

News Writing Tips

1. **Mark** or **code** your prompt the first time you read it.
2. Follow journalistic format, typically called the **transition, quote** format.
3. Lead should include a **future** angle, if possible. If there is not a future event, begin with information the **students don't already know**.
4. Lead should be **1-2** sentences long.
5. First quote should come from someone of ultimate **value** to the story. First, consider someone **connected to the school**.
6. Begin a new **paragraph** each time you switch from a transition to a quote.
7. Keep paragraphs short, usually **2-3** sentences.
8. Facts should be presented in **descending** order of importance.
9. Information should **flow** and paragraph transition should be **smooth**.
10. Generally, **opinions** go in quotes and **facts** go in transitions. You can also **paraphrase** someone's opinion in a transition.
11. Be sure to attribute quotes **accurately**. Attribution always goes at the end of the first **sentence** in a quote.
12. Write **tight** and omit **extraneous** information. Don't try to include **all** the information on the prompt in your story.
13. Don't put your **opinion** in the story.
14. Show **all** sides of the story. To keep story balanced, include opinions **for** and **against** the topic of your news story, unless they are juvenile or irrelevant.

Feature Writing Tips

1. **Mark** or **code** your prompt the first time you read it.
2. Follow **journalistic** format, typically called the transition/quote format.
3. Lead should grab the reader's **attention** and set the **tone** for the story.
4. You can use a narrative, descriptive, compare and contrast or twist type of **lead**. Avoid using a **quote** in your lead.
5. Your lead, including the **news peg**, will usually be **2-3** short paragraphs long. If the lead gets any longer, you risk losing the reader.
6. First quote should come from the **person** or **one of the persons** the feature is about.
7. Begin a new **paragraph** each time you switch from a transition to a **quote**.
8. Transitions should include **facts** or **indirect quotes**. Because there are typically less facts included on a feature prompt, you will probably have more indirect quote transitions in feature writing than you would in news writing.
9. Keep paragraphs **short**, usually **2-3** sentences. One-sentence paragraphs will make your story seem **choppy**.
10. Information should **flow** and paragraph transition should be smooth.
11. Be sure to attribute quotes **accurately**. Attribution always goes at the end of the **first sentence** in a quote.
12. It is okay to call a **student** by their first name on second reference and throughout the rest of the story, but it is not okay to do that for an **adult**.
13. If two or more people in your story have the same last name, make sure it is clear which person you are referring to. You may have to call someone by their **title**, such as Halmark's father, rather than their **last** name.
14. Write **tight** and omit **extraneous** information. Don't try to include all the information on the prompt in your story.
15. Don't put your **opinion** in the story.

Editorial Writing Tips

1. Editorials are typically a **5-7** paragraph story.
2. The first paragraph, the lead, should sound like a **news** lead.
3. Include a **future** angle, if there is one, in your 1-2 sentence lead. Students usually know more about what is going on a school than anyone else, so try not begin with old information.
4. In the second paragraph, which is generally **one** sentence long, take a **strong** stance. Are you for or against the editorial topic? Tell the decision maker exactly what to do.
5. The next two or three paragraphs present evidence that support your stance. Make sure to choose specific, concrete details that back up your stance. **Numbers** and **statistics** are good to include. These paragraphs are usually 3-4 sentences long.
6. The next to last paragraph refutes the **opposition**. Tear down their position in a persuasive way. Don't preach or get pretentious. This paragraph should be 2-3 sentences long.
7. The first sentence of the final paragraph should recap your **stance**. It's called a **call to action**. In the second sentence, you should offer a solution, if your stance is against the editorial topic. If you agree with the editorial topic, offer another strong reason why the reader should agree with you. This paragraph should be 2-3 sentences long.
8. Avoid any **quotes** or rhetorical **questions** in your paper. Your job is to inform and persuade, not ask questions of the reader.

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING HEADLINES

1. Avoid unnecessary words such as articles *a, an, the*.
Vernon college now offers nursing class
2. Use present tense verbs for past stories.
Chamber of commerce moves to new office
3. Use the infinitive verb (to vote) for future stories.
Southbound 287 to close starting tonight
4. Use commas to replace *and*.
Juniors, seniors to take exams
5. Don't split infinitives or prepositional phrases from one line to the next.
*Juniors vote to
cancel prom*
6. Don't end with a preposition.
Band splits up
7. Don't split unit words such as names
*Teachers form task
force on assaults*
8. Avoid passive verbs such as *am, are, is, was, were, be, been, being*.
Wildcats are champs vs. Wildcats win championship
9. Avoid *to be* and *will be*.
Students will be tested vs. *Cops test students
for alcohol at prom* *for alcohol at prom*
10. Don't repeat key words.
Athletic department forces athletes to pay for jerseys
11. Don't pad heads to make them fit.
Seniors to graduate in June this year
12. Use short words instead of long.
Retirees reminisce over fond memories vs. *Retirees recall fond memories*
13. Don't go over the head count.
Don't go beyond column edge
14. Don't use periods and exclamation marks.
Ladycats win district
15. Avoid implied passive verbs.
Ladycats district winners
16. Always check spelling.
receive, names especially
17. Use single quotes.
Drama Club performs 'Macbeth'
18. Use colon for *said*.
Principal Knobloch: 'Uniforms will be issued next year'
19. Use semicolons to separate sentences.
*NHS inducts 12;
students plan trip*
20. Don't use all caps.
ALL CAPS ARE HARD TO READ
21. All headlines need a subject and a verb.
Exception is main headline with secondary headline: *District Champs (main—usually bigger font)
Ladycats regain title (secondary—smaller)*

Name _____ Period _____ Date _____

Style Exercise 1

Numbers

- ◆ Ten and all numbers greater than 10 should be written in digits unless they begin a sentence. Others should be written out ... 12, 11, 10, nine, eight, seven...
- ◆ Always use digits for ages ... 8 years old or 8-year-old girl.
- ◆ When the sentence begins with a number, write out the word. The only exception to this is the use of the year.
- ◆ When using ordinal numbers, spell out first through ninth. If the number is more than nine, use the figure ... 10th.
- ◆ Use the % sign when accompanied with number ... 1%.
- ◆ For amounts of money under a dollar, use a figure followed by “cents.” If the amount is over a dollar, use the dollar sign and the figure. Write \$7, not seven dollars; write \$30 million, not \$30,000,000.

DIRECTIONS: Using copy editing symbols, edit the following sentences. Some will have more than one error.

1. “All athletes should give 110 percent in each game,” Coach Shad Hanna said.
2. Landon Cox, age 7, finished 7th in the golf tournament.
3. The team overall placed eleventh.
4. Students can donate twenty-five cents to help raise money for cancer.
5. The school’s goal is to raise five hundred dollars.
6. 14 video technology students toured KFDX Tuesday.
7. 2016 will hopefully have a forty % increase in the number of students passing.
8. John Smith sold 8 cases of fruit to be the top selling FFA member.
9. Admission to the school dance is five dollars per person.
10. Ms. Cox has fifty students enrolled in journalism.

Name _____ Period _____ Date _____

Style Exercise 2

Time and Dates

- ◆ Use 7 a.m. and 6:30 p.m., not 7:00 o'clock.
- ◆ You may use noon or midnight, but not 12 noon and not 7 p.m. tonight.
- ◆ When writing about an event which will happen or has happened within a week of the publication date, use the day of the week, not the date.
- ◆ Months without a specific date should be spelled out, but months with a day should be abbreviated: Sept. 5, not Sept. 5th. Never abbreviate March, April, May, June or July.
- ◆ Write out the days of the week.

DIRECTIONS: Using copy editing symbols, edit the following sentences. Some will have more than one error.

1. The game starts at six p.m.
2. The first paper will be distributed on October 22.
3. We usually distribute on Fri.
4. Spring break will be Mar. 14-18.
5. School starts at 8:00 o'clock each day.
6. Her curfew is 12 midnight.
7. He plans on taking a vacation in Dec.
8. Their first date was September 23rd.
9. Sat. is my favorite day of the week.
10. He has to meet the bus at seven in the morning.

Name _____ Period _____ Date _____

Style Exercise 3

Possessives/Plurals

- ◆ In sports stories, do not pluralize post-season competitions: regional, not regionals.
- ◆ When pluralizing proper names, add an s. If the name ends in es or z, add an es.
- ◆ When speaking of sports teams, use just the plural: girls volleyball.

Abbreviations

- ◆ On first reference, always write full organization names; subsequent references are abbreviated.
- ◆ In common abbreviations, don't use periods to separate.
- ◆ Abbreviate states with the U.P. Stylebook abbreviations when preceded by the name of a city. Spell out a state when it stands alone.
- ◆ Titles, when preceding a name, are abbreviated: Dr. Kim Lee.
- ◆ One does not abbreviate the following: Christmas, college degrees (bachelor's degree, not BA) or class or course titles (physical education, not P.E.).

DIRECTIONS: Using copy editing symbols, edit the following sentences. Some will have more than one error; others may have none.

1. The girls basketball team expects to advance to regionals.
2. The Ladycat's are the best!
3. John Doe plans to attend MSU next year.
4. He wants to get a BS degree in criminal justice.
5. He wants to work for the Federal Bureau of Investigation or F.B.I. after graduation.
6. His favorite professor is Doctor Michael Flavin.
7. Doe plans to work in Seattle, Washington, since he doesn't like TX.
8. Of course, he will come home to visit during the Xmas holidays.
9. Right now his favorite class is BCIS.
10. He does participate, however, on the boys' cross country team.
11. He thinks that the Wildcats have a chance of winning district.

Name _____ Period _____ Date _____

Style Exercise 4

Capitalization

- ◆ Capitalize
 - ◆ mascots: the Wildcats and the Ladycats
 - ◆ awards, organizations, titles: Most Valuable Player, Student Council, Coach Shad Hanna
 - ◆ geographic locations: the South
 - ◆ documents: the Bill of Rights
 - ◆ nationalities: Canadians, Mexicans, Yankees
 - ◆ room numbers: Room 303
- ◆ Courses should not be capitalized unless they are followed by a number with the exception of languages which are always capitalized. Write out full course titles.
- ◆ Do not capitalize varsity and junior varsity sport teams; however, JV volleyball is used on second reference.
- ◆ Do not capitalize classes: senior, sophomore, eighth grader, kindergartner, etc.

DIRECTIONS: Using copy editing symbols, edit the following sentences. Some will have more than one error; others may have none.

1. The students cheered for the ladycats when they won the championship game.
2. Magan Moore received the most valuable player trophy at the tournament.
3. He had to interview coach Amy Huseman about Varsity girls' basketball.
4. Coach Huseman said her worst player is Senior Jane Doe.
5. Her best grade is in spanish but she is failing ag and algebra I.
6. She may have to practice with the Freshmen and Sophomores on the Junior Varsity until she improves her grades. The jv team plays before the varsity.
7. Elections for student council will be next week.
8. Ballots must be returned to room 207.

Name_____ Period_____ Date_____

Style Exercise 5

Attribution

- ◆ Use first and last names on first reference to a student. The qualifier (grade, classification) is not capitalized and used before the name ... senior Pat Jones. Use the last name of students on subsequent references.
- ◆ Use both first and last names on first reference of an adult. Also the qualifier (title) is capitalized if used before the name ... Principal Josh Castles. Use last name with courtesy title (Mr., Mrs., Ms.) on subsequent references ... Mr. Castles.
- ◆ If there are two or more students or adults with the same last name in the story, use first names as well to attribute.
- ◆ Attribute the source at the end of the direct quotation, beginning a new paragraph after the attribution.
- ◆ In a longer, direct quote, place the attribution after the first statement or at a natural pause, and do not begin a new paragraph.
- ◆ For occasional variation, list the qualifier after the name and separate with commas: Carol Cox, glamour model, said...
- ◆ If the qualifier is very long, list the title after the name and separate it with commas: Sam Smith, assistant director to the committee on closing schools, said...

DIRECTIONS: Circle the correct choice. There are **EIGHT** selections.

1. One returning varsity basketball player is (senior Cavitt / senior Taylor Cavitt / Senior Taylor Cavitt).

(Taylor / Cavitt / Miss Cavitt) plays at the guard position.
2. (Superintendent C.D. Knobloch / Superintendent Knobloch / Mr. Knobloch) ensures that the Cat's Claw is mailed to all tax payers.

(C.D. / Knobloch / Mr. Knobloch) often rewards the class that organizes the mailing.
3. Mikal Musick and Justin Musick are twins. (Mikal / Musick / Mikal Musick) is on the newspaper staff.

4.
 - a. Brittany Dufrene said, "Newspaper is the best."
 - b. "Newspaper," said Brittany Dufrene, "is the best."
 - c. "Newspaper is the best," Brittany Dufrene said.
5.
 - a. "Of course it is the best. Ms. Cox teaches it, and she is the best," Clay Cowan said.
 - b. "Of course it is the best," Clay Cowan said. "Ms. Cox teaches it, and she is the best."
 - c. Clay Cowan said, "Of course it is the best. Ms. Cox teaches it, and she is the best."
6.
 - a. "I totally agree," Ashley Shaffer, former newspaper student and volunteer advertising manager, said.
 - b. "I totally agree," former newspaper student and volunteer advertising manager Ashley Shaffer said.
 - c. Ashley, Shaffer, former newspaper student and volunteer advertising manager, said, "I totally agree."