

Some guidelines in science writing (by Alton Blakeslee and Sandra Blakeslee):

1. Push your enthusiasm button. If you are not interested, how can you expect to captivate your readers or listeners?
2. Think what your story really means and how best to say it. Thinking is always the hardest part. Distill and distill your facts and purpose to the core of meaning. What is this story about? Who cares? Why are you writing it now?
3. Regard your readers not as being ignorant but more likely "innocent" of your topic and its jargon. Write for intelligent fourteen year olds who can follow complex material just fine but have not yet learned scientific terms or concepts.
4. Explain technical terms instantly if you must use them (and often you must), then you can use them again in that same story. But you can't use them again in your next story without defining them again. You likely won't have the exact same readers.
5. Explain the unfamiliar by comparing it with something generally familiar.
6. Put yourself on the other side of your desktop or laptop and ask yourself and then answer all the questions that might occur to you if you had never heard of the subject before.
7. Don't put all the "logs" of attribution and identification into one paragraph, just to get rid of them. Be more solicitous of your readers and sources.
8. Look for gems of detail that can make a story sparkle. Report and write with your ears as well as your eyes, seeking out phrases that say something extremely well, or colloquially, in the words of people interviewed or overheard.
9. In interviewing and researching, there is no such thing as a dumb question when you want to understand something correctly, to write about it accurately. Don't be embarrassed. Who knows everything?
10. Be not afraid to use periods liberally. And avoid putting two unfamiliar points in the same sentence, or even the same paragraph.
11. Look for different-from-ordinary ways of expression.
12. Give your story some focus and a place to go, then quit.
13. Wring out the "water" of excess verbiage.

14. What you leave out of a story can be more important than what you leave in. Otherwise the reader may drown in non-essential detail.

15. Never let a story go without taking a second look. Is there some better or more accurate or appealing word or phrase, some lovelier expression, some sharper beginning?

16. Do not begin a story with a question, except in unusual circumstances. Instead, answer the question.

17. You likely will not get anyone to read your second paragraph unless you hook his or her interest in your first paragraph. Your opening -- dramatic or soft key -- counts hugely.

18. In seeking how to begin or explain something, it often helps to verbally tell a friend what your story is about. The verbal telling may help you hone your thoughts, ideas and ways of expression.

19. Your first draft is not written in concrete. It should be intended to put all that you want to say in one place, so you can see it all better. Let that draft flow. Don't interrupt when the thinking is flowing to look up some minor detail that you can insert later. Keep it coming.

20. Digest your material. Then relax and say what you want to say.

With your story done, ask yourself:

Is it good enough?

Could I do better?

Was I careless? Lazy? Tired?

Did I really say what I wanted to say?

Can I polish it? Find a better verb, better description, analogy?

Yes, as a writer, you probably can.