Gems of Advice About Good Writing

Write for Your Readers.
Who are you? Who are they?
Who is this story about? Who does what to whom in this story? Who are the actors/characters of the story?
What do you want to tell about them?

Banish Passive Construction.
If you know who creates the action, then you can let the subjects of your stories and your sentences do things, not just be. Passive voice usually hides the subject.

Use Strong Verbs.
The same old words bore readers. Lively up your work with what people do: verbs. Seek out and destroy adverbs. Wherever you see an adverb, you are likely to find a judgment being made and a weak verb cowering beside it.

Waste No Words.
Make every word count. Throw out the words that mean nothing and add nothing. Take out the jargon, the hyperbole, the fat AP vocabulary.

Avoid Clichés Like the Plague.
See? It sounds pretty stupid in print, doesn't it?

Be Specific.
Not just who, what, where, why, when and how, but what color was it? What did it smell like? What kind of music or noise did you hear? Why do your readers care? What did the people in your story do, exactly? You need detailed, accurate information.

Now, Simplify.
Study your notes. You know which parts of your story have to be there. Those are your "gotta have its." You should be able to write a bulleted outline based on your main points. If you don't have any main points, you need more reporting.

Protect Your Quotes.
Quotes are the gems of your story, your punch lines. Quotes lose their punch if you give away too much in the set up. Set up quotes for the drama of what is said. And if nothing dramatic is said, why are you using that quote?

All Writing is Rewriting.
Your first draft is a beginning, not a finished product. Read aloud and listen to the story. Replace passive voice with active verbs. Take out extra words. Delete or rephrase boring quotes (but keep the attribution, even if you paraphrase what someone said). Keep on improving, and never be satisfied.