

WRITING & EDITING

Welcome to the world of journalistic writing—a style that is precise, crisp and compelling. You might be accustomed to writing an essay to make your English teacher happy by now, but the style used in journalism is often will leave English teachers scratching their heads.

There are a variety of different styles of journalistic writing: news, feature, sports and opinion. It doesn't end there, though. Each of those styles have variations, making being a journalistic a trickier task than one might imagine.

No matter what type of story you write, it is important to develop a lead. A lead is typically the first sentence or two of an article that hooks the reader and provides the most pertinent information.

In a news story the lead typically answers the who, what, when, why, where and how. Readers will want to know the most important information right away, and this style of lead delivers the information quickly.

Many news stories often follow the inverted pyramid style of writing. This is where the most important information appears at the beginning of the story and as the story continues the information becomes less pertinent. This style is popular with newspapers because if an editor needs to cut a story for space, by cutting from the end the reader doesn't miss out on any important content.

Occasionally, though, reporters make mistakes. Perhaps you've heard the phrase, "you buried the lead." This is when a reporter neglects to put the most information in the lead and instead include later in the story. This can, at times, be effective in a feature-type story to shock the reader, but in a straight-news story this isn't effective.

Strong news stories are balanced, without bias and as accurate as possible. A reporter needs to make every effort to interview as many people connected to the story as possible. Sources provide details, and the more details a reporter has the better and more accurate the story will be.

Except for opinion stories, reporters must take great care not to editorialize when they write. Editorializing is when a reporter interjects his or her own opinion in a story.

"The investigation, though sloppy, was concluded by mid-day." That is an example of editorializing. The reporter, who might think an investigation they witnessed was sloppy, can't say that

in a news story. Everything in a news story must be traced back to someone else. "The investigation, which was sloppy according to eyewitness John Doe, was concluded by mid-day," is an appropriate sentence as the "sloppy" comment has now been attributed to a person on the scene.

Speaking of attribution, when quoting sources there are a few rules to always follow. First, stick to "said." Said is a plain word that offers no additional meaning, like exclaimed, remarked, shouted, laughed and so on. Said is a safe word and should be the only word you use in attributions.

When quoting a person, remember that nine times out of 10 you will follow subject/verb agreement in your attribution. "Today was a great day," resident John Doe said. That is a correct quote. Occasionally, though, said comes first when the person being quoted has a long title that shouldn't separate the quote and their name. For example, "Today was a great day," said director of town management and waste removal John Doe.

When a quote is longer than usual, it is OK to put the attribution between clauses, such as, "Today was a great day," John Doe said, "for taking a bike ride to the mountains."

When writing, it is important to separate your quotes with transitions. Transitions are paragraphs that appear between quotes, often setting up what the quote is about. They also help separate quotes from different people so there is no confusion.

Many times, like most paragraphs in journalism, a transition might only be one sentence.

"Today was a great day," John Doe said.

Others had different opinions.

"I thought today was awful," Cindy Smith said.

A great way to see this in action is to watch a TV newscast. When reporting you will notice the reporter typically speaks between two different soundbytes to keep the ideas separate.

Feature stories often differ from news stories because the timeliness factor is much different. Because feature stories are planned in advance, there is likely less need to cut the story once it runs. Therefore, a news-style lead is not necessary. Feature leads can in fact take several forms, including: quote, one-word, narrative, startling statement, scene-setting or tease.

Where a news story often follows the inverted pyramid style, feature stories are more typically stylized after a rectangle.

The rectangle shape is possible because feature stories are planned in advance and editors can make sure to save the needed space for the story. Because of this, feature stories will at times feature an ending that ties back to the lead, something an inverted pyramid story would have a hard time doing.

A popular type of feature story is the personality profile. This is because people-driven stories are reader-engaging and writer-friendly.

Personality profiles often focus on one aspect of a person. These stories are full of quotes and color, and are perfect for high school publications. The good thing about profiles are that they can be written about anyone, as everyone has a story.

To write a strong profile, reporters often spend time with their subject getting to know all about them. It is also important to interview others who know the profiled person well, to get added depth for the story.

No matter the type of feature story, though, people-driven stories are the best to write. Readers like to identify with others. By featuring people you give a face to whatever you are writing.

Sports stories, like feature stories, can take many forms. Sports can even be news when the event is of significant importance.

It is important when writing about sports to avoid becoming a fan for your school's team. Remember to be free of bias as you report. It is a good idea to interview fans, athletes and coaches from your school and opposing schools when writing sports stories. Get the complete story!

Sports stories are tricky in that you are more likely going to need to reference your school name or mascot more often than other stories. You want to make certain that if you are the Panthers playing the Rebels, the reader knows who you are writing about.

Keep in mind not all sports stories will be well-received. As a journalist it is your duty to cover the good and the bad. If a team loses, say so, don't sugarcoat reality. Avoid only writing fluff pieces when your team is having a tough season.

Finally, the time to include your opinion and observations is in a column. Columns are often a favorite among high school students to write, though

it is important to know there are right ways and wrong ways to write a column.

Columns shouldn't be used to just rant and complain. Columns should show evidence of reporting, combined with the opinion of the writer. In fact, columns can include quotes and appear to almost be a news story with some writer editorializing.

Columns provide the best place for a writer to develop a voice. If you will be writing a column in each issue of the paper, take time to develop into a strong writer that has a unique style readers will enjoy.

Keep in mind that a column is different than an editorial. An editorial is also an opinion piece, however it represents the views of the staff and is typically written by the editorial board. Usually just one editorial appears in each issue, whereas multiple columns can appear in any issue.

Reviews are the final type of opinion piece. Reviews are much like columns but focus on a new CD, book, movie, video game or such. A reviewer wants to go into any review with an open mind. The point of the review is to then present the reader details and let them know whether or not the item being reviewed is worth the reader's time and/or money. Reviewers need to be careful not to spoil books and movies, yet give enough detail that a person can reasonably decide if they want to buy the book or see the movie.

No matter what you are writing, be clear, accurate and professional. The simple misspelling of a person's name can ruin your credibility. Be wise.

WORKING WITH A COPY EDITOR

One of the toughest parts about being a new reporter is learning to deal with copy editors. A person is often very protective of their own writing, so the idea of a person you might not know real well tearing apart what you have written can be a bit devastating.

One of the first things to realize is that it's not personal. The copy editor's job is to make sure the stories going into the publication are the best they can be. The experience of a copy editor might lead them to suggest you make changes, or, they might make the changes themselves. When there is time, a copy editor might work with you, however that is not always possible.

It is important to learn from this process as it will help you go on to be a top notch reporter with fewer and fewer copy problems each time.

WRITING CHECKLIST

Use the following checklist as a guide after each story you write. By following the checklist, you should be able to avoid several preventable errors.

for all

- no matter the topic, the story is written in an interesting way
- no editorialization, your opinion is absent (except for columns)
- any opinion can be attributed to a source
- have at least 3-5 sources (at least 3 quoted)
- sources do not include your friends
- use "said" in attributions
- punctuation is inside quotation marks
- all quotes are separated by transitions
- quotes are interesting/make sense to the story
- avoid overuse of school name
- lead answers the 5 Ws and H

- followed AP Style for time, money
- used commas appropriately in a series
- appropriate, descriptive words are used
- checked spelling of all names used
- the word "that" is actually needed when used
- angle is obvious and interesting
- story is in 3rd person
- paragraphs are short
- NC, Panthers and such are avoided
- nothing is hard to understand

for sports

- used boys and girls, not men's and women's
- avoided cliché terms
- didn't cheerlead
- used sources from competing schools

- explained sports' terms readers may be unfamiliar with
- didn't apologize for school losses
- didn't begin with a lead like "despite a valiant effort"
- uses stats correctly, has done research in this area

for opinion

- clear stance taken
- clear topic presented
- facts back up opinion
- writing has a voice
- rhetorical questions avoided
- overuse of "I" avoided
- avoided preachiness
- avoided libel comments

for editorials

- avoids use of "I," must use "we" or "us" as needed
- clearly explains a problem

- provides a solution to the problem
- is precise, tightly-written
- corresponds to the main news story when possible

for feature

- lead is catchy
- story shows and tells
- strong evidence of thorough reporting

for headlines

- follow subject/verb agreement
- explains the angle of the story
- articles not used
- numbers used instead of words
- proper names avoided
- commas used to separate ideas
- Only first word capitalized (except proper nouns when needed)

INTERVIEWING

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

So, you've been assigned a story and now need to conduct some interviews. No problem! First, research the topic and the people you are going to interview. Don't waste time asking questions that you already know the answer to or can find the answer to before the interview. Also, determine your stance on using "off-the-record" material and make sure your subject knows where you stand.

TIPS

- dress appropriately, don't over-dress, don't under-dress
- develop a shorthand
- listen and allow for response time
- don't let yourself become the interviewee
- be flexible, allow for spontaneous questions
- conduct the interview at a location comfortable to the interviewee
- interview in person, if you must interview by phone do so, but avoid interviews over the Internet

AT THE INTERVIEW

When interviewing a source, try to match their style of dress with yours. Avoid over-dressing or under-dressing, but remember, if left with no choice, it is better to be over-dressed than under-dressed.



WHEN YOU ARRIVE/ STARTING OFF

After you meet the person you are interviewing, start slow to establish your credibility. Begin with some yes/no questions that make you look like you know what you're talking about. Once the interviewee is comfortable, proceed to open-ended questions and allow the interviewee time to think before responding. If you are meeting in someone's office or home, take notes about their possessions, design style and other things that pop out at you while conducting the interview.

1

DURING THE INTERVIEW

Take accurate notes! It will be helpful if you have a shorthand developed to help take notes quickly. Even if recording the interview, take notes, as technology can fail. Ask specific questions and allow for the interviewee the time to respond. Pay attention and have a conversation. Listen for follow-ups, don't be too preoccupied with your next question.

2

FINISHING UP

At the end of your interview, ask your interviewee if there is anything he or she would like to add. This way, the interviewee can follow-up an earlier statement or go on record with something else they wanted to say. Also, ask if it is OK for you to follow-up at a later time should you need clarification or have another question. Interviewees will appreciate your attention to detail.

3

WRITING THE STORY

Your best bet is to begin transcribing your notes while the interview is still fresh in your head whether you write the story that very minute or not. Your interview may lead to you conducting other interviews or doing further research. Some reporters will also use this time to send the interviewee a thank you note for their time.

4

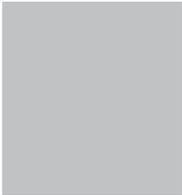
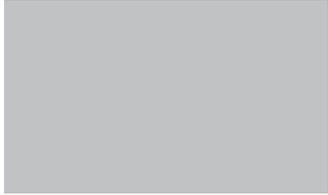
HEADLINES & TITLES

A headline is used to tell the reader what a story is about. "Students perform solos tonight," lets the reader know the story is about students singing solos. Pretty straight forward, eh? Most news stories and more serious types of articles will use a headline. Headlines typically follow subject/verb agreement and are straight to-the-point.

A title is a kind of headline often used with feature stories and those that are more playful in nature. Titles don't follow the typical subject/verb agreement. Many times, titles are plays on words, puns and based on clichés. For example, Entertainment Weekly ran "Pot Luck" as a title for a story about Olympian Michael Phelps' marijuana possession.

headline	Black Oscar nominees thrive on TV
title	Kiss kills (rock band Kiss)
headline	Debt plan gaining ground
title	Lone Star Crazy (Texas extremists)
headline	Japan shocks USA, wins World Cup
title	Spokes People (people who ride bikes to work)
headline	Embattled city is fighting back
title	Bone Appetit (dog food)

HEADLINE STYLES

<p>KICKER A secondary headline that appears above the main headline, often for design effect.</p>	<p>WICKET To provide further context to the main headline, a wicket often sits above the main head and provides more detail.</p>	<p>HAMMER Like a wicket, however a hammer appears below the main head in one fashion or another.</p>	<p>TRIPOD Again like the wicket and hammer, however a tripod runs next to the main head to create yet one other graphic look.</p>
<p>PANTHERS READY Game on!</p> 	<p>Boys basketball team prepares for rematch with Wildcats Game on!</p> 	<p>Game on! Boys basketball team prepares for rematch with Wildcats</p> 	<p>Game on! Boys basketball team prepares for rematch with Wildcats</p> 

WRITING BRIEFS

Briefs are among the hardest things to write, as you want to include a lot of information in a limited amount of space. Briefs should be free of fluff. Stick to the who, what, when, where, why and how. Add some back-up information and perhaps a statistic or quote to add information. A quote or two will quickly add to the length, so be careful to only use the quotes that are the most important. Likely, in a brief, you will only quote one person, so make sure you focus on the best source, too.

Here are some examples of briefs:

POSITIVE REFERRALS MAKE DEBUT

Last spring, social studies teacher Andy Wiggins started a new program, impact!, a group of teachers meeting together to discuss teaching strategies, issues and other topics of importance to teachers.

From this initiative, the impact! Postive Referral was born. Tying into the district's adopted IB MYP Learner Profile Traits, all teachers have now been

armed with a pad of these referrals which are intended to be given to students who do something positive around the building. The pads, the same size as pink hall passes, were limited to one pad per teacher.

"It has become far too easy to focus only on the negative actions of individuals," Wiggins said, "We want to recognize, emphasize and celebrate the positive impact that our students have on NC every single day."

Students are to turn their referrals in to the bookstore or the front desk so they can be entered in monthly drawings for special prizes.

STUDENTS START TEST PREPPING

During their junior year, many students begin to take direction with their studies, often by taking more challenging classes. Juniors are also faced with two of the most stressful and most important tests in high school: the SAT and ACT.

Most college scholarships and admissions depend

largely on a good SAT or ACT score. They can make the difference between dream colleges and the backup plan.

Senior Jack Ellis gave his advice to future test-takers.

"You need to get a lot of sleep the night before," Ellis said. "Any caffeine can help."

Individuals have developed a multitude of strategies aimed to optimize their test scores.

"I had KFC beforehand. It's my favorite food and I actually did really well on the test," senior Mitchell Golden said.

Juniors can begin preparing now as the test are fast approaching. The more a test-taker feels prepared, regardless of strategy, the better the outcome will be. There are multiple SAT and ACT study books available to students wanting to do well. In addition, there are many courses offered by the Princeton Review, the makers of the tests. The guidance office is open to help students requesting further information.

CAPTIONS

Captions are among the most read copy in a publication—especially the yearbook. Use this checklist when writing your captions.

- ___ first sentence in present tense
- ___ following sentences in past tense
- ___ at least two sentences long

- ___ describes the action of the photo
- ___ avoid beginning all captions with an -ing word
- ___ avoid beginning all captions with a person's name
- ___ second and additional sentences add additional

background information to the the photo or event

TWEETING

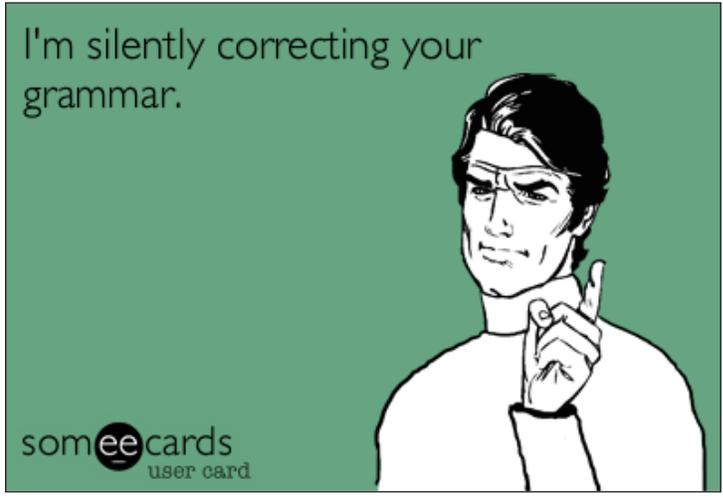
TWEETING SPORTS

When tweeting sports, the tweet should be direct and to-the-point. For most events, scores are only updated after each scoring period. In the first tweet, the school we are playing should be identified by name and mascot. Spell the sport name out in the first tweet and abbreviate thereafter. Additional tweets are appropriate if an injury occurs or some other type of non-ordinary event happens during the course of the contest. Avoid becoming a cheerleader.

	NCHSLive! Sports @NCHSLiveSports Boys bball: Final: Panthers beat Greyhounds, 87-80.	1 min
	NCHSLive! Sports @NCHSLiveSports Boys bball: After 3 quarters, Panthers and Greyhounds tied at 69.	37 min
	NCHSLive! Sports @NCHSLiveSports Boys bball: At the half, Greyhounds overtake Panthers, lead 42-40.	1 hr
	NCHSLive! Sports @NCHSLiveSports Boys bball: After the first quarter, Panthers lead Greyhounds, 23-19.	1hr
	NCHSLive! Sports @NCHSLiveSports Boys basketball set to tip-off with Carmel Greyhounds at 7:30 p.m.	2 hr

COPY EDITING

ATLANTA (AP)—The organization said Thursday. <u>It</u> was the first the last attempts.	indent for paragraph paragraph no paragraph
With this the president tried the Jones <u>Smith</u> company is not over a period of <u>sixty</u> or more years there were <u>9</u> in the group. Ada, <u>Oklahoma</u> is the hometown The <u>Ga</u> man was the guest of prince edward said it was his as a result <u>/</u> his will be	transpose use figures spell it out abbreviate don't abbreviate uppercase lowercase
the ac <u>u</u> ser pointed to them <u>I</u> n these times it is necessary the order for the <u>stat</u> <u>later</u> devices The ruling <u>a</u> fine example according to the <u>his</u> source	remove space insert space retain insert word delete



**Let's eat grandpa.
Let's eat, grandpa.**

Correct punctuation can save a person's life.