

# **Top Tips for Writing a Good Label**

Developed by Dea Birkett and  
Rebecca Mileham

# Tip 1: Start with a Hook

- Amazing facts
- In-your-face phrase (Taxi!)
- ‘Imagine you had to...’
- Did you know?
- Storytelling

# Tip 1: Start with a Hook

## Example



We'll never know what was inside this box. Information about the healing properties of plants is considered secret – only to be passed on to the next local herbalist.

Science Museum  
*Upper Wellcome Gallery*

# Tip 2: The 'Hey' Test

Example text:

Many of London's traffic signals are managed through an advanced traffic control system where timings adapt automatically to suit local changes in traffic volume and direction.

# Tip 2: The 'Hey' Test

Add 'hey' at the beginning, does it sound catchy?

Hey, many of London's traffic signals are managed through an advanced traffic control system where timings adapt automatically to suit local changes in traffic volume and direction.

This might be better:

Hey, did you know that London's traffic lights can think for themselves?

# Tip 3: Use the Active Voice

Example:

British newspapers were prevented from showing the full effect of the Blitz on London.

Using the active voice, it becomes:

**Censors** prevented British newspapers from showing the full effect of the Blitz on London.

# Tip 4: Don't Leave the Best for Last

## Example:

The first practical type of electric fire was designed by H J Dowsing in 1896 and used carbon filament lamps known as 'Dowsing Sausages'. (23)

With the most interesting point first, it becomes:

**Heat your home with sausages** using this 1896 electric fire. The tube-shaped filament lamps were dubbed 'Dowsing Sausages' after their pioneering inventor. (22)





# Tip 5: Keep it Short

## Example:

The aim of a photographer is to get the best photograph and to do this you need the right equipment. (20)

## Shortened version:

To get good photos, you need good equipment.  
(8)

# Tip 5: Keep it Short

When you have to shorten a piece of text, look for:

- Waffle
- Ways you can split information into smaller chunks
- More conversational ways to say things

# Tip 5: Keep it Short

## Example



# Tip 5: Keep it Short

## Example text:

When first introduced in 1959 the Mini was a unique concept in motor design. This sectioned example was prepared by the British Motor Corporation for the launch at the 1959 Motor Show and shows how the designer, Alec Issigonis, achieved so much space in a car only ten feet long.

The key to his achievement was turning the engine sideways and integrating it with the gearbox and final drive. In design terms the Mini became extraordinarily influential and soon the compact transverse front engine layout became standard for all smaller cars from all makers. (93 words)

# Tip 5: Keep it Short

Shortened version:

How do you get four people in a Mini? This cutaway example of the tiny ten-foot car revealed the Mini's design secrets at its 1959 Motor Show launch.

Alec Issigonis' unique idea was to turn the engine sideways and integrate it with the gearbox and front-wheel drive – soon a standard concept for smaller cars.

(55 words)

# Tip 6: Watch the Clichés

## Example:

Nowadays, roll film is **a thing of the past** for most press photographers.

## Without the cliché:

Today's press photographers do things digitally.

# Tip 7: Make it Flow

- Give your text some rhythm

Most people have heard the story of Lady Godiva  
and her naked ride through Coventry.  
But why did she do this?  
And where does the story come from?

The Herbert, Coventry

# Tip 7: Make it Flow

- Mix up long and short sentences
- Don't start sentences with –ing words

Example:

Having eaten our lunch, the boat sailed for Calais.

- Read it out loud



# Tip 8: Be Clear, Not Clever

- Don't scare people off



Brading Roman  
Villa, Isle of Wight

# Tip 8: Be Clear, Not Clever

- Use simple language

## Example:

- *upside-down* instead of *inverted*
- *every day* instead of *on a daily basis*

# Tip 9: Be Accurate

- Check your spelling, grammar and punctuation
- Ask someone else to check it too!

# Tip 9: Be Accurate



# Tip 9: Be Accurate



# Tip 9: Be Accurate

