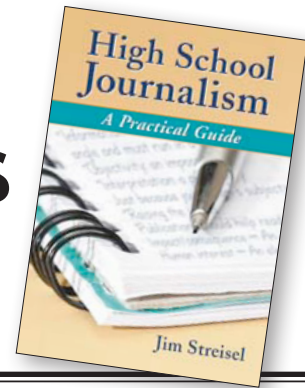


# Journalism's 10 Deadly Style Sins

*Jim Streisel, Carmel (IN) High School*  
*www.hilite.org/streisel*



*Here's a final checklist for you to use  
before you submit copy to your editors.*

1. **OMIT ALL EXCLAMATION POINTS.**  
*Reason:* Exclamation points are subjective pieces of punctuation.
2. **USE THE FORM (NAME) SAID, RATHER THAN SAID (NAME) (I.E. SMITH SAID, NOT SAID SMITH).**  
*Reason:* Subjects come in front of verbs, not after.
3. **OMIT ADVERBS.**  
*Reason:* Adverbs are subjective words. If writers use strong nouns and strong verbs, they shouldn't need adverbs.
4. **OMIT PASSIVE VOICE.**  
*Reason:* Passive voice makes the subject unclear. It is a timid way of writing, and it is often less concise. Remember to put the subject of the sentence in charge.
5. **ELIMINATE GENERALIZATIONS (WORDS LIKE MOST, ALL NONE, SOME, EVERYONE, NO ONE, ETC. — SEE ALSO #10).**  
*Reason:* These words are subjective unless writers have research to back up their claims.
6. **AVOID FIRST & SECOND PERSON (I, YOU — SEE ALSO #10).**  
*Reason:* With few exceptions, journalists should use the third person. Fiction writers use first and second person; this is not fiction.
7. **USE PAST OR PRESENT TENSE CONSISTENTLY.**  
*Reason:* Lack of consistency leads to confusion.
8. **USE THE SPELLCHECK FEATURE ON YOUR WORD PROCESSING SOFTWARE.**  
*Reason:* Correct spelling leads to credibility. Remember, however, that no computer can take the place of a good set of human eyes.
9. **USE THE WORD "SAID."**  
*Reason:* Said is the most objective word for dialogue/quote attribution.
10. **AVOID THESE VAGUE WORDS:**  
*very, really, believe, thing(s), nice, guy, some, most, feel, all, none, seem, unclear "it", everyone, no one, you, your, I, me*