

The kindest cut: Trimming to fit

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Slash and burn

- Keep the main point/ the “new news”
- Keep the explainer
- Keep the “talker” part
- Keep the margin of error/study parameters
- Cut repetitive or unnecessary quotes – but keep he said/she said
- Cut unnecessary background; summarize necessary background
- Cut esoteric or who-cares info

An inch or two

- Trim unnecessary, repetitive or lengthy quotes
- Concisely summarize background information
- Trim excess or unnecessary detail

Beware!

- Make sure that you haven't cut a first reference. If you find that you have done so, either reinstate the name farther down or cut the following references.
- Don't leave 'em hanging: Make sure the story ends – as in, on a period – but also make sure that it ends at a stopping point. Don't end on a graf that says “But he indicated there would be changes in the future.” And if something's alluded to farther up, make sure it gets explained.

Briefly

- Just the facts
- Make the point in the lede
- Cut the anecdotal lede
- Cut the quotes
- Summarize (This may mean a tight rewrite of several graf)

Squeeze your information!

- Make use of your cutlines: Put dropped quotes or extra information into photo captions.
- Have a graphic or box? Delete duplicated information.
- Use the Web. If you've had to cut a large chunk out of an important story, put the whole story on your paper's Web site and put in a refer to let people know it's there.