

# Feature Writing

Invitational B Meet • 2021



You are a reporter for the Leaguetown **Press**, the student newspaper of Leaguetown High School.

From the given information, write a **feature story** as you would for the high school newspaper. You may use statements attributed to individuals as **direct or indirect quotes**. You may not change the meaning of a statement. You have **one hour**.

Do not write your name or the name of your school on this sheet or your entry. **Put your number on your paper.**

Leaguetown High School, located in Texas, has 500 students in grades 9-12. Over spring break, sophomore Peter So will compete to be a chess Grandmaster. If he succeeds, he will be the youngest Grandmaster in Texas and the only one in this county. Grandmaster is the highest ranking a chess competitor can obtain — other than winning World Champion. Out of the millions of chess players around the world, only 1,515 currently have that ranking.

The World Chess Federation ranks chess players based on their competitions. Titles are achieved when chess players reach a specific rating through verified tournaments.

Peter's grandfather taught him how to play chess when he was 4 years old, and by the age of 8, Peter started playing competitively. Since then, Peter has traveled the world competing in chess tournaments and has won more than \$50,000. In fact, last summer, he spent two weeks in Russia training with two Grandmasters. However, since the pandemic, he has shifted to online tournaments.

So's tournament to compete for his Grandmaster title is Friday, March 19. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Tuesday, March 16.

## ■ PETER SO, sophomore

"My grandfather challenged me to become a Grandmaster by the time I graduated from high school. If I win this tournament, I will beat that challenge by two years, and Pawpaw will be so proud. He will be the first person I call if I win.

"No one else in my family plays chess. My parents never liked the game, and my younger sisters think it's boring. My Pawpaw and I used to play every day. Then he moved to San Francisco to live with my aunt three years ago. We play online sometimes, but now he tells me I am too good for him. When I used to travel for tournaments, before the pandemic, my Pawpaw would always be my chaperone. He loves watching me play. He says I make him nervous. Sometimes I wait until the last second to make my move for strategy. I want my opponent to think that I am struggling with my move, but I rarely am. In most games, I know where I am going for each move even before my opponent moves.

"I guess I like chess because it's all about strategy and not always about winning. A chess player has to lose thousands of games, study those losses and then learn from those losses. That's how you become a stronger player. Playing in tournaments gives me the opportunity to put my new knowledge to the test, learn about the psychology of competition, practice time management and gain the experience necessary to become a strong player. I am never upset about the outcome of tournament even if I lose and, honestly, sometimes I learn more from losing.

"Everyone thinks chess is only a mental game, but that's not true. You have to be in good shape to sit through a two-and-a-half-hour game. You don't eat, you

don't get up from the table except to go to the restroom, and you don't talk to anyone. I try to work out my body as much as my mind. It may sound a little weird, but I think it gives me an edge over my competitors. I am a distance runner, and I try to run 20 to 25 miles each week. This year, I won second at the UIL State Cross Country Meet. Running also helps me mentally. While I am running, I think about chess moves. I think about strategy — how I lost or why I won. I do some of my best chess training when I am running.

“My hardest tournament was in the Netherlands. We were in this little auditorium in some small town. It was grueling. It was so cold in the room that I could barely feel my fingers by the end of the match. Every time I blew out a big breath, I could see it. It was crazy, and the sad thing was, I didn't even win the match. I learned a lot, and it made me a better player. I also learned to always take extra warm clothing when I play in a cold climate. That proved super helpful when I did my training in Russia.

“Thankfully, the pandemic didn't affect chess competitions too much. Everything was moved online. It's not as much fun, but at least we still get to play. That is all that really matters.

“My winnings will help pay for college, but I hope to get a scholarship. Texas Tech University has a great chess program, and they are interested in me. For me, it's not about winning the money. In fact, I would play even if I never won a penny. I love the game. I love predicting my opponent's next move and planning mine. It's a total rush for me.”

#### ■ **VANESSA VACCA, science teacher and cross country coach**

“Peter isn't just an incredible chess player. He's also a great runner and a great kid. He's the fastest kid on our team and the most dedicated. I never have to tell him to train over breaks or holidays. He's always running.

“Last year, when he told me he played chess, I challenged him to a game after practice. About 10 minutes into the game, even though I thought I was a fairly decent player, I realized I was toast. Peter guessed every move I made and had me in checkmate in 12 moves. It was definitely humbling.”

#### ■ **SEBASTIAN GUILD, sophomore**

“Peter and I have been best friends since kindergarten. He tried to teach me how to play chess in elementary school, but I couldn't wrap my head around it. I don't think many people at school know he's this big chess wizard. He keeps all of that to himself. I really didn't even know how good he had gotten until I googled him. Then, I saw all of his winnings, and I couldn't believe it. When I asked him why he didn't tell me, he said it was because he didn't want to brag. Man, if I had won all of those contests and money, I would be shouting it from the rooftops. But not Peter. He's too humble for that, and that's one of the things I like best about him.”

**DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!**

## INVITATIONAL B • 2021 FEATURE WRITING CONTEST TIPS AND SAMPLE STORY

*Contest Director: Give one copy to each judge to use during critique/judging. Also, staple one copy of the contest and one copy of the contest tips to each student's returned entry. The purpose of the tips is to provide immediate feedback to students. However, it is not meant to replace written comments from the judge.*

1. Figure out what the story is about and its theme or focus. This story is about a student who is competing to be a Grandmaster in chess.

2. The lead of a feature story must grab the reader's attention. It does not have to be a certain length or include the 5Ws and H. It should set a scene and get the reader into the story. Although you have freedom to describe the scene as you think it might have existed, try to stay as close to the prompt as you can. Some judges will not want you to wander off the subject too much.

Cross country makes sophomore Peter So a better chess player.

“It may sound a little weird, but I think it gives me an edge over my competitors,” he said.

Not only does running keep him in good physical shape, which helps when he has a long chess game, but it also gives him time to think about chess.

“I think about strategy — how I lost or why I won,” he said. “I do some of my best chess training when I am running.”

3. Once you get past the lead, make sure you include a nut graph. It tells the reader what the story is going to be about. Follow the nut graph with a direct quote and then go into the transition/quote formula.

### **nut graph**

And Peter is looking for every edge he can as he prepares to compete for his Grandmaster title this Friday. If he succeeds, he will be the youngest Grandmaster in Texas and the only one in this county. Grandmaster is the highest ranking a chess competitor can obtain — other than winning World Champion. Currently, 1,515 chess players worldwide have earned that ranking.

### **direct quote**

“My grandfather challenged me to become a Grandmaster by the time I graduated from high school,” he said. “If I win this tournament, I will beat that challenge by two years, and Pawpaw will be so proud.”

4. After you get past the nut graph, the rest of the story can tell itself through the use of transition/quote formula.

Be sure you attribute after the quote or at least after the first sentence. An attribution should be: subject of attribution followed by the verb of attribution (“Peter said,” not “said Peter”). Avoid stacking quotes. Try to avoid putting two or more quotes together without placing some kind of transition between them. Also, make sure transitions provide information to help the action of the story and that the quote does not repeat information in the transition.

**transition/story-telling**

Peter's grandfather was the one who taught him how to play chess when he was only 4 years old. Peter started playing competitively when he was 8.

**direct quote**

"No one else in my family plays chess," he said. "My parents never liked the game, and my younger sisters think it's boring. My Pawpaw and I used to play every day."

**transition/story-telling**

Three years ago, Peter's grandfather moved to San Francisco to live with relatives.

**direct quote**

"We play online sometimes, but now he tells me I am too good for him," Peter said. "When I used to travel for tournaments, before the pandemic, my Pawpaw would always be my chaperone."

5. Always use third person. Don't say "our student" or "our own Peter." Also, do not editorialize. For instance, you should not say "He is so smart." These statements are personal opinions and should not be made in a feature story.

6. Always use the verb "said" as the verb of attribution. Don't say "says," "stated," "feels" or any other synonym for "said."

7. Finally, look for a strong quote to use as a closing statement or a statement that will bring the reader back to the beginning of the story. It should give the reader a sense of satisfaction or resolution.

His winnings will help Peter pay for his college, but he hopes to get a scholarship to Texas Tech University, which he said has a strong chess program.

"For me, it's not about winning the money," he said. "In fact, I would play even if I never won a penny. I love the game. I love predicting my opponent's next move and planning mine. It's a total rush for me."

**SAMPLE STORY**

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Not only does running keep him in good physical shape, which helps when he has a long chess game, but it also gives him time to think about chess.

“I think about strategy — how I lost or why I won,” he said. “I do some of my best chess training when I am running.”

And Peter is looking for every edge he can as he prepares to compete for his Grandmaster title on March 19. If he succeeds, he will be the youngest Grandmaster in Texas and the only one in this county. Grandmaster is the highest ranking a chess competitor can obtain — other than winning World Champion. Currently, 1,515 chess players worldwide have earned that ranking.

“My grandfather challenged me to become a Grandmaster by the time I graduated from high school,” he said. “If I win this tournament, I will beat that challenge by two years, and Pawpaw will be so proud.”

Peter’s grandfather was the one who taught him how to play chess when he was only 4 years old. Peter started playing competitively when he was 8.

“No one else in my family plays chess,” he said. “My parents never liked the game, and my younger sisters think it’s boring. My Pawpaw and I used to play every day.”

Three years ago, Peter’s grandfather moved to San Francisco to live with relatives.

“We play online sometimes, but now he tells me I am too good for him,” Peter said. “When I used to travel for tournaments, before the pandemic, my Pawpaw would always be my chaperone.”

Peter said his grandfather loves to watch him play, but Peter’s style makes him nervous.

“Sometimes I wait until the last second to make my move for strategy,” he said. “I want my opponent to think that I am struggling with my move, but I rarely am. In most games, I know where I am going for each move even before my opponent moves.”

Vanessa Vacca, the cross country coach, can attest to Peter’s prowess in chess.

“Last year, when he told me he played chess, I challenged him to a game after practice,” she said. “About 10 minutes into the game, even though I thought I was a fairly decent player, I realized I was toast. Peter guessed every move I made and had me in checkmate in 12 moves. It was definitely humbling.”

Peter brings that same intensity to running.

“He’s the fastest kid on our team and the most dedicated,” Vacca said.

While students may know about Peter’s second place finish at the UIL Cross Country State Meet this year, sophomore Sebastain Guild, his best friend since kindergarten, doesn’t think many know Peter is a “big chess wizard.”

“I really didn’t even know how good he had gotten until I googled him,” he said. “When I asked him why he didn’t tell me, he said it was because he didn’t want to brag.”

Peter has traveled the world for chess tournaments and even trained in Russia for two weeks last summer.

“My hardest tournament was in the Netherlands,” he said. “We were in this little auditorium in some small town. It was grueling. It was so cold in the room that I could barely feel my fingers by the end of the match. Every time I blew out a big breath, I could see it. It was crazy, and the sad thing was, I didn’t even win the match.”

His winnings will help Peter pay for his college, but he hopes to get a scholarship to Texas Tech University, which he said has a strong chess program.

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