

Putting it All on Paper: The writing process

Pay close attention to detail. Facts, on this beat, are essential. Constantly check and re-check facts, spelling, ambient details, and everything else in your story. Errors, on this beat, can be a legal problem.

Know when to write the straight story and when to narrate. The Salt Lake Tribune's Lisa Rosetta said: "By and large, we tend to do the straightforward, inverted-pyramid style of reporting. However, there are some stories that lend themselves to a good narrative piece."

Just do it. "I think when you don't have a lot of time to write, you just do it," Rosetta said. "If you know you have to produce a story in the next fifteen minutes for an online update, you just try to arrange the pieces as best you can. You just try to get to what happened, why it happened, who was involved... I try to take good notes... if you have good, thorough notes that are legible and easy to get through, I think that can speed up the writing process."

Flex your writing muscle. "Humanize it. Make it sing. Make it shine. We're not the Associated Press," said David Ovalle, police reporter at The Miami Herald. "And I think we have the luxury here to cherrypick the best stories. And make the reader care about it."

Pause. Stop and think for a minute. What do you know about the case? What's the most compelling, most dramatic element? How can you tap into that? Be creative.