

1) **Before** you write every story, sit down for a minute and think “Why am I writing this?” — work out what the *news* is in the story, and what is the Most Important Point (**MIP**) of all the story. *Deciding “Why am I writing this” will help you decide what to write in the story, and how long the story should be.*

2) Think about **how important** the story is, and therefore **how long** the story should be. No one wants to read 1000 words, for example, about an exhibition of flowers at the Cambodiana Hotel — 200 or 300 words is enough. Stories have to be written according to what they are worth. The best way to work out how long a story should be is to think about how interesting is it to you personally — you are not very interested in a story, few other people will be either. But there are some stories which are not too interesting but still have to be written. You can write 100, 200 or 300 words on them, and use the rest of your time to write better stories that will interest more people. If you’re not sure how important a story is, ask Jason or Matt, but you should do this as little as possible. *It is you, the reporter, who has the best idea of how big a story is.*

3) Remember that what seem to be boring stories can sometimes become exciting stories. A flower show at the Cambodiana isn’t very interesting, but sometimes it could be — for example, if the Khmer Rouge is holding the flower show, and Pol Pot himself will deliver a speech there. Or, for example, if the flower show has been organised by a rare group of hill tribesmen who have never been to Phnom Penh before and the flowers took 300 years to grow. *Good stories can pop up out of anywhere, you just have to grab them.*

3) The Most Important Point (**MIP**) should automatically be your first sentence, or **intro** (unless, maybe, it is a colour or human interest story where you can be a bit more creative) in any news story. Your intro has to be the *best-written* part of any story, and the part that instantly tells the reader exactly what the story is about. If your intro is boring, no-one will bother to read the rest of the story. *Your intro is like the front of a shop — if it is dull or boring nobody is going to step through the door to see what’s for sale inside.*

already read in another newspaper. Sometimes we have to look for the **new angle** to put at the top of our stories. If Hun Sen and Ranariddh fall off a moto on Monivong Street and hurt themselves, many of our readers will already know that by the time the Post comes out. So there's no point writing: "Hun Sen and Ranariddh fell off a Moto on Monivong Street on Jan 26." We have to find something new in the story — *why* did they fall off the moto, *who* caused the accident, *how* badly hurt were they, *how* will the government work if both the PMs are stuck in hospital?? If we can find the answers to questions like that, we should be able to find a new angle for the story. *The Post wants to be the first newspaper to report a story, or to tell readers something new about a story that they may have read in another newspaper.*

5) All sentences should be short (20 to 30 words) and easy to understand. Make sure *you* understand every sentence in your stories. *If you don't understand everything in your stories, nobody else will.*

6) When interviewing someone, remember the **Golden Rule** — get the answers to six questions: *When, where, why, how, who and what*. *When* did something happen, *who* was involved, *why* did it happen, *how* did it happen, *where* did it happen, *what* are the implications of it happening, *what* do people think and say about it happening — the list of questions is endless. *Before you finish every interview, think whether you have answered the when, where, how, why, who and what questions.*

7) If you are writing a story and you find out that there is something important that you forgot to ask during an interview, or there is something that you are unsure of, go back to the person you interviewed and check. If they complain at being bothered again (then they are stupid), tell them that you would prefer to make sure that you have all your facts correct, rather than risk publishing something which was wrong. If it is deadline time and there are things you are unsure about but cannot check again with your source, **do not put them in your story.** *That's another Golden Rule: if in doubt, leave it out.*

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put it in quotes. (And remember: don't put anything in quotes unless it is *exactly* what they said to you.) *Quotes should be colourful and descriptive; if they are not, you don't need to put them in quote-marks.*

10) Check your facts and give other people the right to respond to allegations against them. If somebody says that Matthew Grainger is a thief, you have to check your facts — ask them what proof they have that Matthew Grainger is a thief. If they have some proof, then you have to go to Matthew Grainger and say that somebody claims he is a thief and you would like to get his side of the story. If he doesn't want to talk to you, that's OK, at least you have given him the opportunity to comment. *There are too many newspapers in Cambodia which report unproven allegations against people without giving them the opportunity to comment. The Post doesn't.*

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