

WEEKLY NEWS LEADER

Drug profits fund terrorism

DEA says meth ring sent money to Mideast groups

WASHINGTON — Federal authorities have amassed evidence for the first time that an illegal drug operation in the United States was funneling proceeds to Middle East terrorist groups like Hezbollah.

Evidence gathered by the Drug Enforcement Administra-

tion is being used to support terrorism in the Middle East, according to a report by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) on Monday.

The report, which was obtained by The Associated Press, says that a methamphetamine ring in the Midwest involving members of the Eastern descent shipping money to terrorist groups, officials said.

DEA officials said the U.S. should seek a return of U.S. inspectors before any

pseudophedrine from Canada into the Midwest.

Officials said the smuggling went through two primary Midwest locations, Chicago and Detroit, and involved several men with ties to Jordan, Yemen, Lebanon and other Middle East countries. There is no evidence any of the money was connected to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, officials said.

Pseudophedrine is used in some popular cold and allergy

"Drug sales in United States going in parallel support terrorism organizations Middle East

ASA HUTCHINS THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

REPORTERS and EDITORS

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ANOTHER STEP IN THE



Transplant patients taken ill

Death spurs lo spread of West

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATLANTA — A heart transplant recipient's preliminary diagnosis of West Nile virus is raising questions about how the disease spreads and whether blood donors could unknowingly transmit it.

The recipient is one of four received organs transplanted from a recent victim. One died of encephalitis, the most serious consequence of the virus, according to federal health officials.

Federal experts and the American Society of Transplant Recipients are working to determine whether the virus is a potential threat. "We have not seen for some time the possibility that someone could get this virus through blood or organ donation," said a spokesman for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Blood banks and organ donors are being screened for the virus. Officials with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said that blood banks in the United States have been informed of the virus after receiving the kidney and liver of a woman who died of encephalitis in early August after a car accident, CDC said.

Three of the four developed encephalitis, the inflammation of the brain and central nervous system.

He's a friendly survivor

Steve Row

Journalism, Education Coordinator

'Life is too good to feel down' he says

BY STACY HAWKINS ADAMS
Times-Dispatch Staff Writer

Edward Sando-Miller came to the United States six years ago with a stomach swollen from malnutrition, a hole where his nose should be

Chesterfield County, now carries about 300 pounds on his 5-foot-tall frame. He has become accustomed to the nose and upper lip he received during reconstructive surgery in September 1996, and to the scar tissue that surrounds those features.

Edward's disfigured face haunted

Richmond Times-Dispatch

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

Being a journalist involves more than being able to write. Being a journalist involves being able to observe, ask questions, interpret or distill information and communicate with others. Whether writing a news story or a feature story or a sports story or a personality profile, a journalist must bring several skills and attributes together at once. When Richmond Newspapers Inc. created the position of journalism education coordinator in 1992, one of the first ideas we had was to create a guide that would explain some of the basics of print journalism to young reporters and editors. This guide would serve to help young journalists improve the skills they need to complete their assignments and duties successfully. The program concluded its 10th year in the 2001-02 school year, and the guide now is being updated. We hope that scholastic newspaper advisers and student journalists will find a good explanation here of some of the basic elements of journalism and what being a journalist involves.

Many thanks to Mary Anne Pikrone, associate Virginia editor, and Marggie Graves, assistant Flair editor, for helping with this update.

Richmond Times-Dispatch

NEWS AND THE NEWS STORY

One of the first things a young journalist must understand is what constitutes news. News is information. News is an account of a recent event that interests readers. News is an accurate and timely recounting of happenings, discoveries, opinions and matters of any sort that affect or interest readers.

This means that news stories are all around you — in the people who do interesting things, events that are taking place, fads and trends of the moment, and issues that affect your life and the lives of your friends and family.

Among the many definitions of news:

- ▲ News is everything that happens, the inspiration or cause of happenings and the result of such happenings.
- ▲ News consists of all current activities that are of general human interest, and the most newsworthy is that which interests the most readers.
- ▲ News is whatever readers want to know about. Anything that enough people want to read is news, so long as it does not violate the canons of good taste and laws of libel.
- ▲ News is anything that people will talk about. The more it will excite comment, the greater its value.
- ▲ News is a report that makes a person nudge a stranger on the bus and say, “Hey, did you see this?”

Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter.

Thomas Jefferson

A good news story is interesting, informative and filled with facts and detail. A good news story is an accurate account of an event and an accurate recounting what someone said or did.



“Straight” news or “hard” news stories answer specific questions mainly about events that happened recently, such as the results of the recent student government or class elections.

Feature stories are more descriptive in nature and allow the reader to meet and get to know an interesting person or feel as if he or she is in the midst of the event being reported.

If a reporter or editor had to define what constitutes news, he or she might say it’s a departure from the norm. If you think about the news events you read about or saw on television in the past week, nearly all of them represented departures from the norm. Even continuing news stories — conflict in the Middle East, the national economy, the state legislature’s meeting — contain information that constitutes a departure from the norm.

Where do we find news?

The basic components of news are people, events, trends and issues. Any or all of those components are necessary elements of what constitutes news.

People who do interesting things are good subjects of stories. A student might collect old movie photos or posters; a dancer might have been accepted into a prestigious arts school or a national dance company summer school; a student might baby-sit for handicapped children or assist the elderly.

Current events — from the classroom level to the school system level — lead to a wide variety of stories, and you must keep up with what’s happening at your school and your community. Remember that reporting about events must be timely. Your editor or adviser will help you in determining the timeliness of the event about which you want to write.

Trends (or fads) provide interesting feature story ideas. Not every trend is worth reporting, but an occasional feature story on the latest trend or group of trends might be interesting. You might even talk with students at other schools to determine how widespread a fad or trend is.

Issues often provide the most interesting topics for stories, especially

The window to the world can be uncovered by a newspaper.

Stanislaw Lem



feature stories. Race relations, sex and birth control, AIDS, religion, health and stress — these are topics of considerable interest to youth and their families. These also are among the most sensitive for a school paper to report on, so special care must be taken on how to approach such stories.

For example, the problem of teen drinking and driving could be approached from the perspective of a survivor of an automobile accident in which alcohol was a factor, or from the perspective of a student who does volunteer work for a rescue squad, or the newly elected president of the local SADD chapter at school.

THE NATURE OF A NEWS STORY

The main elements of a news story (but not the only elements) are interest, timeliness, proximity and familiarity.

If a topic interests you, chances are good that it will interest your readers. Remember, however, that “interesting” does not always mean “important.”

Although staging the theatrical production might be interesting to a particular group of students at your school, the mere fact that the play is being staged could be of only limited interest to all students at school — unless you find an unusual aspect of the production to report.

For instance, suppose one of the characters in the play is blind. How does the actor or actress prepare for this role? Perhaps the director of the play is a student who adapted the play to change the time period and rewrote portions to suit the different time period. How did that student decide on such changes, and how did he or she accomplish the task?

Timeliness is important, too. The objective of a newspaper is to provide as much current news as possible, given the obstacles of deadlines and distribution. If you just found out about an interesting event that took place

The public have an insatiable curiosity to know everything. Except what is worth knowing. Journalism, conscious of this, and having tradesmen-like habits, supplies their demands.

Oscar Wilde



several months ago, you probably could not write about that event and make it interesting to many readers.

However, if a person involved in the event several months ago plans to undertake a similar project in the future, an interesting story might develop, and the story could refer to the earlier event or project.

Proximity means that the story takes place near where the reader lives, or, in this case, goes to school. You might know of an interesting event involving one of your cousins, who goes to another school in another community, but readers of your school's paper want to know more about the interesting events that take place in your school. You can keep up with events that are going on in schools other than your own, through friends in those schools, but your paper is about your school, so always be aware of what is going on at your school first. And look for opportunities to write stories about students in your school who are accomplishing things outside of school — club sports, hobbies, part-time jobs, volunteer work, and so forth. The student from your school who wins a local photography contest sponsored by an outside organization is worth writing about in your paper.

Familiarity means that the reader can identify with, or is at least somewhat familiar with, the subject of the news story. Your readers are other students, so they presumably are interested in reading about what's going on in organizations and clubs in which they participate, as well as clubs in which their friends participate. They want to read about their friends and issues they talk about, as well as about people they might not know and what they think about the same issues.

Other elements or values of news stories:

Disruption of the status quo (or potential disruption); in other words, a departure from the norm.

Conflict (tension, surprise).

Progress (triumph, achievement).

Disaster (defeat, destruction).

*The man who reads
nothing at all is better
educated than the
man who reads nothing
but newspapers.*

Thomas Jefferson



- Consequence** (causal effects).
- Eminence** (prominence, notoriety).
- Novelty** (unusual, uniqueness).
- Human interest** (emotional background).
- Sex** (human relationships).
- General interest** (other: animals, old people, children, hobbies).

THE FIVE W's

In order to provide information about people, events, trends and issues, and in order to take into account interest, timeliness, proximity and familiarity, a reporter should remember to answer six basic questions in his or her news story — the five W's and an H. These provide the core of information essential to the story.

Who is the subject? Who said something, or who did something? How do you spell the person's name? How old is the person? What year in school?

What happened? What did the person do, or what is the person doing? This usually is the point of the story, such as the track star getting the scholarship, or the piano student being selected for the special arts camp.

Why did the person say or do what he did? Why did the event transpire the way it did? Why is the story being written? This is the logical follow-up to the "what" part of a story and often goes into greater detail. Why has there been a sudden surge in enrollment in Latin? Why were school dress codes changed?

When is the story taking place? Did the person win the award last week or last year? When were the officers elected? How long had the geology class been prospecting for gold as part of a project when the students found some?

Where is the story taking place? Is the subject being written about because something he or she does at school or in the community? In church

*Get your facts first,
and then you can
distort them as
much as you please.*

Mark Twain

*Reporters thrive on
the world's misfor-
tune. For this rea-
son they often take
an indecent pleas-
ure in events that
dismay the rest of
humanity.*

Russell Baker



or in the after-school job? Have you identified where the subject lives?

How does the person do what he is doing? How did something happen? This, along with the “why,” is the main explanatory part of the story.

In most scholastic newspapers, these six elements can be ranked in importance. Most stories would start with the “who” and the “what,” followed closely by “how” and “why,” although answers to those questions are not always obtained easily.

The least important, especially in a story about a past event, such as a sporting event or social event, is “when” and “where.” This means that stories in the school paper never begin with “On Monday, Oct. 14, at 2 p.m. in the school auditorium...”

HOW TO WRITE GREAT LEADS WITHOUT USING THE INVERTED PYRAMID

David Knight
Public Information Director
Lancaster County, S.C., public schools

- (1) Great leads have great first words. Never use the name of the school or the school mascot or “students” as the first word of any story. If you can't find a great first word, at least find a great first phrase.
- (2) Great narrative leads show and don't tell. Use powers of description and use examples rather than abstract, general, essay-like openings.
- (3) By showing the reader something, rather than telling, the writing will offer a better understanding of the story and will be more interesting. Show-don't-tell involves using looks, sounds and senses, actions and others' reactions.
- (4) Narrative leads must be true to the story. Don't trick the reader with a lead that has little or nothing to do with the what the story is about. The lead must be honest.
- (5) Never make up a narrative lead. You can't go inside a person's head by guessing what the person was thinking; you can't make up a scene without having

GETTING AND USING INFORMATION TO WRITE THE STORY

Each story is different, and each reporter's approach to the story can be different. However, basic rules about writing a news story should be followed.

When you write, use simple language that resembles conversational language — almost. Most stories are written in language that is several notches below formal English and maybe a notch or two above



conversational English.

Use short sentences, and write in short paragraphs. Most paragraphs consist of only one sentence, sometimes two, rarely three, never four.

If the story is a straight news story, use the “inverted pyramid” shape of relating events, with the most important information at the top of the story and the least important at the bottom. If the story is a feature story, the inverted pyramid shape could be used, but you probably would use as strong an ending as a beginning, so the shape of the story would more closely resemble an hourglass. Whichever way you choose, organization is important.

First, **organize the information for the story**. Take a little time to jot down the main points and decide the order that they should follow. Some reporters find that outlining their information is helpful.

Remember that the process of writing a story for the newspaper does not necessarily progress in the same order as how you obtained the information.

In other words, your story probably will not be written in chronological order. You may change the sequence of facts and information around to make the story “flow” more smoothly.

Organizing also means determining which information to use and which to discard. You do not have to use all the material you have gathered for a story. Some information gained in an interview might be interesting, but when you get down to writing, you might find that it does not relate to the main point

been there or because you think that's how it might have been. Ask many questions to fill in little details. Ask for recollections. Ask for descriptions. Ask for feelings.

(6) Narrative leads always have a real lead somewhere nearby. The “nut graf” or reason for the story must be high up in the story (fourth, fifth or sixth paragraph) and can't be buried way down. If the narrative opening goes on and on without getting anywhere, the reader begins to wonder, “What's the point?” and loses interest.

(7) Great leads, and all great writing, do not rely on adjectives or adverbs. Use the power of the language by finding strong nouns and strong verbs. Use exciting single words, and not series of dull words.

(8) If the worst way to deliver news or information is via the paragraph, we'd better make our paragraphs as good as they can possibly be. No wasted words, no false images, no made-up information, and all in no more than 30 words, probably in no more than one sentence.



of the story.

Do not feel compelled to use all the information you gather. Stories become too long, and the reader loses interest.

Next, **write a forceful or interesting first paragraph** or two, or “lead.” Such a paragraph can contain some of the five W’s, but it does not have to.

But the paragraph must make the reader think, “I’d like to know more about this.”

The lead of a story usually is its first two to four paragraphs, and if the reader’s first reaction to those paragraphs is “So what?” then the reader will go on to another story or, worse than that, will put down the paper.

You can determine the lead of your story by asking yourself what the single most important or interesting aspect of the story is, the one thing that grabs attention first and holds it.

Some reporters start off by writing a lead and then proceeding with the story, while some write the body of a story first and then come back to develop the best lead. Try both approaches to see which works better for you.

If you continue to find it difficult to start the story, talk with your editor or adviser about it. As you explain the story, you probably will begin to see what the most important elements are.

Next, **quote people throughout the story**. While some shorter stories can be written without a single quotation, feature and news feature stories must contain plenty of quotations to be interesting. The way a person explains things or expresses himself or herself often contributes to the story

WRITING LEADS FOR NEWS STORIES

Roy Peter Clark
Poynter Institute

(1) Keep leads short. Even a long story can flow from one carefully crafted sentence.

(2) Never forget the news. If it is not in the first paragraph, put the news in the “nut graf” near the top of the story, and certainly before the jump.

(3) Give readers a reason to continue. Even if the lead is indirect, you have a responsibility to include elements that dramatize the news, foreshadow events, create a sense of foreboding or anticipated surprise.

(4) Chronological narrative often works. You can begin the story with the hard news, but look for an opportunity to retell events in chronological order.

(5) Keep the lead honest. Don’t begin with the most startling or sensational anecdote if it is not organically related to the news.

(6) Get a good quote high in the story. Shoot for the second, third or fourth graf.



and makes the difference between a dull story and a good one.

Make sure the quotations accurately reflect what the subject said. Seek a variety of sources for your stories, not just your best friends. The newspaper must be inclusive, not exclusive, and you should attempt to incorporate references to and quotations by the widest possible mix of students.

While newspaper staff members often belong to other school organizations and might even be in leadership positions, the newspaper should not appear to be reporting only on activities in which its staff members (or their friends) participate. This means that reporters should not write stories about activities or teams in which they participate and should not use their best friends as their only sources of quotes and information.

Next, **be sure that your story is objective**. Do not inject your opinion into the story. Your writing does not need to analyze something or to express an opinion about whether the student artwork was beautiful or whether everybody had a good time at the concert.

Be sure to **give a balanced view** of a topic, especially a matter in controversy. If you are reporting on an issue of concern to students, be sure you include the views of administrators. Don't be satisfied with just one side to a story, even though that is an interesting viewpoint. Don't hesitate to talk to anyone who can help you — and the reader — understand all the different aspects of a topic.

The information and quotations you obtain from other people and put into your story will help the reader draw his or her own conclusion about the story.

Next, remember that **you are not a booster** or cheerleader for your school, your school friends or your school activities. A reporter is not part of a

(7) There is no such thing as a "delayed" lead. Your lead begins with the first word of the first sentence.

(8) Place emphatic words at the beginning and especially at the end of the first paragraph.

(9) Don't always swing for the fences. Settle for a clean single to center. On bad days, a bunt will do. Throw yourself in front of a pitch — anything to get on base.

(10) When you find a good lead that violates any or all of these rules, use it.



news story. A reporter reports. A reporter must not take sides in favor of anything, and this includes praising something the reporter thinks is worthy of praise.

For example, your story does not congratulate the students tapped for National Honor Society; your story reports their names, which is congratulations enough.

Remember that whether flattering or unflattering to school groups or activities, your reporting must be honest, accurate and fair.

Last, **be sure all facts are correct**. Check and double-check dates and numbers and other factual information. Check and double-check spelling of names. Use correct courtesy titles (if your paper uses courtesy titles), and use complete identifications of people quoted or referred to in stories.

When turning in your story, for example, make sure the editor knows that you checked the spelling of an unusual name by marking “c.q.” after the name.

And this important reminder: Never end a story by offering praise to the subject or encouraging support for the subject or urging the reader to think how nice or how good the subject is. Your story does not need this kind of artificial ending. End the story with a quote instead.

Beware of the half truth. You may have gotten hold of the wrong half.

Anonymous

INTERVIEWING

The Heart of Your Work as a Reporter

Most information that you put in your news stories will come from interviews. Interviewing styles vary from reporter to reporter, and you probably will settle into a comfortable style pretty quickly. You should not be combative or rude, nor should you try to put words in your subject’s mouth or guess what your subject is or was thinking.

Relax and use the opportunity to talk with people you otherwise



might not meet. Ask questions about what they do, how they do it and why. Writing down a few important questions (perhaps six or eight, not 20 or 30) before the interview is a good idea. Asking an adult for a resume is a good idea. If a resume is not available, asking for biographical information — age, address, phone number, birthplace, hobbies and interests — is a good idea.

Face-to-face interviews are the best kind and should be undertaken whenever possible. A list of questions written down and placed in a coach's mailbox, or a list of questions written down and distributed to all English class students, does not constitute an interview.

After the first few interviews, you will find that you are not uncomfortable meeting strangers and then writing down what they say and what you observe.

You should remember to listen to your subject carefully and look at the person all the time. Don't yawn. Don't chew gum. Don't appear nervous or bored.

As you listen, notice such details as the sound of your subject's voice, the rhythm or pattern of speech, the kind of accent, drawl or inflection. Does the person talk very quickly or pause often to think about what to say? Does the person make eye contact? You also might take note of the kind of clothes worn, the kind of gestures made while talking, other mannerisms, even the color of hair and eyes.

These details would not necessarily be used in a straight news story, and they might not be used in a feature story, but they can be used effectively

SOME ADVICE FROM UNKNOWN EDITORS ABOUT STARTING STORIES

Steve Row

(1) If the first seven words of your first sentence don't at least indicate what the story is about, you'd better start over. If you haven't grabbed the reader so tightly by the end of the third or fourth paragraph (the lead) that he or she cannot do anything but continue, you'd better start over.

(2) Don't answer the Who-What-Why-When-Where-How questions in the first sentence of the story, or even the first two sentences. But don't go past the first five or six paragraphs to answer them, either.

(3) Avoid the "voice of God" lead, which uses general, abstract or summary-type information as almost a kind of topic sentence or thesis statement (much like a research paper). If you start a story with "Teenagers all around the world have been dealing with stress in a variety of different ways for many years," your reader reacts with a "Yeah? So?" and quickly moves on to something else, or puts the paper down. Lead with specifics, lead with real people.

15 BASIC TIPS ON NEWS WRITING
FOR YOUNG JOURNALISTS

Steve Row

(1) Decide what the story is really about and put that at the top. If you are doing a profile story on another student, you don't begin with "Susan Smith was born on . . ."

(2) Unless the story is about something historical, you do not begin any story with "On Monday, Oct. 14, at 2 p.m. in the school auditorium. . ."

(3) As a reporter, you have the opportunity to not write about events in chronological order. If the most important part of the event happened near the end, that belongs at the beginning of the story, not near the end. If the most important part of the interview came in the middle, that belongs at the top of the story, not the middle.

(4) Any time you can find more than one word to say something, use the simplest, clearest, most precise word. Example: use "said," not "commented" or "stated."

(5) Write to be understood, not to be admired. Write for the reader, not for yourself. If you do this, the reader will admire your writing.

(6) Avoid using too many adverbs and adjectives. Avoid "very" and "really." Avoid starting sentences with "There are," "There is," "It is."

(7) "News story," "feature story" and "sports story" do not have "I" in them. Instead, they have "eye" in them, because the reporter must be able to see what has happened and who said what and who did what to be able to report that in the story.

(8) Because of that, all news writing must be absolutely true, absolutely accurate.

(9) Generally, news stories, feature stories and sports stories are written in the past tense and in the active voice.

(10) Generally, news stories, feature stories and sports stories are written in one- or two-sentence paragraphs.

*You can never get
all the facts from just
one newspaper, and
unless you have all
the facts, you cannot
make proper judgments
about what is
going on.*

Harry S Truman



in some stories, such as profiles. Avoid cluttering the story with too many insignificant details, however.

Reporters can use tape recorders to ensure accuracy of interviews, but do not rely on a tape recorder. Rely on your handwritten notes.

Telephone interviews are necessary, and while you can't see your subject, you still can take note of how the person is talking.

The most important thing about interviews is to make sure the information you have from the subject is correct. Don't hesitate to ask your subject to repeat anything you do not hear clearly or understand. Don't hesitate to ask the subject to spell his or her name or spell out terms or phrases with which you are not familiar.

It is far better to know that you have accurate information than to be unsure.

And if you encounter information in your notes that you do not understand, and there is no way to clarify it, do not use it in the story. A reporter does not have to empty his notebook to complete a story, especially if some of his notes are unclear.

Also, don't hesitate to call the subject back a second or third time to get clarification of something you are unsure of. Did you forget to ask something important? Call back. Most people are understanding and do not object to follow-up questions; in fact, most people appreciate your attempt to make

(11) Quotes always start their own paragraphs.

(12) While you should not start a story with a quote, you can end a story with a quote. In fact, a quote is the best way to end a story. Stories do not end with a reporter's summary or conclusion or subjective comment.

(13) Because news, feature and sports stories are forms of information, they don't need underlining, bold face, italics, all capital letters or exclamation points for emphasis.

(14) Finish the story before you begin to think about a headline. If you try to write a headline before you write the story, your headline might cause your story to go in the wrong direction.

(15) You should be able to write a headline that generally describes the whole story from just the first four paragraphs. Those paragraphs are the lead of the story, and if they do not tell the reader what the whole story is about, they should be rewritten.

sure you have correct information.

SEEING YOUR STORY IN PRINT

Most student reporters' stories will be published in the school paper if they adhere to the basics. To make sure, however, you must follow your paper's procedures. Situations vary from newspaper to newspaper, so you should find out from your editor or adviser how stories proceed from idea to publication.

Because not all stories in the paper are assigned, you should discuss an idea or proposal you have with the editor before starting your story. Do a little homework and make some notes to yourself before suggesting a proposal.

Why would this idea make a good story for the newspaper? How should this story be approached? Whom should you interview for the story? Be prepared to defend the idea.

Once you have discussed the idea with the editor, you might be asked to submit a story proposal (depending on your paper's policy or practice), which consists of a few sentences about the subject, ideas on how to approach the subject and ideas for art or photographs.

Deadlines will be imposed, and the editor will talk about deadlines with you. You should be realistic when you suggest how long it might take you to get information and interviews for the story, and how long it will take to write the story. Once a deadline is established, do not delay, and do not go past the deadline.

Story preparation rules vary, but generally when you submit a story, it must be typed, double- or triple-spaced. Leave wide margins on the sides and at the top and bottom of the page.

Unless your paper has a different procedure, put your name at the

By giving us the opinions of the uneducated, [journalism] keeps us in touch with the ignorance of the community.

Oscar Wilde



top of every page. Use a “slug” (a one-word description of the story, such as “PIANIST” or “FOOTBALL”) on every page along with your name. Number each page, and put “MORE” at the bottom of all pages except the last one, which should be marked “-30-”.

Also, keep a copy of the story for yourself. You will find it helpful to check the printed version with the editor’s editing against your original copy.

FEATURE WRITING

Mollie Gore
Richmond Times-Dispatch

WHAT IS A FEATURE STORY?

A feature might be or might not be related to a news event. It generally involves an element of human interest. Unlike a news story, you don’t need to cram the who-what-why-when-where-how into the lead, although these questions should be answered relatively high up in the story.

*Journalists do not
live by words alone,
although sometimes
they have to eat
them.*

Adlai E. Stevenson

FEATURE VS. NEWS APPROACH

Feature writing requires a lighter, more creative touch than straight news writing. Whereas the primary purpose of a news story is to inform, a feature can also entertain, interpret, amuse, surprise. Besides human interest, feature stories often include elements of incongruity or the unexpected.

FEATURE WRITING TECHNIQUES

A feature assignment usually gives the writer more literary flexibility. You can be descriptive, use anecdotes, play on words, surprise the reader.



FEATURE WRITING TIPS

The feature writing style can be used in many assignments: news-features (stories related to news events), personality profiles, sidebars to main stories, short-brights, social issue stories, lengthier in-depth stories. Keep these tips in mind when writing features:

(1) The use of color and detail

Set the scene. Put the reader there. Describe how things look, feel, smell.

(2) Good use of quotation

Quotes vary the pace of the story. Plus, a person's own words add drama and emotion.

(3) Use of anecdotes (the story within a story)

Many features include anecdotes in which the subject being interviewed might share a story or personal experience to illustrate a point or provide background. These can easily be woven into a story and sometimes might even provide the writer with a good lead.

(4) Length

A good feature can be long or short. Try to give your story a definite beginning, middle and end. Surprise endings often work well with features.

(5) Rewriting

With features, it's easy to get carried away, so don't go overboard with unnecessary adjectives or adverbs. Always proofread your work and rewrite. More than any other kind of news writing, feature stories benefit from several rewrites, time permitting.

ELEMENTS OF FEATURE WRITING

- (1) *Vision*
- (2) *Focus*
- (3) *Form*
- (4) *Ideas*
- (5) *Grabs*
- (6) *People*
- (7) *Color*
- (8) *Explanation*
- (9) *Judgment*

William Ruehlmann
"Stalking the
Feature Story"



GETTING INFORMATION FOR & STRUCTURING THE FEATURE STORY

Steve Row

(1) Remember that feature stories are mainly about people, not things or institutions or even events. Always keep people foremost in mind when collecting information and writing the story.

(2) Identify at least three sources for information, and talk to them face-to-face.

(3) Ask “why” and “how” questions, not questions that can be answered “yes” or “no.” Ask contrasting questions. Ask followup questions. Be sure all questions focus on what the story is about.

(4) Be observant about scenes and surroundings, personal mannerisms and characteristics. This lets you put good detail into story.

(5) Ask your best source if he or she can recommend someone else for additional information. Always tell sources you might call back to get additional information. Don’t be shy about calling back.

(6) After collecting all information, evaluate what you have and determine what the most interesting aspect of the information is. This contributes to the lead of the story.

(7) After collecting all information, begin to rank pieces of information in your notes, from most important to least important. Identify information you want to include in story, and don’t hesitate to discard information that is of little value to the story you want to write.

(8) Find the best quote in your notes and put it in the second or third or fourth paragraph. Work hard to develop an interesting first sentence or two ahead of that quote, without using the quote but still indicating what the story is going to be about.

(9) Use many quotes, work hard on transitions between quotes

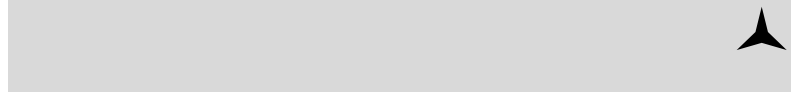
*What is everybody's
business is nobody's
business — except the
journalist's.*

Joseph Pulitzer



and between speakers, make sure story maintains reader interest from top to bottom.

(10) Find the next best quote in your notes, especially if it is a summary-type or forward-looking-type quote, and use it to end the story.



PHOTOGRAPHY, ART AND GRAPHICS

When you consider story ideas, think about the kind of photographs or artwork that could accompany the story. Take note of situations, people or things that strike you as colorful or photogenic. Photographs can accompany stories, or they can be published by themselves.

While you might find it relatively easy to come up with an idea for a picture to accompany your story, you might find it more difficult to come up with an idea for an enterprise photo.

But don't ignore what seems obvious to you. Although you are used to seeing a classmate in a colorful leotard in gymnastics practice every day, remember that a good picture of her might be new and interesting to others who don't see her in this setting.

The same is true for the amateur rocket club outing every Saturday, or the car wash fund raiser. You might think of these activities as routine, but others might find a picture or two interesting.

You also might have an idea for an illustration that can accompany your story. If you have access to a talented artist, don't hesitate to ask for that person's help in developing artwork or graphics to accompany the story. Avoid using computer clip art, however.

*Fact that is fact every
day is not news; it's
truth. We report
news, not truth.*

Linda Ellerbee



As editor of your school newspaper, you have one of the most invisible visible jobs in the school.

Your job is visible, because your work results in a product that is available to the entire student body, the faculty and administration and parents several times a year.

Your job is invisible, because the school newspaper carries the names of so many contributors and participants that the reader probably won't understand that one person could be responsible for it all. And many school newspaper editors also must share the spotlight with their journalism teachers or newspaper advisers.

This section is designed to help school newspaper editors as they supervise the publication of their newspapers.

SETTING UP A NEWS PAPER OPERATION

Whether chosen in a vote by class members or selected by the journalism teacher/newspaper adviser, the high school newspaper editor generally is given considerable responsibility for supervising the content and appearance of the school newspaper. The editor also might be a student who has expressed some interest in pursuing journalism as a course of study in college and as a possible career.

Before taking any steps to begin supervising the paper, however, the editor should meet with the journalism teacher/newspaper adviser to determine what the editor's duties and responsibilities are. And several important questions must be answered.

- ▲ Will the newspaper be produced as part of a regular class, with stories graded by the teacher, or will the newspaper be

Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets.

Napoleon

produced as an extracurricular activity, with stories completed as extra credit, or no credit?

▲ Will the editor be responsible for making all story assignments, will stories be assigned by the main editor and section editors, will stories be assigned by the editor and the journalism teacher/newspaper adviser together, or will the stories be assigned by only the journalism teacher/newspaper adviser?

▲ Is the newspaper editor expected to be the final editor on all stories, will the journalism teacher/newspaper adviser be the final editor, or will such responsibilities be shared?

▲ Will your newspaper have a copy editor, or even a copy editing staff? Is the newspaper editor also expected to be one of the newspaper reporters?

▲ What role, if any, does the school principal or other administrator have in approving the content of the newspaper and its stories?

Once questions such as these are answered, the editor can begin the task of being an editor.

Once a newspaper touches a story, the facts are lost forever, even to the protagonists.

Norman Mailer

STAFF ORGANIZATION

The size of your journalism class, along with the objectives of the journalism teacher/newspaper adviser, can help determine how the newsroom is organized. Some classes contain both first-year and advanced students,



while other classes separate beginning and advanced students.

In smaller journalism classes, the journalism teacher might want to be sure that each class member learns all aspects of journalism - news writing, feature writing, interviewing, copy editing, and so forth. Some journalism classes are large enough that students can develop specialties while still receiving general journalism instruction from the teacher and textbook.

If the class has enough students so a staff can be set up with specific responsibilities, here are some suggestions:

Name an assistant editor. This might be someone who also is interested in pursuing journalism as a career and who can take over in your absence. You might miss some school because of illness right at the time the next paper is to be published, for example. Someone else on the staff should be ready to step in. The assistant editor might be an underclassman, and his or her efforts might lead to appointment as editor for the coming year.

Name a copy editor. This is a person who has demonstrated skill in knowing good grammar and good journalism style. Having one person serve as copy editor will help the paper develop and maintain a consistency of style. The copy editor also might be responsible for writing headlines.

Name a sports editor. School athletics usually have more participants and followers than any other activity, and the sports pages usually are widely read. Make sure that the sports editor shows no favoritism toward any sport, however, and make sure the sports editor provides balanced coverage for all teams.

If your newspaper is financed through the sale of advertising and subscriptions, you also might consider appointing a **business manager**. This could be someone who is less interested in contributing stories to the newspaper on a regular basis and more interested in the business-related workings of the newspaper.

If the class size permits, you also might appoint a **news editor** or an **assignment editor**, whose responsibilities would include assigning and editing hard news stories; a **feature editor**, whose duties would include assigning and

I always turn to the sports section first. The sports section records people's accomplishments; the front page nothing but man's failures.

Earl Warren

editing feature stories and profiles, and a **layout and graphics editor**, who would be responsible for supervising all art, graphics and photography, as well as designing all pages.

Setting up a good staff organization is one of the most important duties that an editor has. In setting up a staff, however, remember that everyone does not necessarily get an editor's title. No newspaper has a staff of only editors.

Also remember that, after you know what your duties and responsibilities are, you need to communicate with your staff members to let them know what their duties and responsibilities are.

NEWSPAPER MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATIONS

The great enemy of clear language is insincerity. When there is a gap between one's real and one's declared aims, one turns as it were instinctively to long words and exhausted idioms, like a cuttlefish squirting out ink.

George Orwell

Whether you meet daily or every other day, your journalism class still comes together for only a short time each day, and this requires you to spend your time wisely. With the obligations and demands of your other classes in mind, you must make the most of the time you have with your staff.

You should establish times in the publication cycle for planning each issue, including brainstorming ideas, checking calendars for events and receiving information from staff members on possible stories to be included. You should set time aside at the end of the publication cycle to critique each issue. Critiquing helps point out the good and bad parts of the paper, but planning helps anticipate where the strengths and weaknesses of the paper will be, and how mistakes or weaknesses can be avoided. In between, editors and reporters must make the best use of a limited amount of time, so avoid wasting time by making sure assignments are clear and clearly understood, by identifying the focus of a story quickly, by finding the right sources for the story quickly and by adhering to all deadlines.

Creating a large assignment status board — showing when stories



were assigned, when drafts are due, when photos were assigned, when layouts will be prepared — is a good idea. Involve the entire staff in both planning and critiquing. If the staff is involved in the planning process, the paper will improve.

Staff communication isn't something that you can do once a year or once a semester and then forget. Staff communication must be done day by day, issue by issue, so that each staff member knows what the newspaper is trying to achieve.

You can conduct occasional staff meetings, you can write memorandums, and you can meet informally with one or two staff members at a time to get your message across. Be aware of the language you use in both written and spoken communications. Your written messages might appear to be harsher than you intend and harsher than your spoken messages.

NEWS PAPER MANAGEMENT EDITING

Editors' responsibilities vary from school to school, but generally the editor of the school newspaper is the last door through which the copy goes before it is published. If this is the case, any mistakes in grammar, style and format that are published are yours, and not those of your reporters. So pay careful attention to copy that crosses your desk.

A good editor does many things. He or she checks the way the story is written, to make sure that it conforms to good journalism style; considers the facts in the story to determine whether they "feel" right or wrong; and looks at the overall readability of the story, to make sure that it will be understood by the reader.

In short, a good editor makes both the writer and the paper look good by polishing the story.

While mathematics has a right answer and a wrong answer, and

*They kill good trees
to put out bad news-
papers.*

James G. Watt

*If one morning I
walked on top of the
water across the
Potomac River, the
headline that after-
noon would read:
"President Can't
Swim."*

Lyndon B. Johnson

grammar has a right way of saying and writing things and a wrong way, what works in newspaper writing and what doesn't work often is not as simple to determine.

That's why it is important to talk about stories when an assignment is made, before the story is written and turned in.

Any time an editor changes something important in a story — a quotation, for example, or a fact — without talking to the reporter, the editor is taking a big risk of making an error. Never assume. Always ask instead. It could be that the reporter left out a word unintentionally, or mistyped “now” instead of “not.”

As editor, you won't know whether the story as turned in reflects what the reporter intended to write unless you ask — that is, you won't know until someone brings an error to your attention, and you have to print a correction, which chips away at your newspaper's credibility.

Whose copy should be edited?

Everyone's. All the time.

The editing process actually begins with the reporters, who should go over their stories three, four and five times before turning them in. A reporter can write and rewrite the story and believe that it is the finest example of news writing ever created, only to have an editor find several mistakes.

Everyone is human, and all make mistakes. We know what we intended to write or type, but we might have mistyped, or we might have used language that obscures instead of illuminates. Readers can't read our minds. We must put everything on paper

10 TIPS FOR EDITING COPY AND CONFORMING TO STYLE

Steve Row

(1) Separate problem areas and read copy several times for each of these potential problems. EXAMPLES: Numbers (including dates, ages, quantities), punctuation, abbreviations, capitalization, spelling, grammar, subjective language, quotation, subject-verb agreement (singular with singular, plural with plural) and noun-pronoun agreement (singular with singular, plural with plural), length of sentences and paragraphs.

(2) Read the story aloud. If you begin to run out of breath before the end of the sentence, it is too long. If you cannot use voice inflection to make the sentence sound understandable, it probably is too confusing. If you do not understand what you just said out loud, the reader probably won't be able to understand it by looking at the words.

(3) Have an Associated Press Stylebook on the desk as you edit and proofread copy. If your



clearly, and that's where good editors come in.

A good editor:

- * Makes sure that all stories conform to the newspaper's style, beginning with little mechanical things such as abbreviations, capitalization, spelling, time references, names and places.

- * Makes sure that the story is understandable, is logical and leaves no significant questions unanswered.

- * Makes sure that the news stories are objective, the commentaries are fair, and the overall content of the newspaper reflects the truth, or as much of the truth can be determined.

However, a good editor does not:

- * Make changes in a story just to make changes.

- * Rewrite a story as he or she would have written it.

- * Criticize the writer openly because of omissions or errors and then expect cooperation from the writer to correct the error.

- * Delete the writer's descriptive prose, which often adds to the story, unless the descriptions stray over the line between news writing and commentary.

- * Delete all direct quotes, unless he or she doubts that the writer actually heard the speaker say those things.

- * Demand that the story fit a preconceived idea or notion of what the

school has its own stylesheet, have that handy, too. Use a dictionary, and above all, do not rely on a computer's spell-check as the first and only method of double checking your spelling.

(4) Do not be the last person to read your own copy before it goes to the printer.

(5) Be especially careful about inconsistency. Every story should use numbers the same way, every story should refer to students and adults the same way, every story should apply all style rules consistently from top to bottom, so that the style is the same from first page to last.

(6) Be suspicious of any story that doesn't make sense — or paragraph, or sentence or quote. This includes quotes that don't belong or that don't stay focused on, or relate directly to, the point of the story.

(7) Check each story for balance, fairness and completeness. If you have any unanswered questions after reading the story, the reader will have questions. If you are concerned about fair-

story should say, even if the events don't match the idea or notion.

* Show any bias toward or against the subject of a reporter's story.

* Show any bias toward or against a reporter.

The best editing is the least noticeable; that is, the really good editors are those who can make subtle changes in copy, almost undetectable by the writer, so that the writing conforms to good journalism style.

ness, the reader will have concerns.

(8) Be sure that news, features and sports stories are news, features and sports stories, and not some fuzzy blend of information, commentary and opinion.

(9) Be certain that the story supports the headline and the headline supports the story. If the football team is 2-6, the headline shouldn't read: "Cyclones on a roll this season."

(10) Strive for accuracy, objectivity, clarity, simplicity and precision in each sentence, paragraph and story. Follow journalistic rules above all others, including English rules and composition rules that might vary from journalism rules.

The most effective way to edit is to read a story all the way through once, to get the sense of it, then read it through a second time for spelling, grammar and style. Then read it through a third time, checking for flow of ideas, logic and other elements, as well as making sure your editing makes sense and answers all of your first questions. Be sure to check for numbers, check for consistency, check for loopholes.

If the edited version has to be retyped before going to the printer, read the final typed version — along with the reporter — to make sure that the story is what the reporter intended to write, and no typing errors crept into the copy.

NEWSPAPER MANAGEMENT CONTENT

The school newspaper should be a full and accurate record of the life of the school community.

Years ago, the school newspaper often was the only source of information on activities in the schools, but today daily and weekly newspapers routinely report on school activities, some PTA newsletters contain vast amounts of



information on students and activities, and even radio and television often report on high schools. The school newspaper still serves a vital function, however, because students often do not get the chance to see the local newspaper or the PTA newsletter.

The editor must make sure that the school newspaper is published with interesting, informative, timely stories. With most school newspapers published only four to 10 times a year, stories can quickly lose their timeliness and importance after several weeks.

As editor, you should focus on future events as much as possible. For example, your newspaper should devote more resources to the school play that is being produced a week after your next publication date than on the choral concert or football game that took place four weeks before publication. Old news events become older quickly.

You might consider this mix of stories: about 30 percent of the content should be devoted to past events, about 30 percent to future events, about 20 percent to people (profiles, for instance), and about 20 percent to issues (commentaries, issue-oriented center spreads).

Regarding potentially controversial stories: Work closely with your journalism teacher/newspaper adviser on sensitive stories or series of stories. Don't shy away from topics because they are controversial, but more important, don't exploit topics just because they are controversial. Don't publish controversial stories just to see what you can get away with.

A few words about commentary: Most school papers have a page for editorials, editorial cartoons and letters to the editor. However, many papers place staff members' commentaries and satires on other pages throughout the paper.

This kind of writing should be marked clearly as commentary, wherever it appears, and ideally should be grouped together on a page, perhaps the page opposite the editorial page. If the sports editor writes a sports column, that can be part of the sports pages, but if a staff member writes a commentary or a humorous column, that would be better placed in an "op-ed" setting

*Literature is the art
of writing something
that will be read
twice; journalism
what will be grasped
at once.*

Cyril Connolly

(the page opposite the main commentary or editorial page).

Just as a newspaper must make a clear distinction between advertising and news, so it should make a clear distinction between commentary and news.

And a final suggestion on content: If you as editor believe that the main function of the school newspaper is to provide news and information, you should have a policy on what constitutes news and information.

Some school newspapers routinely print poems, essays, original art and other creative efforts of students. However, because most schools have their own literary magazines, the school newspaper should not serve as an outlet for that kind of writing and art.

Regardless of the merits of the creative writing, publishing it in a school newspaper detracts from the basic purpose of the newspaper.

*All of us learn to
write by the second
grade, then most of
us go on to other
things.*

Bobby Knight
on reporters

NEWSPAPER MANAGEMENT - LAYOUT AND DESIGN

Page design is part of the editing process. Those who design the pages should understand the importance of story presentation — which stories have accompanying photographs or art, for instance, and which stories can be packaged with other stories because of similar themes or subjects.

A newspaper's success in communicating news and information to its readers depends greatly on the success of its editors and staff members in communicating with one another on these matters. Stories should be presented in such a way as to encourage reader interest and satisfy reader interest.

Designing a news page means using news judgment along with an eye for strong visual appeal. In planning a page, you should limit the focal point to one major element that gives the reader a place to start on the page.

Things to remember about design are **balance**, **white space** and **contrast**.



Do not try to **balance** stories perfectly (symmetrically) on a page. Effective balance is asymmetrical and keeps the reader moving from story to story on the page. The most important stories generally go at the top of a page, and the less important stories generally go at the bottom of a page. However, the bottom of a page also can be used to “anchor” a secondary visual element — a feature story with a picture, for instance.

White space is a powerful element in news page design, too, but uncontrolled or excessive white space can distract from the intended focal point and can steal attention from important news and pictures. If used correctly, white space can dramatize and provide emphasis around headlines, pictures and artwork and graphics.

Contrast is a key element to good page design. You can use regular and bold headlines near each other, large and small, one-line and two-line, and so forth. One large photograph or graphic can become a dominant element on the page, but a smaller photo or graphic can be used elsewhere on the page for contrast.

Another form of contrast is to place multi-column stories next to single-column stories — a one-column story next to a four-column story, or a one-column story between two two-column stories, for instance. Do not put two single-column or multi-column stories and headlines next to each other, a design shortcoming often called “tombstoning.”

Today’s news page design generally is done in a modular format, in which story spaces are single blocks, usually horizontal or square, rather than long vertical blocks, often with one-column “tails” of type. Multi-column stories “square off” on the bottom and generally do not wrap around other stories, although stories can wrap around accompanying sidebars, fact boxes, photos, graphics or illustrations.

As editor, you should remember that your newspaper’s design often is what gives it identity, even character and personality. Adhering closely to a set of design standards, based on your concept of what the paper should look like, will help provide that identity, character and personality. Consistency of

Television has a real problem. They have no page two. Consequently every big story gets the same play and comes across to the viewer as a really big, scary one.

Art Buchwald

I do not mean to be the slightest bit critical of TV newsmen, who do a superb job, considering that they operate under severe time constraints and have the intellectual depth of hamsters. But TV news can only present the "bare bones" of a story; it takes a newspaper, with its capability to present vast amounts of information, to render the story truly boring.

Dave Barry

design elements is important, a virtue, even a necessity.

While much page design will take place on a computer, page editors still should know how to use a grid or layout sheet for all layouts. The grid will show how many columns the page has, and this should be the guide for publication throughout the year.

You also should select three basic fonts for your typeface — one for the body copy, one for headlines and one for the nameplate (which also can be an art head.) Bylines could be in a fourth font, but they are better in the same style as either the headline or the body copy. Within the fonts, you can use medium and bold, Roman and italic, and different point sizes; this generally provides you with all the variety you need.

You also should determine whether your body copy will be set in justified type (even margins right and left) or ragged right margin. You should determine whether each word in the headline will be capitalized or just the first word. (Most current headline writing is done in “downstyle,” with only the first word and all proper nouns capitalized.)

You also should determine whether you will use logotypes as column headings or as headings of regular standing features. Whatever you decide, you then should carry through those decisions consistently, without variation, from the first page to the last and from the first issue to the last.

NEWSPAPER MANAGEMENT PHOTOGRAPHY AND ART/GRAPHICS

The purpose of a news photograph is to convey as much information about a person or event as possible in a visually interesting way. Photographs (and artwork) should be treated with respect as important elements of communication.

Many times a picture or illustration can communicate as much as



any story — sometimes more. Don't hesitate to play a good photo big; don't play a bad photo big.

To help photos stand out, you might consider framing all pictures with a thin black line, or rule. (Special tape is available from art supply stores for this if you are actually pasting photos on a layout sheet. If you are placing photos on a page through a computerized pagination system, you can add line rules electronically.)

This framing is effective because some photo backgrounds are so light that they fade away or disappear into the space around the photo.

Another tip about photos: As a rule of thumb, people's faces in published photos should be no smaller than the size of a dime.

Because of the importance of photographs in a newspaper, the photographer should understand the content and focus of the story. The reporter and photographer should work together as a team, each contributing to the collection of information.

Once the assignment is completed, the photographer then teams with the editor, each contributing to the presentation of the visual image with the written copy.

To ensure that the best possible photographs can be obtained, the editor should provide the photographer with enough time to work on an assignment and enough detail about the story so the photographer knows what kinds of images would best accompany the story.

And the photographer should be sure he or she knows the equipment, knows the best exposure for the lighting conditions and knows the principles of good photo composition.

Both photographer and editor should be familiar with the "rule of thirds," for instance, in which the best photo composition does not always place the main subject in the exact center of a photograph but puts it closer to the upper, lower, right or left third of the image.

Other tips you can pass along to your photographer(s):

Location. Find out as much as possible about the location of a

*If you saw a man
drowning and you
could either save
him or photograph
the event . . . what
kind of film would
you use?*

Anonymous

photo assignment before the picture is to be taken. Know the exact room number, street address, and so forth.

Relationship with subjects. Talk with photo subjects in an easy, relaxed, conversational way. This will help keep subjects from feeling as if they must pose for a picture, which means that you will get a more natural-looking picture. Photographers still should be in control of the situation and should direct subjects so the appropriate and desired picture is obtained.

Film. When using a standard camera, film is the cheapest part of the photographic process. Whether using film or digital, take as many pictures as necessary to fulfill the assignment, and then take a few more. Better to choose from too many pictures than not enough.

Preparation. Prepare for the unexpected. Some things, such as weather, temperature, illness, lighting, background, cannot be controlled.

Self-reliance. Photographers should get their own information to accompany the pictures, including the name(s) of subject, correct spelling, date and place of the shoot, and so forth. A description of circumstances surrounding the image in the picture (such as the action at a sporting event) should be included with the photos.

If you have an artist on your staff, or if you have access to an artist, make sure that his or her talents are used wisely and effectively. Don't use an illustration just for the sake of having an illustration.

Encourage creativity, but avoid subjectivity and straying too far from the focus of the story. Even a caricature or satirical image should have some bearing on the content of the story.

You occasionally might use photographs that stand alone (with cut-lines but without stories), but artwork should not be free-standing. Artwork and graphics should accompany a story.

Encourage the artist to become familiar with various forms of



The first cartoon ever published in an American newspaper.

Benjamin Franklin
Pennsylvania Gazette
May 9, 1754



graphic illustration and presentation used in such periodicals as USA Today, weekly news magazines and advertising publications. Do not hesitate to look at other school and college newspapers to see how they present information with graphics and art. Do not hesitate to look at the local daily newspaper to see how it uses graphics and art to enhance stories.

As editor, you should look for ways that a news story can be accompanied by a photograph or a graphic. You should encourage your reporters to think about how their stories can be improved by visual elements such as a photo or a drawing or graphic.

Pictures can help “sell” a story to the reader. They often are the point of entry for readers to get into stories. Remember to think pictures.

Journalism is literature in a hurry.

Matthew Arnold

NEWSPAPER MANAGEMENT MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

Many school newspapers receive financial support through advertising revenues, subscriptions and single-copy sales, just like commercial papers. Others are financed with school fees or advertising (or both) and are distributed free to students. Others are financed with fees and sold; still others are financed by advertising revenues and distributed free. As editor, you should be aware of the cost of putting out the paper and where the revenues come from to defray that cost.

If you have the opportunity to appoint a business manager, this person can be responsible for the financial end of publishing the newspaper.

When you analyze the costs, you should take into account the printer's expense, the cost of paper, the cost of special equipment and special charges for art or photography, among other things.

When you analyze revenues, you should take into account revenues from advertising, circulation through subscriptions, circulation through sin-

gle-copy sales and revenues from school fees, if any. You must determine a break-even point. If you use advertising, you must set advertising rates to meet your revenue needs so that the break-even point will be reached. If you use some combination of advertising revenues, school fees, subscriptions and single-copy sales, you probably can set lower advertising rates. You also should determine whether you and the school want to make a profit from the newspaper, as a way to purchase equipment in the future, for instance, or have it a break-even operation.

Circulation can increase if you are providing a good product to readers. An editor should consider the newspaper as a product and ask why a consumer would want to use this product and who the projected consumer is. The answer to the first question ought to be because the newspaper provides information on the school that is not available elsewhere, and the answer to the second question is the entire student body and the faculty and staff of the school.

Parents, too, can be included as readers.

An editor also should ask why someone would want to advertise in the newspaper and who the projected audience is. The answer to the first question ought to be because your school represents a group of consumers, presumably with considerable disposable income, interested in buying goods and services from merchants near the school and the students' neighborhoods.

The answer to the second question is the entire student body, the faculty and staff of the school, and parents of the students.

One thing to remember: Advertising and news are separate functions in a newspaper operation. Although the situation is not likely to arise in a school paper, remember that newspapers are not obligated to write about businesses or business people just because those businesses advertise in the paper.



A journalist follows a set of rules relating to language and usage when writing a news story. These rules are similar to (in many cases, identical to) the rules of grammar taught in English classes. Over many years, a “journalistic style” has evolved that is based on clarity, simplicity, consistency and uniformity. The following summary covers the main points of style that a young journalist should know. While these rules are not necessarily the same that are taught in all English classes today, they are the rules that are followed by nearly all reporters and editors.

(1) ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations are used most commonly in addresses, time references, geographic locations, courtesy titles and when referring to companies and organizations. Do not use note-taking abbreviations in copy, such as “natl” for “national” or “e.g.” for “for example.” Do not use “etc.” in copy unless it is part of a direct quotation.

Grammar is the logic of speech, even as logic is the grammar of reason.

Richard C. Trench

ADDRESSES

Use St., Blvd., Ave. when part of a specific address, such as “123 Main St.”

Spell out Street, Boulevard, Avenue when part of a more general location, such as “the store on Main Street.” Spell out and use lowercase on street, boulevard, avenue when part of a reference to an intersection, such as “Main and 14th streets.” But spell out and capitalize when writing “Main Street and Allen Avenue.”

Abbreviate N., S., E., W. when part of street address, such as 123 E. Main St., but spell out when part of a more general location, such as “the

store on East Main Street.”

Spell out Road, Drive, Lane, Place, Circle, Turnpike and all other names of streets when used in specific addresses.

DATES/TIME ELEMENTS

Use the following abbreviations for months when a specific date is used in a story:

Jan. Feb. Aug. Sept. Oct. Nov. Dec.

A newspaper is of necessity something of a monopoly, and its first duty is to shun the temptations of monopoly. Its primary office is the gathering of news. At the peril of its soul it must see that the supply is not tainted. Neither in what it gives, nor in what it does not give, nor in the mode of presentation must the unclouded face of truth suffer wrong. Comment is free, but facts are sacred.

C. P. Scott

The other five months are spelled out, even when using a specific date in a story, such as March 3 or July 15. Do not use “th,” “rd,” “nd” or “st” after the numeral in a date.

All months are spelled out when used with a year but not a specific date, such as October 1982 (no comma between month and year).

If you are using a table in which all 12 months are listed as column headings or categories, you can use standard three-letter abbreviations — Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Jul, Aug, Sept, Oct, Nov, Dec — and do not use a period.

In time references, use a.m. and p.m. (lowercase). Do not use “:00” when referring to whole hours in an exact time of day (use 11 a.m., not 11:00 a.m.)

MONEY/PERCENTAGES

Use dollar symbol for dollar amounts, spell out cents, spell out percent. Examples: \$4 (not \$4.00), \$12.20, 12 cents, 4 cents, 5 percent, 3.4 percent.

NAMES/TITLES

If you use courtesy or occupational titles, use Mr., Mrs., Ms., Dr., Rep., Sen., Gov., Lt. Gov., the Rev. before a person’s name. However, such titles are not necessary on second reference. Use first and last name for adults on



first reference and last name only second reference. Use Jr. and Sr. after a person's name, but without a comma in between. Do not abbreviate attorney general, superintendent, supervisor, professor.

ORGANIZATIONS

Spell out an organization's name on first reference, then use common abbreviation on later references, such as "Student Government Association" and "SGA." Several well-known organizations do not need to be written out on first reference, such as FBI, NCAA, NASA.

When writing company names, abbreviate Co., Corp., Inc., Ltd., and do not set such abbreviation off with commas.

STATES/COUNTRIES

Do not use the U.S. Postal Service abbreviations of states when you are using city, followed by state. For example, use the following abbreviations:

Ala.	Fla.	Md.	Neb.	N.Y.	Tenn.
Ariz.	Ga.	Mass.	Nev.	Okla.	Vt.
Ark.	Ill.	Mich.	N.C.	Ore.	Va.
Calif.	Ind.	Minn.	N.D.	Pa.	Wash.
Colo.	Kan.	Miss.	N.H.	R.I.	Wis.
Conn.	Ky.	Mo.	N.J.	S.C.	W.Va.
Del.	La.	Mont.	N.M.	S.D.	Wyo.

A free press can be good or bad, but, most certainly, without freedom a press will never be anything but bad.

Albert Camus

Do not abbreviate Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas or Utah.

Do not use any state (abbreviation or otherwise) when referring to another community in your own state. If you are in Richmond, in Virginia, and refer to a school in Norfolk, you do not need to write "Norfolk, Va."

You can use Postal Service abbreviations when using an actual

mailing address including ZIP code.

Generally, all countries' names are spelled out, including the United States (not "U.S." unless part of a direct quotation or if used as an adjective, and not "United States of America" unless part of a direct quotation.)

(2) ATTRIBUTION

The most important component of a reporter's work is his or her credibility, and one of the most important ways to establish credibility is to report accurately and objectively, including accurate quotation and using proper attribution of quoted material.

The reporter should attribute all quoted materials in a story to his or her sources. The reporter should not be the one saying something, because reporters never insert themselves into stories. Ever.

Reporters do not make essay-like statements of opinion in the midst of a news story or offer any kind of opinion in a piece that is not clearly labeled commentary. Ever. Any opinion that is in a news story must be part of a quotation, and that quotation must be attributed to its source.

That said, merely naming a quoted source is not enough. When quoting students in articles, for instance, identify the student by name and year in school. You could include the age, too, although the year in school often is enough information.

Also, use proper titles for adults who are quoted in interviews. Don't just write "John Smith of the English Department" when you could write "John Smith, an English teacher" or "John Smith, head of the English Department."

This also is true when quoting people who work for companies. Don't just write "Jane Jones of Acme Supply Co.," write "Jane Jones, assistant director of community relations for Acme Supply Co."

*We can't quite decide
if the world is grow-
ing worse, or if the
reporters are just
working harder.*

The Houghton Line
November 1965



(3) CAPITALIZATION

The general rule is to avoid capitalization unless using proper names. This means not capitalizing such phrases as “foreign language teacher” or “athletic trainer.” However, you can capitalize similar phrases if they represent proper names, such as “Foreign Language Department,” if that is one of the formal departments in the school organization, or “Athletic Department.”

Just because a phrase or word looks important does not mean that it is capitalized, such as “federal law” (not “Federal Law”) or “local ordinance” (not local Ordinance”) or “final exams” (not “Final Exams”). Also, capital letters are not necessary to refer to undergraduate college majors or degrees.

Use lowercase for terms that are more descriptive of jobs, rather than formal titles, such as “mathematics teacher” (not “Mathematics Teacher”) and “football coach” (not “Football Coach”). Also, you do not need to capitalize any word in the phrase “girls varsity volleyball team.”

Do not put a word in all capital letters as a way to indicate emphasis.

Newspapers: dead trees with information smeared on them.

ADDRESSES

Capitalize street name and St., Blvd., Ave. when part of a specific address, such as “123 Main St.” or “4820 Anderson Blvd.” Spell out and use lowercase on “street” when part of a reference to an intersection, such as “14th and Main streets.”

Horizon Magazine

NAMES/TITLES

Capitalize **Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms., Dr., Gov., Rep., Sen., Lt. Gov., the Rev., Jr., Sr.** Capitalize most titles that precede a name, such as “Virginia Attorney General William Jones,” but do not capitalize those titles if used after a person’s name, such as “John Smith, superintendent of schools in the county.”



ORGANIZATIONS

Capitalize first letters in organization's formal name, then use capital letters in common abbreviation on later references, such as "Student Government Association" and "SGA," or "National Football League" and "NFL." When listing a specific governmental body, capitalize the first letters, such as "Chesterfield County School Board," and when referring to the same body in a later reference, use uppercase, such as "the School Board."

TRADEMARKS/COPYRIGHTS

When referring to materials that are patented or protected by trademark or copyright laws, use capitals, such as "a Xerox copy" and "She used a Kleenex." In these two examples, however, writing "photocopy" and "tissue" instead would not require capitalization.

News is history shot on the wing. The huntsmen from the Fourth Estate seek to bag only the peacock or the eagle of the swifting day.

Gene Fowler

(4) DATES/TIME ELEMENTS

TIME

Use "a.m." and "p.m." when referring to specific times during the day, such as "The meeting will begin at 7 p.m." or "The explosion occurred at 3:18 a.m."

When using "tonight" or "tomorrow morning" or some other more general reference to time in the sentence, don't use "a.m." or "p.m." Instead, you might use "o'clock" for hourly times, such as "The meeting will take place tonight at 7 o'clock," and omit time references in such instances as "The train will come through the town tomorrow morning at 6:30."

DATES

As in the section on abbreviations, use Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec., but spell out the names of the other months. Use numerals for any date 1 through 31.



When writing only the month and year, spell out the month and do not separate by a comma, such as “January 1993.”

Do not include the year if the story refers to an event that took place in the past 12 months or will take place in the next 12 months, unless identifying the year is required for clarity.

(5) NAMES / IDENTIFICATION

COURTESY TITLES

Use a person’s first and last name on first reference. Do not use courtesy titles, such as “Mr.” or “Miss,” unless your school publication stylebook calls for such reference. If courtesy titles are required, use only on second reference. This means that your first reference would be “English teacher Jane Smith,” not “English teacher Ms. Jane Smith.” If your stylebook has no such requirement, this means that you omit courtesy titles on all references. “English teacher Jane Smith” becomes “Smith” on second reference.

Do not worry about whether you are being impolite toward adults by referring to them by their last name. This is the way newspaper stories are written.

On second reference to ministers or doctors, courtesy titles are not necessary.

Rules vary on how to refer to young people on second reference. One guideline is to refer to young people through their senior year in high school by their first names only on second reference. For persons at least 18 years old and those in college and graduate school, last names only are used on second reference.

As discussed in the “Attribution” section, be sure to identify people properly. Identify students by age, name of school and year in school. Also, don’t just write “John Smith of the English department” when you could write “John Smith, an English teacher” or “John Smith, head of the English

Trying to determine what is going on in the world by reading newspapers is like trying to tell the time by watching the second hand of a clock.

Ben Hecht

Department.”

Don't write “Jane Jones of XYZ Co.,” when you could write “Jane Jones, assistant director of community relations for XYZ Co.”

At the college level, be specific when identifying professors, assistant professors, associate professors, instructors, etc., as well as reporting the subject areas taught and department.

Also, use the full, correct name of the college or university on first reference, such as The College of William and Mary, not William and Mary, and the University of Virginia, not U.Va. or UVA.

COURTESY TITLES FOR WOMEN

Most newspapers now omit courtesy titles for women on second reference in the general news columns, because a courtesy title signifies marital status, and that usually is not an important element of a story.

Also, courtesy titles are not used for women who are athletes, in accordance with the Associated Press Stylebook. Also, courtesy titles for women generally are not used in most photo captions and headlines. Your school newspaper should have its own policy on courtesy titles for women, and then follow that policy consistently.

*No news at 4:30 a.m.
is good.*

Lady Bird Johnson

INITIALS

Despite the frequent practice by high school and college yearbooks years ago to identify students and teachers by only their first initial and last name, don't do this. Identify an adult by first name, middle initial and last name on first reference (although you may ask if the person uses a middle initial.)

If an adult uses two initials and last name as his or her regular name, that is permissible.

For students, first and last names are permissible without middle initials, but avoid nicknames in place of given names.



(6) NUMBERS

The general rule is that the first nine numbers of the Arabic system are spelled out when referring to quantities, and 10 and above are written in numerals. However, some exceptions exist. For instance, a number that is the first word of a sentence is spelled out, such as “Twenty-five potential jurors awaited lawyers’ arguments in the pre-trial session.”

When the number is higher than 99, though, the reporter should find a different way of writing the sentence so that the large number is not the first word in that sentence. Example: “In all, 125 band members will participate.”

Roman numerals are used rarely, if at all. They are used in a man’s name, such as state Sen. Henry L. Marsh III, or if a building has been identified with a Roman numeral, such as Arboretum IV.

ADDRESSES

A street number in an address always is written as a numeral, such as “6 N. 12th St.” and “123 E. Main St.”

For numbered streets, the one-through-nine/10-and-above rule applies, such as “6 N. Sixth St.” and “12 E. 19th St.”

Exceptions can include buildings that are named according to their addresses, and the building owner has decided to spell out the numbers, such as the “Nine Hundred East Main Building.”

AGES

Numerals almost always are used to denote age, even single-digit ages, such as “2 months old,” “7 years old” and “45-year-old man.” However, also use “third birthday” or “12th month.”

DATES/TIME ELEMENTS

Numerals almost always are used to denote time, such as “7 p.m.”

COPY EDITOR’S TOOLS

Dictionary (such as Webster’s New World Dictionary)

Associated Press Stylebook (and local stylebook or stylesheet if available)

Local telephone directory

Student / faculty directory

State and local maps

Current world almanac

Calculator

or “4:15 a.m.” However, also use “12 hours” or “four minutes.”

For specific dates, always use a numeral; when referring to time elapsed, use the one-through-nine/10-and-above rule, such as “As of June 3, four weeks had gone by since he heard from his brother.”

LARGE NUMBERS

Use commas to set off numbers of at least 1,000, such as 2,504. Round off numbers of at least 1 million to the nearest decimal point, such as \$5.2 million (not \$5,204,335 and not 5.2 million dollars). The general rule for rounding off is to go to one decimal place in millions and three decimal places in billions, such as 5.2 million or 3.865 billion.

Some editors prefer that billions also be rounded off to the nearest decimal place, too.

Exceptions: do not use a comma to set off large numbers in street addresses, radio broadcast frequencies, manufacturer’s serial numbers, telephone numbers or calendar years.

MEASURES/DIMENSIONS (DISTANCES/HEIGHTS/SPEEDS/VOLUMES)

Numerals almost always are used to denote measurement, although use the one-through-nine/10-and-above rule for distances, such as “He walked four miles.” For other dimensions, use numerals. For speeds, use numerals.

Also, do not use quote marks to denote feet and inches. A yardstick is 36 inches long, not 36” long, and 12 inches equals one foot, not 1’.

MONEY/PERCENTAGES

Numerals almost always are used to denote dollars and cents, as well as percentages. Examples: \$4, \$12.20, 12 cents, 4 cents, 5 percent, 3.4 percent.

SCORES/VOTING RESULTS/MARGINS/RATIOS

Numerals almost always are used, such as “The Cardinals won 3-2” or “Jones won the election by almost a 2-to-1 margin.”

There was a time when the reader of an unexciting newspaper would remark, “How dull is the world today!” Nowadays he says, “What a dull newspaper!”

Daniel J. Boorstin



(7) OBJECTIVE VS. SUBJECTIVE

When writing stories for the newspaper, don't show off what you know or think, but show what you see and hear.

The reporter is the eye and ear of the reader who could not be present at a meeting, a sporting event or an interview. This means that the reporter must be observant, take good notes and summarize as completely as possible the event that is subject of the story, using as much detail as necessary to recreate the event and make the story interesting.

However, the reporter also must do all of this with complete objectivity. No hint of bias or opinion should be evident in the reporter's story, unless the story is labeled clearly as "commentary."

Some words and phrases — many of them adverbs or adverbial phrases — have a built-in tone that the reader might perceive to be subjective or biased. If the reader perceives bias in the news reporting, such a bias might as well exist.

Reporters should watch their copy carefully, especially in transitional sentences and paragraphs, to avoid using such words and phrases.

WORDS TO AVOID

"Moreover" and "therefore." *Too lawyerly, and they also indicate that the reporter is drawing a conclusion for the reader. Let the reader draw the conclusion.*

"Obviously." *A situation might be obvious to the reporter, but it is not always so obvious to the reader. Again, let the reader draw the conclusion.*

"Of course." *Similar to "obviously." Using this phrase often indicates that the reporter is drawing a conclusion or filling in the reader with some information to which only the reporter has access.*

"Surprisingly," "incredibly" and "not-so-surprisingly." *The reporter might be surprised, but he or she runs the embarrassing risk of*

Journalism is popular, but it is popular mainly as fiction. Life is one world, and life seen in the newspapers is another.

G. K. Chesterton



showing ignorance in a situation that is not so surprising for the reader.

Any adjective that expresses a derogatory opinion, such as ridiculous, foolish, silly, ugly, stupid. When such adjectives are part of direct quotations, care must be taken to quote the speaker accurately. And never manufacture a quotation just to get your own views into print.

10 QUICK FIXES FOR IMPROVING STORIES —
FOR WRITERS AND EDITORS

Steve Row

Your stories will improve dramatically if you **avoid** the following:

- (1) Starting sentences with "There is," "There are," "There will be," "It is," "It will be," "This is," "That is," and so forth. Any sentence beginning with such indefinite phrases usually can be rewritten so that the "impact" words are closer to the front.
- (2) Using "hopefully" anywhere in the story. If a person you are quoting uses "hopefully," find a way to paraphrase the quote.
- (3) Introducing a quote or response to a question with "When asked if," "When asked whether," "When asked about," "When asked how." Or putting such a phrase after the attribution in a quote, such as ". . . Jones said when asked about the. . ."
- (4) Using a verb other than "said" as the speech tag in a quotation. Only rarely should you use

(8) PUNCTUATION

PERIODS

Used to end a declarative sentence, to set off initials, to indicate abbreviations (except in cases in which all capital letters are used to denote a well-known term, such as NFL or FBI), to end a command that is not an exclamation, to end an indirect question.

Also used after numbers or letters that list elements of a summary or series, such as "A. Write clearly. B. Write simply. C. Punctuate properly."

COMMAS

Used to separate words in a series (except before the conjunction and last word in the series), to separate numerals in numbers greater than 999, to set off a parenthetical expres-

sion or identifying phrase.

Also used to set off non-essential clauses (ones that can be deleted without affecting the meaning of a sentence), to set off long introductory phrases/clauses, to divide sentences consisting of two parts joined by "and" or



“but” when either part could stand alone without the conjunction.

Frequently used before “because” when that word connects two-part sentences.

In quotations, used before attribution or before introduction of direct quotation.

Used to set off city and state, ages, precise dates, city and foreign country, the words “yes” and “no” at the beginning of a quotation, and direct address, such as “Could I help you, sir?”

Used to set off “too,” but not used to set off “Jr.” and “Sr.” and “III” from a man’s name.

SEMICOLONS

Used sparingly in news writing, if at all. The semicolon is used perhaps most often to indicate a close relationship between two elements of a sentence or between independent clauses.

A guideline from the Associated Press is to use a semicolon to separate thoughts when something more than a comma but less than a period is needed.

Also used to separate items in a series when some of the items themselves are separated by commas.

some other verb, such as “explained” or “added,” but you should avoid substituting “stated,” “observed,” “noted,” “expressed,” “commented,” “declared,” “remarked,” and especially “quoted,” for “said.”

(5) Using the passive voice. Nearly every passive voice sentence can be rewritten into the active voice, which (a) reduces the number of words per sentence, (b) puts the actor/action at the beginning of the sentence, and (c) does not alter the meaning of the sentence.

(6) Confusing such words as

its and its

there and they re and their

all right and alright (which does not exist)

a lot and alot (which does not exist)

consists of and comprised of (which does not exist)

lead (present tense) and lead (heavy metal) and led (past tense)

principal and principle

capital and capitol

affect and effect

who and whom

that and which

weather and whether

complement and compliment

were and where

fewer than and under and less

than ; more than and over and greater than

(7) Overloading sentences with adjectives and adverbs. Use strong nouns instead of adjectives;

COLONS

Also used sparingly in news writing. The colon is used most frequently at the end of a sentence to introduce a series or list of things, such as “In other action, the School Board:”

Also can be used to introduce a paragraph of direct quotation containing more than one sentence.

use strong verbs instead of adverbs. Especially avoid “very” and “really” and “very much.”

(8) Using “sometime” when you mean “some time,” “anytime” when you mean “any time,” “someday” when you mean “some day.”

(9) Using “due to” when you mean “because of,” and using “feel” or “believe” when you mean “think.”

(10) Turning people into things. Remember that you use “person who” and “thing that.” You do not write “the student that went. . .” or “the singer that performed. . .”

QUOTATION MARKS

Used to begin and end direct quotations, which are the exact words of a speaker.

Quotation marks do not have to surround a complete sentence; they can surround a portion of a sentence that is directly quoted from a speaker. However, do not use quote marks to begin and end a short or routine phrase of direct quotation within a longer sentence, unless the phrase is so unusual or compelling that it deserves special attention.

Also used to denote a person’s nickname, when the nickname is unrelated to the formal given name. You would write John A. “Butch” Jones, but you would not write Jeffrey A. “Jeff” Wilson.

Also used to set off nearly all composition titles, such as books and poems, song and opera titles (and recordings), movie and theatrical play titles, television shows, works of art. Exceptions are names of encyclopedias and dictionaries, newspapers and magazines and the main religious books.

Also used to set off slang or unfamiliar terms, words or phrases that often are followed by a brief definition. However, do not use quote marks around the same term, word or phrase on second reference.

In nearly all cases, commas and periods are placed within the quo-



tation, while semicolons and question marks are placed inside the quotation only if they are part of the quoted material.

EXCLAMATION POINTS/QUESTION MARKS

Exclamation points are used sparingly in news stories, only when necessary to show considerable surprise or some other strong emotion, and only as part of quotations. Do not use an exclamation point to indicate emphasis.

Question marks are used at the end of direct questions, such as “Who started the riot?” but not at the end of indirect questions, such as “He asked who started the riot.”

Exclamation points and question marks go inside quotation marks only if they are part of the directly quoted material; otherwise, they go outside the quotation marks.

PARENTHESES

Used sparingly in news stories. Reliance on parentheses usually means that the sentence or paragraph is becoming too confused and confusing.

Use of parentheses occasionally can be justified if they set off legitimate background material.

Generally, if the material inside parentheses is a phrase or sentence fragment, the period goes outside the closing parenthesis; if the material inside parentheses is a complete sentence, the period goes inside.

A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts.

William Strunk Jr.



(9) WRITING/WORD USAGE/
MISCELLANEOUS STYLE GUIDELINES

This is a brief summary of key points in the Associated Press Stylebook, Rene J. Cappon’s “The Word” and other reference materials on writing styles.

Keep sentences and paragraphs simple and tightly written, using uncomplicated language. Try to restrict each sentence to one main thought. Prefer the short word to the long, the familiar word to the fancy and the specific word to the abstract.

Use no more words than necessary to make your meaning clear. Instead of writing “The crimson vulcanized spheroid descended into her outstretched hand,” write “She caught the ball” or “She caught the red ball” or “She caught the red rubber ball.”

Remember the “10-20-30” rule: No more than 10 percent of your words should be complicated words, sentences generally should be no more than 20 words long, and paragraphs generally should be no more than 30 words long.

Most typewritten paragraphs — either on a piece of paper or on a computer screen — should be no more than 3 1/2 lines long, and most paragraphs in news writing consist of one sentence.

Watch the distinction between **after** and **following**. “After” is best used as a time reference to something that happened later; “following” indicates the next thing in time or order. Depending on the editor’s preference, “the next day” is the same as “the following day.”

Alot does not exist in the English language; **alright** does not exist in the English language.

A company is **based** in New York City, not **headquartered** in New

I never made a mistake in grammar but one in my life and as soon as I done it I seen it.

Carl Sandburg



York City.

Avoid using **coed** or **co-ed** as a noun. That term was used years ago to refer to female students at a time when co-education, particularly at the college level, was not as widespread as today.

Use comparatives and superlatives (better, best, more, most) sparingly, if at all, and don't use them if they are your opinion.

Compare can be used both **with** and **to**, but know the difference. "Compare to" means to stress similarities, such as the current unemployment rate vs. the previous year's unemployment rate. "Compare with" means taking both similarities and dissimilarities into account, usually with emphasis on the latter, such as comparing apples with oranges.

Comprised of does not exist in the English language. One should not write "The school board is comprised of two lawyers, two business executives and a retired military officer." The reporter could write "The school board consists of...." or "The school board comprises five people — two lawyers, two business executives and a retired military officer."

(Note also that it is wrong to write "The school board includes two lawyers, two business executives and a retired military officer" as a way to identify all board members. See "include" below.)

A person might have a **conflict of interests**, not a **conflict of interest**.

Convince and **persuade** are not interchangeable. "Convince" refers to winning by argument, while "persuade" refers to winning by an appeal to emotions or reason. A person might be "convinced that" something will happen or "convinced of" something, but a person must be "persuaded to" do something.

Do not put statements in the negative form.

And don't start sentences with a conjunction.

If you reread your work, you will find on rereading that a great deal of repetition can be avoided by rereading and editing.

Never use a long word when a diminutive one will do.

Unqualified superlatives are the worst of all.

De-accession euphemisms.

If any word is improper at the end of a sentence, a linking verb is.

Avoid trendy locutions that sound flaky.

Last, but not least, avoid cliches like the plague.

William Safire
"Great Rules of Writing"

Remember: **different from**, not **different than**.

Remember: **During** the past six months, not **over** the past six months.

Everyone, everybody, anyone and **anybody** take a singular verb and pronoun, such as “Everyone takes off his coat.”

Don’t use **first annual**. First annual does not exist.

Avoid using **home** on first reference when writing about a house or apartment. House is the preferred word to use when referring to a single-family residential unit, and apartment is a rental residential unit. The word residence often refers to the place where a person legally lives. Home can be used on occasion to refer to the place where a family lives and has its possessions.

*Punctuation is the
sound of your voice
on paper.*

Hopefully, regretfully and **thankfully** never start a sentence. Ever. And in the typical news story, those words never would be used. Ever.

Joseph Colligan

Include means a partial list follows, such as “The speakers at the hearing included two teachers and four parents.” This means that more people spoke than the two teachers and four parents.

If two teachers and four parents were the only speakers at the hearing, the reporter should write, “The speakers at the hearing consisted of two teachers and four parents” or, better, “Two teachers and four parents spoke at the hearing.”

Insure is not the same as **ensure**. If you mean to guarantee, use “ensure.”

Ironically does not mean **coincidentally**. Strictly speaking, irony



means using words to convey the opposite of their intended meaning, or a result that is opposite of what was intended.

A reporter would not write “The police ironically found the suspect hiding in the woods a short distance from the crime scene.” If the suspect stole a car to escape and discovered that the car was an unmarked police car, that situation might represent some irony.

Remember: Use **its** as a possessive and **it’s** as a contraction of “it is.”

Avoid using **-ize** words such as generalize, actualize, finalize, maximize, institutionalize, optimize, prioritize. Only a few “-ize” words are permissible, and all can be replaced by more appropriate words or phrases. Also, avoid creating words by adding “-wise” as a suffix.

Avoid jargon, clichés and words or phrases with a built-in sense of artificial drama, such as “management regime,” “bottom line,” “at this point in time,” “meaningful,” “expertise,” “unveil.” Even “announce” should be used sparingly.

Use **like** and **as** carefully. One good distinction between the two is that “as” usually is correct if the introduced element has a verb, such as “He ran as he had never run before.” “Like” is usually correct if the introduced element does not have a verb, such as “He ran like the wind.”

Myriad is both a noun and an adjective. Webster’s defines myriad only as an adjective, and American Heritage prefers myriad as an adjective, so you could write “He considered the myriad details of planning the meeting,” not “the myriad of details.” However, Oxford and MacMillan permit myriad as a noun, so you could write “a myriad of details,” as well as “myriad details.”

Avoid using **near-miss**. A near-miss is a hit.

The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug.

Mark Twain

Remember: **neither...nor** and **either...or** and **not only...but also**. In a few instances, however, “also” does not need to be used following “not only.”

The difference between **obtain** and **secure** is fading. The developer “obtained” approval for the rezoning, or the teacher “secured” approval for the class trip. “Secure” often carries a sense of guaranteeing something, perhaps after some effort, while “obtain” often means just getting or receiving.

Watch where **only** is placed in a sentence — it should be placed directly in front of only the word or phrase being modified, unless such placement makes the the sentence sound too stiff or stilted. “I only want orange juice” means the same thing as “I want only orange juice” but sounds better.

Avoid using the passive voice. Instead of writing “He was seen by the teacher,” write “The teacher saw him.”

Remember: She **plans to buy** the chair, not she **plans on buying** the chair.

*Words are the most
powerful drug used
by mankind.*

Rudyard Kipling

Podium is an elevated platform for a speaker or a music conductor. “Dais” or “rostrum” also is a raised platform for a speaker. “Lectern” is a stand at which a speaker speaks.

Pupils generally are those in nursery school and kindergarten through middle school or junior high (eighth grade); those in high school and college are **students**. A mixed group of young people from several grades can be referred to as students.

Remember: His arguments were **rebutted**, not his arguments were **refuted**.

Avoid redundancies, such as “true facts,” “new record,” “weather conditions,” “active consideration,” “qualified expert,” “new initiatives,”



“future plans,” “end result,” “subject matter,” “serious crisis,” “final outcome,” “mutually beneficial,” “viable alternative,” “completely destroyed,” “great majority,” “major disaster,” “overexaggerated.”

Use **said** as the speech tag with nearly every quote. Don’t try to use a variety of words that you could think are synonyms for “said.” “Stated” and “declared” are too stiff. “Noted” and “pointed out” are only slightly more usable but still carry their own specific meaning. “Continued” and “added” can be used if the speaker is being quoted at length in successive paragraphs.

Also, in nearly every instance, “said” can be used without “that.”

Since is not interchangeable with **because**. “Since” usually indicates a time element, such as “The department has been operating inefficiently since the supervisor resigned.” “Because” usually indicates a conditional element, such as “He said he wouldn’t leave because there was too much work to do.”

The Associated Press says “since” can be used in a causal sense when the first event in a sequence led logically to the second event but was not its direct cause, such as “He went to the game, since he had been given the tickets.” Also, use **because of** instead of **due to**.”

The store is **situated** on the corner, not **located** on the corner. “Locate” is an active verb that means to place or find or determine the position of.

Don’t write “**Some** 1,900 students attended the game” when you mean “**Approximately** 1,900 students attended the game.” Don’t write “**Less than** 100 people attended the game” or “**Under** 100 people attended the game” when you mean “**Fewer than** 100 people attended the game.”

Likewise, don’t write “**Over** 1,900 people attended the game” when you mean “**More than** 1,900 people attended the game.” And don’t write “**Approximately** 1,935 students were at the game.” That would be an exact

Three guys are sitting at a bar.

Bob: “Yeab, I make \$75,000 a year after taxes.”

Jim: “What do you do for a living?”

Bob: “I’m a stockbroker. How much do you make?”

Jim: “I should clear \$60,000 this year.”

Bob: “What do you do?”

Jim: “I’m an architect.”

Steve has been sitting there quietly, staring into his drink, when they guys turn to him.

Bob: “Hey, how much do you make a year?”

Steve: “Well, hmmmmm, I guess about \$13,000.”

Jim: “Yeab? What newspaper do you work for?”

figure.

You may split infinitives and split compound verbs sparingly, generally when splitting makes the sentence sound better, flow more smoothly or avoid ambiguity.

Correct usage now is **teenager** and **teenage**, not “teen-ager” or “teen-age.” And “teenaged” is not used.

*The most famous split
infinitive in the
English Language*

Space...the final frontier. These are the voyages of the starship Enterprise. It's five-year mission: to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations, to boldly go where no man has gone before.

Star Trek
the original series
1966-1969

A book or song or play or movie is **titled**, not **entitled**.

Remember: “The student **who** is in class,” not “The student **that** is in class.” Also, “The book **that** is on the desk,” not “The book **which** is on the desk.” “Which” is used to introduce a non-essential clause and is set off by commas.

For purposes of news stories, first-year high school and college students are **freshmen**, not **first-years**. Likewise, second-year students are **sophomores**, third-year students are **juniors**, and fourth-year students are **seniors**. A student's year in school is not capitalized, and the name of the student's class need not be capitalized. Also, students are not identified by the calendar year of their graduating class, unless a complete phrase is used, such as “Jim Smith, a freshman who will graduate in 2005.”

Also, a student can **earn** or **receive** a degree; a person is **given** an honorary degree, or an honorary degree is **conferred** upon a person. A person who receives an honorary doctoral degree is not referred to as Dr. in any reference.

And a person earns a **doctoral** degree, not a **doctorate** degree. However, a person can earn or hold a **doctorate**. Use lowercase for all references such as these.

Do not use the initials of academic degrees or professional designations or certifications or licenses after a person's name.



Avoid verbal abuse — the misuse of words such as “contact,” used as a verb instead of “notify” or “call”; “presently,” used instead of “soon”; “funded,” used to mean “financed”; “impact,” used as a verb instead of “have an impact on” or “affect”; “hosted,” used as a verb instead of “played host to” or “sponsored”; “authored,” used as a verb instead of “wrote”; “will hold a meeting,” used instead of “will schedule a meeting” or “will conduct a meeting,” or, even more simply, “will meet.”

Avoid verbal nonsense, such as “more unique,” “irregardless,” “conceptualize,” “interface,” “input,” “output,” “ongoing,” “upcoming,” “hereinafter.”

A GUIDE TO HEADLINE WRITING

Many of the same basic principles that go into writing a good news or feature story go into writing a good headline.

A good headline — or a good story — should intrigue the reader. A good headline should be lucid and concise, well-organized structurally and accurate, and it should use simple but vigorous language. A good headline contains brief colorful nouns and active verbs, which vividly tell the story in just a few words.

Yet a headline should honestly reflect the intent and tone of the story.

The headline differs from the story in space limitations. The headline must be written within rigid, mechanically confined bounds. However, rules for writing headlines, like rules for writing stories, can be relaxed or broken to achieve a desired effect.

The headline’s purpose is to advertise the story, as well as present a pleasing typographical appearance. When you first go through a newspaper,

The First Duty of a newspaper is to be Accurate. If it is Accurate, it follows that it is Fair.

Herbert Bayard Swope

what makes you stop to read a certain story? If not a picture, then the headline. The reader is drawn to attention-getting, compelling, curiosity-arousing headlines, not to dull headlines.

The sins of dull, perfunctory headlines can't always be blamed on the headline writer, however. Often, the writer of the story is at fault. If you write a superficial or indifferent lead, you likely will get an uninspired headline to match, because in most cases the headline echoes the lead.

Cleverness, not cuteness, counts in headline writing. When witty and well thought out, a good pun in a headline can attract readers; when forced or awkward or obscure, a bad pun in a headline will turn reader away. Don't fill the page with punny headlines; one per page, even one every other page is enough. Maybe just one good pun per issue.

Alliteration in headlines should be used sparingly and when used should appear to be effortless.

To summarize, consider the following 10 rules for headline writing, as supplied by Norval Neil Luxon in "Headlining the News." He said headlines should:

- (1) Tell the story accurately.
- (2) Contain a verb, but not start with one.
- (3) Be in the active voice.
- (4) Be in the present tense, historical present tense or future tense.
- (5) Never repeat words.
- (6) Avoid the use of articles (a, an, the).
- (7) Avoid abbreviations, except widely known ones (NATO, FBI).
- (8) Be typographically and mechanically perfect.
- (9) Not split a phrase between the first and second lines.
- (10) Reflect the tone of the story.

That said, all the preceding rules except the first and last can be set aside under certain circumstances. Feature headlines, like feature stories, often are a world unto themselves, for instance, and might violate all rules for news headlines. They still should not be misleading.

*Surely the glory of
journalism is its
transience.*

Malcolm Muggeridge



Headlines usually are placed along the left margin of the space above a story, or “flush left,” and extend to the right margin on the space allotted for the story. Some headlines, especially art heads (headlines that incorporate graphic elements), can be centered in the space above the story. On rare occasions, headline lines are “stepped,” or set so that the second line (and third, if there is one) is indented from the first line.

Newspaper headlines rarely are written in all capital letters any more. The most widely used style now calls for the first letter of the first word in the headline to be capitalized, and all other words begin with a lower case letter (except proper names, of course). This is called “downstyle” and is easy to read because it resembles a sentence. In “upstyle” headlines, the first letter of each word in the headline is capitalized.

Headlines generally contain one, two or three lines. Generally, the larger the type, the fewer the number of lines. While an 18-point or 24-point headline could be written in three lines, a 48-point or 60-point headline would be written in one line. Also, the longer the headline, the fewer the number of lines. A one-column head can be written in three lines, but a five-column head generally is written in one line.

A “teaser” headline, or an “overline,” is a phrase placed atop the main headline (and often underlined, depending on the newspaper’s style). It typically and logically leads to, or helps explain, the main headline. It can be centered or flush left, but it always is in smaller type size than the main head, usually by about half.

The newspaper editor, in deciding what styles of headline type to use, also should determine whether his or her newspaper will use Roman and italics headlines or only Roman headlines, and whether the paper will use regular and bold typeface or only regular typeface. Using bold and italics type can provide some contrast to the appearance of a news page, but too much mixing of styles can lead to a cluttered appearance.

To a philosopher all news, as it is called, is gossip, and they who edit and read it are old women over their tea.

Henry David Thoreau



DOUGLAS SOUTHALL FREEMAN'S
RULES FOR WRITING

In the 1920s, Dr. Douglas Southall Freeman, then editor of The Richmond News Leader, compiled his rules for writing. They provided guidance for News Leader reporters and editors for nearly 70 years. Here are his rules, updated only slightly to take into account current editing practices.

- (1) Above all, be clear.
- (2) Therefore, use simple English.
- (3) To that end, write short sentences.
- (4) Do not change subjects in the middle of a sentence unless

there is

(a) definite antithesis, such as “Smith shook his fist in the air, but the police officer looked away,” or

(b) no possible way to avoid the change of subject. If you must change the subject, always insert a comma at the end of the clause that precedes the one in which you make the change.

*People everywhere
confuse / What they
read in newspapers
with news.*

A. J. Liebling

(5) Do not end sentences with participial phrases. Avoid such construction as “The mayor refused to discuss the subject, saying it was one for the consideration of the council.”

(6) Do not change the voice of a verb in the middle of a sentence. If you start with an active verb, keep it active. To write “He went to the office and was met by...” is sloppy.

(7) Seek to leave the meaning of the sentence incomplete until the last word. Add nothing after the meaning is complete. Then start a new sentence.

(8) Avoid loose construction. Try never to begin sentences with “And” or “But,” although some feature stories are aided by judicious (and



sparing) use of those words at the beginning of sentences. Try never to begin sentences with “There is,” “There are” or “It is.”

(9) Never use vague or unusual words that divert the reader’s attention from what you are reporting.

(10) Make every antecedent plain. Never permit “it” or “that” or any similar word to refer to different things in the same sentence.

(11) When you write a clause beginning with “which,” do not follow it with one that begins “and which.” For example, never write a sentence such as “The ordinance, which was considered by the finance committee and which was recommended to the council...”

(12) Avoid successive sentences that begin with the same word, unless emphasis is desired or intended. Be particularly careful to avoid starting one sentence with “He said...” and then starting the next sentence with “He stated...”

(13) When several nouns, phrases or clauses depend on the same verb in one sentence, put the longer phrase or clause last. For example, do not write: “He addressed the General Assembly, the members of the State Corporation Commission and the governor.”

(14) If you are compelled, for the sake of condensation, to use many long sentences, also try to employ short sentences at intervals. This develops a welcome rhythm to written news stories. However, try to avoid writing long sentences.

(15) In conditional sentences, seek to put the condition clause before the principal clause. An “if” clause is better placed at the beginning of a sentence than at the end, for example, unless the whole point of the sentence lies in the “if.”

(16) Be accurate in the use of synonyms, and avoid overloading a sentence with a long phrase used as a synonym. You are advised to refer to a thesaurus and a dictionary of synonyms and antonyms to find the right substitute word or phrase.

(17) Avoid successive sentences with the same form and conjunc-

*I am unable to
understand how a
man of honor could
take a newspaper in
his hands without a
shudder of disgust.*

Charles Baudelaire

*English usage is
sometimes more
than mere taste,
judgement, and
education —
Sometimes it's sheer
luck, like getting
across the street.*

E. B. White

tion. One of the surest ways to kill interest and to make a story dull is to use a succession of compound sentences, in which the clauses are connected by “and.” Change the conjunction and the form of sentences as often as possible.

(18) Avoid using nouns as adjectives; it is the lowest form of careless English. You always can find better ways to condense than to pile up nouns before a noun and pretend they are adjectives.

(19) Avoid successive words that begin or end with the same syllables — for instance, “re” or “ex” at the beginning of words and “ly” and “ing” as the final syllable.

(20) Try to end every story with a strong sentence — and a short, strong one if possible.

TIPS ON SPELLING & LANGUAGE

Know how to spell. Know the meanings of words. Know the language. As a journalist, you are a guardian of the language, perhaps a “language sheriff.” You must use the language well and carefully if your reader is going to understand what you are trying to say in print. If you as a writer put up roadblocks to understanding through poor command of the language, the reader is not well-served. Not only that, but the reader becomes an editor — and edits your poorly written copy by putting the paper aside.

Become comfortable using a dictionary -- a real dictionary that you can hold in your hand. Avoid using a thesaurus, however, because the words you use in a story should be precisely the right words, the clearest and simplest words, and not a distant relative that might look more sophisticated.

Also, pay close attention to spelling of all proper names, such as company names, product names, school and college names and geographic names and references. Use highway maps, college directories and telephone books, in addition to dictionaries and encyclopedias, as resources to assist in spelling proper names correctly.



Do not rely on computer spell-checking programs.

MORE THAN 150 OF THE MOST COMMONLY MISPELLED OR MISUSED WORDS

absence	disappear	occasion
academic	effect	occur/occurred
accept	efficient/efficiency	omit/omitted
accidentally	eighth	overall
accommodate	embarrass	pamphlet
accurate	environment	parallel
achieve/achievement	especially	percent/percentage
adolescent/adolescence	everybody	personal
adviser	exceed/excess	personnel
affect	existence	precede
all right	extracurricular	preparation
all together	feasible	principal
already	February	principle
alter	foreword	proceed
altogether	forward	questionnaire
apparently	fulfill/fulfillment	receive/receipt
athlete/athletics	gauge	recommend
attendance	government	refer/referred
believe/believable	grievance	reference
beneficial	guarantee	regret/regrettable
benefit/benefited	harass/harassment	representative
calendar	height	rhythm
capital	immediately	righteous
capitol	intellectual	rivalry
cemetery	interrupt	schedule
changeable	irrelevant	separate
commercial	irresistible	similar
commit/commitment	judgment	stationary
committee	kidnap/kidnaping	stationery
comparable	knowledge/knowledgeable	succession
compatible	label/labeled	summary
complement	leisure/leisurely	supersede
compliment	liaison	surprise
conscience	license	susceptible
conscious	lightening	teenage/teenager
consistent/consistency	lightning	temperature
continuous	maintenance	thorough/thoroughly
council	manageable	through
counsel/counselor	miscellaneous	travel/traveled
definitely	mileage	under way
dependent/dependency	misspell	unnecessary
desert	movable	usable
dessert	necessart	warrant

REFERENCE CHART FOR COPY-EDITING SYMBOLS

1. Abbreviate	He was born on <u>(August)4</u> in Urbana, <u>(Illinois)</u> .
2. Boldface	<u>This line should be set in boldface type.</u>
3. Capitalize	An <u>A</u> merican won the <u>N</u> obel prize.
4. Center]Continued on Page 10[
5. Change letter	Their <u>hoxe</u> is expensive.
6. Change word	She received <u>three</u> gifts.
7. Close up space between words	Their car was <u>totally</u> destroyed.
8. Close up space within a word	Their children <u>r an outa</u> de.
9. Continues on next page	<u>(More)</u>
10. Delete letter	They received <u>d</u> the money.
11. Delete phrase	They did not use <u>any-unneded-or-unnecessary</u> words.
12. Delete punctuation	They asked <u>if</u> he was <u>safe</u> .
13. End of story	OR: They asked <u>if</u> he was <u>safe</u> . ### OR: -30- OR: -0-
14. Flush left	[The typesetter will begin this line at the left margin.
15. Flush right	The typesetter will end this line at the right margin.]
16. Ignore correction (Correct as written)	<u>(Stet)</u>
17. Insert apostrophe	It's good you're going home.
18. Insert colon	He set three goals: success, health and wealth.
19. Insert comma	The girl, lives with her grandmother.
20. Insert dash	The score was 87 to 53, a disaster.



21. Insert exclamation point "What! I don't believe it!" she exclaimed.
22. Insert hyphen The 7-year-old girl lives with her mother.
23. Insert letter Their car fled to sart.
24. Insert period John C. Kefalis received the scholarship.
OR: John C. Kefalis received the scholarship.
25. Insert quotation marks "This is easy," he said.
26. Insert semicolon Don't go, he needs your help.
27. Insert word He writes poetry.
28. Italic Some publications set words in italics for emphasis.
29. Lowercase (Do not capitalize) The Mayor failed to arrive.
30. No new paragraph To generate more publicity, the candidate announced that he would work at 100 different jobs.
He spent the remainder of his campaign picking tomatoes, plucking chickens, hauling trash, digging ditches and driving trucks.
31. Separate words Journalists are critical of political gimmickry.
32. Spell out numbers or words He said 8 people will go to Ala.
33. Start new paragraph ¶ Another man campaigned on roller skates.
His wife explained: "We met at a roller skating rink, and we thought it would be a fun idea. He's going house to house, subdivision to subdivision on his skates, and people remember him."
34. Transpose letters Typists often transpose letters.
35. Transpose words Happily, he accepted the award.

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