

Tips to uncover the best story:

Finding Stories Right Under Your Nose

--Look at life--and news events--upside down, backwards and sideways. Develop a nonlinear mind

--Take walks. Explore your world. Really look at and listen to the things and people you pass. Remember, there's no news in a newsroom.

--Question the obvious.

--Recapture the driving curiosity you had when you were 3 years old. Everything was examined with a "Why?" and "How?" back then. Don't give that up.

--Take up a new hobby. Stretch your known world and meet new people and learn new things. It will strengthen your ability to be open to new things.

--Small is beautiful. Think small, it's more universal than big. Readers can identify with a person or a thing. Writing about the human condition doesn't mean interviewing an army of people.

--Always keep your reporter's eyes and ears open. Everything in life is a story. Try to write a little something every day on a person, place or thing you noticed. Don't sleepwalk through life.

--Follow people's passion. Everyone has something they are passionate about. Draw that out of people. There's an unsung maverick around every corner.

--Be humble. Arrogance inhibits curiosity. Blessed are the nobodies, for theirs is the kingdom of quality features. How bout that guy on CBS who points a finger at a phone book every week and finds a story?

--Avoid following the pack and thinking like the pack. Look for something absurd or obscure in every situation.

--Keep a list of random thoughts and observations and story ideas. Sometimes the best ideas are fleeting and they never revisit.

--Read a variety of things. Go to the library and pay attention to what's on the "Recent Books" shelf. Look at magazines, newsletters, bulletin boards, signs, graffiti, anything containing the alphabet.

--Find new twists to boring stories. Challenge yourself to write in a new way.

--Have fun with your work. Your joy and passion will automatically transfer to your stories. Really.

--Ask dumb questions. You get interesting answers.

--Ask to see things. If you go to the theater or a museum and find something particularly interesting, it's a story. Others will think so too.

--Make new friends. Sometimes, the best conversations are in line at the grocery store or on the plane or in a line. You never know who you're going to meet and you never know how interesting their world is.