated.”  
In quote attribution, use “said,” not commented, observed, stated, yelled, etc
- 7. Use precise words.**
- 8. Write to the emotions. Include the senses.**
- 9. Use active voice.**  
(Passive voice) The ball was thrown by the quarterback.  
(Active voice) The quarterback threw the ball.
- 10. Make positive statements.**
- 11. Write in the third person.**
- 12. Write in past tense.**
- 13. Tie your conclusion to your lead.**
- 14. Proofread and correct all spelling and grammar errors.**
- 15. Have a copy read-around to get input from others in your class. Avoid writing anything that can tell the story of any other high school somewhere else.**
- 16. Don't use dates/labels:**  
The 2013-2014 Northstar High School Band.  
This year, the varsity cheerleaders did many new and exciting routines.  
This year, the 2013-2014 Lady Gators at Northstar High School...
- 17. Avoid using clichés such as:**  
Purpose: The purpose of learning history is to find out what happened in the past.  
Goals: The goals of the English Department were to teach...  
During: During the year, the students of Northstar High School were interested in...  
Hard work, dedication, team unit.
- 18. Worthless Quote**  
“English was a lot of fun. We did lots of different things.”
- 19. Yes/No Question**  
Do you know what happened in Science this year?
- 20. Saying nothing**  
Lots of new things happened this year at Northstar High School. The students were together more than ever and they had more school spirit than ever.
- 21. Editorializing**  
Don't write your own opinion. Include facts and quotes in your story instead.
- 22. Avoid writing the obvious.**  
Get behind the scenes with in-depth reporting and research.



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**23. Never use these words in your yearbook:**

Numerous  
Various  
Many  
Some  
Several  
Few  
A lot  
Not many

**24. Spell out numbers one through nine.**

Use Arabic numbers above nine.  
Spell out numbers that begin your copy.

**25. Never use the name of the school, its initials or mascot in any copy or caption, except in competitive situations.**

**26. Report about this year. Never predict anything about next year.**

**27. Never let editorial terms creep into copy.**

Avoid using words such as “beautiful,” “spectacular,” “wonderful,” “seemingly,” “apparently” or “awesome.”

**28. Capitalize all proper nouns.**

**29. Do not classify students into different years or classes (Mary Jones, '04 or Junior Matt Dell)**

**30. Do not invert sentences or verbals. Use active voice, not passive voice.**

Use “The play was memorable.” Don't use “Memorable was the word for the play.”  
Use “The quarterback threw a touchdown.” Don't use “The touchdown was thrown by the quarterback.”

**31. Learn the difference between “its” and “it's.”**

Its is possessive. “The dog wagged its tail.”  
It's is the contraction for it is. “It's going to be a great day.”

**32. Learn subject-verb agreement and use it correctly.**

“Everyone said they enjoyed the show,” is incorrect. “Everyone” is singular and “they” is plural

