

How to Write a Newspaper Ad

by Mike Hughes

Start with a large glass of Diet Coke[®] on ice. Position yourself so you can look out the window once in a while.

For inspiration, open up a newspaper and remind yourself how big a newspaper is. It's huge and it's just inches from your nose. In this space assassinations have been depicted in detail, moon landings have been brought to life, heroes have been created, despots have been brought to ruin. Make sure you're intimidated by the deadline. Make sure you're not intimidated by the research.

Too many ads become bloodless when writers become slaves to sophisticated marketing processes. Creative briefs are starting points, not finish lines.

Just last week, I was told by an ad writer I admire immensely that "ads great art." I disagree. Write like it's art.

Only after you've rewritten an ad ten times are you free to say that the first version was the one to go with. Usually, incidentally, it isn't.

This is the 16th time I've written this ad. It's now 1:30 am. I'm going home. I'll probably be writing it again tomorrow night anyway.



Mike Hughes is president and creative director of The Martin Agency in Richmond, Virginia, which is routinely honored in the Newspaper Association of America's Athena Awards. To see examples of the agency's work and other great newspaper ads, visit www.naa.org.