

# JOURNALISTIC RESEARCH

One of the first places to begin your quest for information (that would be verifiable factual data) is at the website I developed specifically for use by my students. Using the Internet, go to this page: <http://www.getasite.com/STG/index.htm>. Once at this page, click on the link to "Online Study Help." This will open up a page that contains specific links for each of the classes I teach. Look under JOURNALISM and click on the link to the "Journalism Resources" page and here you will find links to all the major US and world newspapers, the 3 major US news magazines, and a number of the television and cable network stations. There are other very useful journalism resources on this page, so if you are working at home, you might want to bookmark this page so you can return to it often.

## **Assessing the Event:**

*Assessing an event basically means "taking stock" of a given situation. This means making an inventory of the actors or agents involved in the event, getting a good "picture" of the scene, determining the sequence of actions that transpired in the unfolding of the event. It is essentially asking the "journalistic 5" questions: who, what, when, where, and why? The "how" calls into question judgment on your part, so you want to refrain from any opinion about the event for now.*

1. Here is a brief discussion of the "journalistic 5" questions. Use them not only to assess an event, but also to aid you in the writing of your story:
  - ⊙ **WHO** makes us think of the actor(s) or agent(s) involved in the event. What kind of person(s) is/was he or she, or them? Who was most responsible for the event? Who was the leader? Who was first to act? Who was affected by the event? Who was most helped? most harmed?
  - ⊙ **WHAT** may involve weeding out the legends and misunderstandings to see what really happened. Deciding what happened is difficult; it is a matter of putting together bits and pieces of evidence to construct a mosaic.
  - ⊙ Sometimes we know exactly **WHEN** and where something happened, but asking when something happened in relation to something else can provide a fascinating topic of research. For example, we don't know when Richard Nixon first learned of White House staff involvement in the Watergate burglary.
  - ⊙ **WHERE** questions involve geography. For example, where are the rivers of France? of Germany? Why are those facts of important? Well, various historians have argued that the rivers of France provided a natural unity to the country; whereas, the rivers of Germany flow in such a way to cause Germans to remain disunited. Given the outcome of World War II, this is an interesting "where."
  - ⊙ **WHY** - Always distinguish between the precipitating (triggering) cause and the background causes of a great event. Remember that causation is complex. Be cautious in your judgments of causes and motivations.
2. Read the highly informative article titled "Follow Your Curiosity to Find Better Stories" by Valerie Hyman of The Poynter Institute. In this article, Hyman discusses using the "journalistic questions" approach to either finding good leads for stories, or for assessing the merits of a given event to find a good "angle" by which you can cover the story as news ([http://www.poynter.org/research/rwe/rwe\\_curious.htm](http://www.poynter.org/research/rwe/rwe_curious.htm))

## **Gathering the Facts:**

*Gathering the facts basically means identifying sources you can use to get your questions answered. Basic sources include: the library, the Internet, people, and observation.*

1. Locating useful resources available at the library -- When you go to the library, search the electronic or regular card catalog there for books in the library's holdings. Browse in the book stacks and reference section. Consult the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* for magazine articles. And don't be afraid to ask a librarian for help.
2. Skim written sources you find for answers to one question at a time. Pause to read carefully and to take notes when you find an answer. Then continue skimming for additional information that answers your questions.
3. Keep track of where you find information. Write down the author, title, publisher, place and date of publication and pages on which you found answers to a question.
4. Using the Internet for research involves all three of the previously listed steps, and a bit more as well. (See "Internet Research" in a later part of this Handbook.)
5. Prepare for interviews, whether you meet with the person or speak by telephone. (See "Conducting Interviews" in a later part of this Handbook.)
6. When making observations of your own, be aware of how your own background, experience, and emotions affect what you observe and how you see it. Test what you've observed by examining other evidence. Compare your observations with those of others.
7. Before using ANY information you've found, evaluate each source you've consulted.

### **Checking the Reliability of those Facts:**

*Reporting the news is all about facts — obtaining them and then passing them on to others. That means that your news stories are only as good as the facts you put in them. If you use sources that aren't reliable, the facts you are reporting might not be reliable either, and you could end up reporting gossip instead of news. This is the reason it is very important to evaluate your sources of information, whether those sources are books, newspapers, magazines, or the Internet.*

1. When you are deciding which library facts to use, ask questions such as the following:
  - ω What person or organization is the source of this information? What do I know about him, her, or it?
  - ω How could I check the source's reliability?
  - ω How current is the information; is any of it out-of-date?
  - ω Why is the person writing this piece? Is it for information, entertainment, opinion, or marketing/advertisement purposes? If for information, is the writer objective?
  - ω How does the information compare with information in other sources?
2. When evaluating sources on the Internet, keep these points in mind:
  - ω Almost anyone can put information on the Web, so much information has not been edited or checked for correct facts.
  - ω Since anyone can put information on the Web, it is sometimes hard to know what the exact source of the information is, the source's reputation, or qualifications.
  - ω To some people, the Web is a place to voice opinions and not necessarily report facts. It is hard to tell if the sources are objective.
  - ω Dates of publication are sometimes not put on the Web site. If they are, the date could mean the date the information was first written, when the information was put on the Web page, or when the information was last revised. Because of this, it is difficult to know how current the information is.
3. Keep in mind that you should use different kinds of sources to make sure you have accurate information. Don't use only library sources or rely just on personal accounts. For every Internet source you use, always cross-check it with a non-Internet source. For data collected via the Internet, don't miss two very important sites that help you determine the credibility of Internet sources: "Ten C's For Evaluating Internet Sources" at <http://www.uwec.edu/Admin/Library/Guides/tencs.html> and "Check Your Sources" at <http://www.usus.org/techniques/checkingsources.htm>.

# INTERNET RESEARCH

There is a fairly decent tutorial at the University of Albany library called "Conducting Research on the Internet." You can locate this tutorial at the following web address: <http://www.albany.edu/library/internet/research.html>. However, I would be remiss in my duty as your advisor if I did not impart to you my own wisdom regarding the use of the Internet for research ... so here goes ... New Mediums of Research: "The Internet ~ The World At Your Fingertips, Literally."

For several decades, the Internet was the exclusive domain of the Department of the Defense and academic scholars. Now that the "net" has been opened for commercial use (since 1994), the Internet and the World Wide Web are bringing more and more people to the new frontier of "cyberspace" or the "information superhighway." Quite literally, you and I now have the world of information at our fingertips. We can access documents produced by government agencies, by institutions of higher learning, and by organizations both for profit and nonprofit that are now a part of the "public domain." We are also thankful that many of our public libraries are now connected to the "information superhighway."

This exercise is not really an exercise, but more an "exposure" lesson so you might have the chance to "surf the net." There are three "areas" this assignment takes a look at with respect to the Internet: (1) search engines; (2) databases; and (3) directories. All are comparable to the types of traditional mediums we find in print form in libraries.

**Internet Search Engines** ~ There are a number of very powerful search engines now on the Internet. When you access a search engine and type in a "keyword" to conduct a search, the search engine sends out a "robot" or a "spider" that reads information contained on any given web page called META TAG data. The most powerful search engines can scan tens of thousands of web pages in a matter of seconds. The engine then returns on your screen a list of web pages that the robot found to contain the keyword(s) you requested. Some searches return 10,000+ documents. My recommendation for the most powerful and most selective search engine to use is AltaVista as you can refine your search by placing quotation marks around your keywords or by conducting a search by using a phrase and the number of returns you get will be much smaller. The following are some of the search engines on the Internet and the URL (or web address) where you can locate the engine. Go to several of these search engines, use the same keyword and conduct a search. Compare the findings you get with each search engine.

|                  |   |                       |   |
|------------------|---|-----------------------|---|
| <b>AltaVista</b> | <a href="http://altavista.digital.com">http://altavista.digital.com</a> | <b>InfoSeek</b>       | <a href="http://www.infoseek.com">http://www.infoseek.com</a> |
| <b>BeauCoup</b>  | <a href="http://beaucoup.com">http://beaucoup.com</a>                   | <b>Lycos</b>          | <a href="http://www.lycos.com">http://www.lycos.com</a>       |
| <b>Excite</b>    | <a href="http://www.excite.com">http://www.excite.com</a>               | <b>Magellan</b>       | <a href="http://www.mckinley.com">http://www.mckinley.com</a> |
| <b>HotBot</b>    | <a href="http://www.hotbot.com">http://www.hotbot.com</a>               | <b>Starting Point</b> | <a href="http://www.stpt.com">http://www.stpt.com</a>         |

**Internet Databases** ~ Just as its name implies, the databases on the Internet are comprised of hundreds even thousands of listings of websites and web pages that individuals, companies and organizations have submitted for listing in these databases. The best known Internet Database is YAHOO. The limitation of searching a database is that you will only get the information on your subject from the number of entries listed in that given database. Here is a brief listing of some of the Internet Databases.

|                           |   |                   |   |
|---------------------------|---|-------------------|---|
| <b>Beatrice Web Guide</b> | <a href="http://www.bguide.com">http://www.bguide.com</a>                   | <b>WebCrawler</b> | <a href="http://www.webcrawler.com">http://www.webcrawler.com</a> |
| <b>dBase America</b>      | <a href="http://www.databaseamerica.com">http://www.databaseamerica.com</a> | <b>Yahoo</b>      | <a href="http://www.yahoo.com">http://www.yahoo.com</a>           |

**Internet Directories** ~ What do you do when you want to order a pizza? Pick up your telephone book, look in the yellow pages under pizza (or restaurants), and find a pizza shop in your area to call who then takes your order and delivers your pizza, right? Just as we have directories, like the Yellow Pages in print, there are endless directories now "in print" in cyberspace. The main difference between a database and a directory is that the information contained in a directory is usually more "topic" or "field" specific. Here are a few of the better known Internet Directories.

|                     |   |                   |   |
|---------------------|---|-------------------|---|
| <b>555-1212</b>     | <a href="http://www.555-1212.com">http://www.555-1212.com</a>                       | <b>Four 11</b>    | <a href="http://www.four11.com">http://www.four11.com</a>       |
| <b>AT&amp;T 800</b> | <a href="http://www.tollfree.att.net/dir800">http://www.tollfree.att.net/dir800</a> | <b>LookUp USA</b> | <a href="http://www.lookupusa.com">http://www.lookupusa.com</a> |
| <b>Big Yellow</b>   | <a href="http://www.bigyellow.com">http://www.bigyellow.com</a>                     | <b>MapQuest</b>   | <a href="http://www.mapquest.com">http://www.mapquest.com</a>   |
| <b>Feminina</b>     | <a href="http://www.femina.com">http://www.femina.com</a>                           | <b>WWWomen</b>    | <a href="http://www.wwwomen.com">http://www.wwwomen.com</a>     |

Finally, I have a page online that discusses citing electronic sources which can be found at the following Internet address: <http://www.getasite.com/pww/electronic.htm>.

## **CONDUCTING PERSONAL INTERVIEWS**

Often, we profile individual seniors, athletes, or faculty members in *The Chant*. Writing such profiles means sitting down and conducting a personal interview with the individual. So, how do you conduct a successful interview? Keep these tips in mind as you prepare for such assignments.

### **Before the Interview:**

1. Contact the person, introduce yourself properly, state the reason for the request, and arrange a convenient time (for him or her, not you) to meet for the interview.
2. Do some background research on your subject.
3. Get your list of questions ready for the interview.
4. Sign out a tape recorder if you feel it will assist you in the interview, but make sure you ask your subject before the interview if you have his/her permission to tape the interview.
5. Go meet the person for the interview.

### **During the Interview:**

1. Greet your subject cordially. Reintroduce yourself and the nature of your meeting. **BE POLITE** at all times.
2. Begin the interview with your first question.
3. Allow for some flexibility in the interviewing process. You may ask your subject a question, and in the process of his/her answer, he/she may answer another one of your questions, so don't be redundant – skip the other question. Also, if he/she interjects additional, interesting information, take down those notes. Obviously your subject feels that the information he/she has shared about him- herself is important.
4. Remember it is still your responsibility to keep the interview "on target," so if you see that the person is veering "off tangent," try, at an appropriate spot, to get back on track with your questions.
5. Thank the person for his or her time when the interview is concluded. Follow-up the interview with a personal note of thanks (especially if it is a faculty member or a member of the administration, or if you have interviewed a member of the community for a feature story you are working on for the paper.) This means jotting down the person's address so you can send the note.
6. Also ask the person if you may call him/her if you have any follow-up questions as you begin to write the story. **And**, also ask him/her if he/she would like to see the final draft of the article BEFORE it is published for his/her approval.

**Possible Interview Questions:** (obviously not all these questions are appropriate for teachers or administrators)

1. The accomplishment I am most proud of \_\_\_\_\_
2. Most of my teachers would be surprised to know \_\_\_\_\_
3. The fictional character I'd like to meet in real life \_\_\_\_\_
4. My favorite excuse for not turning in homework on time \_\_\_\_\_
5. I like to spend my free time \_\_\_\_\_
6. My biggest regret (or greatest reward) about high school \_\_\_\_\_
7. What most adults don't seem to understand about kids \_\_\_\_\_
8. Three words or phrases that describe me best \_\_\_\_\_
9. When I was younger, I used to image myself as \_\_\_\_\_
10. The biggest change I'd like to make in myself \_\_\_\_\_

## **WRITING PROFILES**

Profiles are an important part of the Features section. They serve to inform the reader why the profiled person is special, why we're profiling him/her in the first place. When profiling a person, you must of course interview that person, which will sometimes require three or four interviews before getting all the information about them. You must also interview people who know them, who can provide you with other reasons why this person is special, i.e. colleagues, friends, students, etc.

A profile describes a person or a place -- not just in general, but with a particular focus. If you are asked to write a profile, you might focus on a person's interesting job, hobby, or lifestyle. You might write about someone who has made a major contribution to his or her community, church, place of employment, or organization; someone who has overcome a problem such as anorexia or a learning disability; or someone who played a significant role in your life or in the life of someone else. You could profile someone you do not admire: an abusive parent, for example, or a childhood friend who joined a violent gang.

Sometime, you might be asked to profile a place. If this is your assignment, consider taking readers into an unfamiliar or exotic world -- a scuba diving expedition, a spelunking adventure, a boat trip through the Everglades. Encourage readers to visit a favorite museum, historic district, or park (or discourage them from visiting a place you found disappointing). Introduce readers to a foreign country or an ethnic neighborhood with which you are familiar.

## **STANDARDS FOR ASSESSING YOUR FEATURE WRITING**

### **1. READER APPEAL FACTORS:**

- Title catches attention
- Pictures add interest
- Topic should be one to which audience can relate
- Writing should be true to life
- Should have some angle to make it different
- Use of color
- Should be a longer article

### **2. WRITING STYLE FACTORS:**

- Descriptive words which show, don't tell
- Direct and to the point
- Good grammar (and other editing factors)
- Might use a question or other interesting attention-getter in introduction
- Organized (has a beginning, middle, and end)
- Has feeling, voice
- Easy to read
- Vocabulary on level of audience
- Might use humor
- Appealing appearance
- Might use boxed comments

### **3. Terms you need to use:**

- Lead – opening paragraph; should reveal topic somehow or capture the reader's interest.
- Hook – what catches attention.
- Revision – adding to a piece, taking out something, changing wording or other characteristics.
- Editing – correcting conventions of spelling, grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, usage.
- Publishing – form in which the writing reaches the reader.

## **STYLE ISSUES FOR THE SPORTS SECTION**

1. the St. Gregory girls team or the St. Gregory boys team > no apostrophe in the word girls or the word boys
2. varsity team > no capitalization  
junior varsity team > no capitalization  
JV team > in caps when abbreviated
3. state meet, state tournament, state competition, or state champion > no caps unless proper name, for example, 1A Central State Championship, or 1A Central Conference
4. no abbreviations for schools unless spelled out and (abbreviated) earlier in article > ex.: Arizona Lutheran Academy (ALA)
5. coach > no caps  
Coach Faith Hisey > caps
6. captain > no caps  
Captain Hae Mi Kim > caps
7. freshman, sophomore, junior, senior > no caps
8. to write record > ex.: 11 – 6 (state # of wins first, # of losses second), and always specify if it's total or only conference play
9. to write scores > ex.: Scottsdale Christian over Greenfields 81 – 73 (state winning team first)
10. use lots of quotations in sports articles
11. NO editorializing > avoid use of words like “best” and phrases like “looks like they will be”
12. NO “Congratulations” or “Good Luck” sentiments in articles

## STYLE & GRAMMAR CONCERNS

The following guidelines should be observed with regard to grammar and style concerns for all articles submitted to *The Chant* staff. These errors seem to display themselves with an alarming frequency in issue after issue of the newspaper. Furthermore, don't fail to run the spelling and grammar checkers first when you finish typing up an article. This will catch some of the initial errors you won't then plague your copy editors with when they read your articles.

### Names in print

First, use full name, then only last name.

⇒ example: first usage - Dr. John Menke  
 subsequent usage - Menke

⇒ **NO**: Judy or Jay (first names only), or Ms. Weller (use of titles)  
 should simply be: Cheng, Harris or Weller (last names only)

### Use of Apostrophes

1. Singular → Weller's (inside the "s") = means something belonging to Weller
2. Plural → dogs' (outside the "s") = means something belonging to the dogs

### Quotations

Proper form →

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| (open quotation mark) →<br>(capitalize 1 <sup>st</sup> word) →<br>(lower case) → | "Brick's handling of the game of tennis is extremely impressive,"<br>say his teammates. | ← (comma inside close quotation mark, then close quotation mark) |
|--|---|--|

Improper form →

|                   |                                 |                       |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| (missing comma) → | "He is nice" Say his teammates. | ← (no capitalization) |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|

### Numbers

1. Dates → singular form (all numeric) - 1983 or 2000  
 plural form (all numeric, but **NO** apostrophe) - 1990s or 1870s
2. Dates (when abbreviated) → plural form only - '80s or '60s (use this form sparingly because this form can cause confusion on the part of your readers - for example, do you mean the 1980s or the 1880s when you say the '80s? a good rule of thumb is to use this form only for decades that really left an historical impression on the population, such as the '60s.)
3. Days → you should always write days in the following manner: On August 7, 1963, Richard M. Nixon resigned as president of the United States.
4. Days → subsequent references to particular days, after the year has already been established for your readers, should be written like this: October 4<sup>th</sup> or January 3<sup>rd</sup>
5. Days → especially in news stories, the days should be preceded with the actual day of the week, such as Monday, October 4<sup>th</sup> (this helps your readers establish the "timeline" of the episodes as they unfolded for a particular event)
6. Time → generally we indicate time in journalism in the following manner: 6 o'clock in the morning
7. Time → If you are recounting the particular sequence of episodes, then you should mark the time as follows: 6:00 A.M. the president (blah, blah). 7:45 A.M. the assassin is presumed to have taken his position. 8:30 A.M. the first shots were fired.

## **COPY EDITING PARAMETERS**

You will be required to make editing mark-ups on all stories. This is what is known in the field of journalism as COPY EDITING. You should learn to do your editing as follows. Emulate the format in which all professionals edit, and be enlightened.

\*WHEN YOU MARK-UP, use one color pen for steps 1-2, and a different color for 3-4.

### **Step One: Syntax**

Journalists must be clear and concise. Cleverness and creativity come second.

1. Is the article wordy?
2. Is the author's main focus unclear, indirect or imprecise?
3. Is the lead catchy, correct and easily read?
4. Does the article have a clear direction and center?
5. Has the author eliminated all gratuitous, excessive, unnecessary and superfluous language without, at this point, manipulating or correcting the style?

### **Step Two: Diction and Grammatical Errors**

Do not err in this, journalists. Read with a critical eye. USE Strunk and White.

3. Has the author chosen the most appropriate words and attempted to vary them?
4. Are sentences clear?
5. Are obscure references and inside jokes eliminated and double meanings vanquished?
6. Will a reasonably educated audience find the vocabulary enlightened yet accessible?
7. Are there grammatical errors, such as dangling participles or misplaced modifiers?

### **Step Three: Transitions / Article Progression**

Note whether paragraphs flow from one to another (keep in mind that they should be brief).

1. Are ideas clear?
2. Does each paragraph have a topic sentence that relates directly to its content or that clearly matches the article's thought flow?
3. Does each paragraph end on a complete idea and lead to another?
4. Is the article laid out logically?
5. Does it have a beginning, middle, and end?
6. Does it go anywhere in this process, reaching a conclusion or making a clear observation?

### **Step Four: Style**

It is perfectly acceptable to have a personality to your writing, but recognize that journalistic integrity is the first priority. The finest journalists are able to blend a subtle touch of self with sound newspaper writing: make this your goal.

1. Has the author committed the unforgivable sin of branding a news article with his/her patented style?
2. Is the article accessible to all?
3. Does the article read appropriate to its genre?
4. Is the author appropriately serious or light-hearted for the topic?
5. Is this an article your grandmother (a) could read and understand, (b) would enjoy reading?

### **Step Five: Pre-Submission Final Draft Checklist**

Always make any suggestion you think will help the author of the article.

1. Consider the lead, and then the second sentence of the article.
  - ⇒ After having scrutinized the article, do you find the lead accurate, interesting and appropriate?
  - ⇒ Does the second sentence complement it well?
  - ⇒ Finally, how does the conclusion work? Is it punch? Intelligent? Cohesive with the rest of the story?
2. Consider the structure and organization of the article.
  - ⇒ Are paragraph divisions sensible, or has the author divided major thoughts?
  - ⇒ Has the author taken advantage of the option of making a solid quotation its own one-liner or short paragraph?
  - ⇒ Are long, unbroken blocks of text eliminated?
3. Consider the tone and stance of the article.
  - ⇒ Are unnecessary words or musing eliminated?
  - ⇒ Has personal bias been eliminated?
  - ⇒ Have meandering thoughts and vague references been eliminated?
  - ⇒ Has language been varied?
4. Consider the accuracy of the article.
  - ⇒ Is a person's last name used consistently throughout the article?
  - ⇒ Are ALL names spelled correctly?
  - ⇒ Are unclear and questionable facts starred and bracketed?
  - ⇒ Are all quotations and sources accurate and properly attributed?
5. Consider the composition of the article.
  - ⇒ Is the article grammatically sound?
  - ⇒ Is its spelling correct, as well as its usage and structure?
  - ⇒ Does it read clearly?
  - ⇒ Are the sentences varied in composition to keep the article engaging?
  - ⇒ Is it well written generally?
  - ⇒ Is it enjoyable for you or informative?
  - ⇒ Is there one space only between sentences.
  - ⇒ Is the first letter of each full quotation, and of each word after a colon, capitalized?
6. Finally, add your suggestions for improvement:
  - ⇒ Could the article be complemented by a sidebar, fact box, quote box or follow-up interview? A survey?
  - ⇒ Is the story conducive to a cartoon or editorial cartoon?
  - ⇒ Do you think that it is in the wrong category?
  - ⇒ Should it be accompanied by a photograph, a piece of clip art or some other embellishment?

All of these questions are important to consider NOW, since time is of the essence!

# **THE FACES OF JOURNALISM**

## **NEWS**

News stories are the basis for all of the paper - often opinion and feature pieces are built on news stories. They follow the basic rules of journalism and are usually most concerned with reporting events and other news in a straightforward, informative manner.

It is crucial that you deeply understand any issue you are reporting on. Remember our key questions: (1) So what? What is so important or interesting about this? (2) According to whom? Who is saying something and why? What is the evidence? (3) Who benefits, who is harmed? (4) What other points of view might there be?

It is not enough to go out and get two or three quotations and string together an account that is "he said" - "she said." What is the context? What is the reason? What would the wealthy parents think of this? What would the working class parents think of this? What would one group of students think of it? How about another group? How about the administration, teachers, staff, city? In most controversial issues, there are various interests and ideas. If you don't dig deeply, you will have a shallow story.

## **OPINION**

The Opinion section serves as a forum for reporters and students to express their views on community, national, and international issues that affect St. Gregory. Articles hope to influence the reader to take action, but their most basic purpose is to stimulate thought. They should contain sophisticated information gathering, analysis, and a solution that aids people in their decision of the issue. Opinion articles should be strong (not offensive) and provocative.

The goals of the opinion writer are to explain, to persuade, and to evaluate. No matter what the subject of your article, you must have a strong argument. Although it is easy to write a ranting and raving angry article in ignorance, it is a waste of your and your reader's time. Research is vital in helping you to achieve a powerful voice. Without facts to back up your arguments, the result is ungrounded personal opinion. Clarity is essential. Purple prose and showcases of your impressive vocabulary will ultimately lose your reader before you've made your point. Your goal is to find the line between sophisticated and clear-cut writing.

When there are pro and con articles, both writers must agree on some basic facts. Nothing sounds so unprofessional as a debate in which the two sides cite distorted and wrong statistics.

## **FEATURES**

The purpose of the Features section is to inform students on subjects they might not usually think about in a detailed way. Features are in-depth human-interest stories. They are often not bound by breaking stories and can be covered at any given time. Features occasionally used to dig in deeper to a familiar issue. But more often they should be used to allow the reader to take a look at something they have not seen before, to bring to visibility that which is invisible.

All feature stories in our paper are generally at least a half-page spread. Features stories should have reader appeal; **MAKE THEM INTERESTING.** Features stories allow flexibility to the writer. Reporters often do not need to follow the inverted pyramid format and can use different devices and angles such as different viewpoints to make them interesting. Features stories should also be well researched to make them complete.

## **ENTERTAINMENT**

The Entertainment section serves a lighter side to the paper. It is primarily a section where students go to find out about subjects that interest them, such as movies, performances, art shows, restaurants, fun corners, etc. The Entertainment section does not contain news, even if it concerns something that might usually go into the entertainment section. For example, an announcement that there will be no fall play would go into the News section. However, the Entertainment section would most likely contain reactions of students to this announcement, a look back at previous school plays, etc.

Since Entertainment stories are rarely as "serious" as news stories, it is very important to make the story interesting so that students will read it. Everything in the story - especially the lead paragraph - must be written creatively. The

best writers will have a distinctive "style" that makes the story interesting to read. Make sure not to write an entertainment story like a news story. Readers will not be interested in the section if there's nothing distinctive about it. To make your story interesting, state more than just the facts: use comparisons, humor and other such tools to make people want to read your story.

A main goal of the entertainment section is to provide true entertainment for students, through comic strips, columns, crossword puzzles, etc. For these items, you must have editor approval before beginning. These fun items must be inclusive: no inside jokes or obscure trivia. The most important thing to remember when writing an entertainment story is to make it creative - that is, make your writing as interesting as possible. Entertainment has the capacity to be one of the more enjoyable sections to write for but it is in no way an "easier" type of writing. In fact, most writers claim that humor and entertainment is the most difficult type of writing.

## **SPORTS**

Sports stories are read by more students than any others are. They have the latitude to be entertaining, engaging, and informative. Sports stories should not just repeat the news of how a game went. They should be filled with feature details, should develop an angle that grabs the reader's attention. If it is about a game, it might examine the key play or problem that arose. If it is about the season, perhaps it should also examine a rival team. And always it should name students, develop stars, create interest in the human story. Use action words. Put a strong hook in the lead.

Your responsibility in a sports story is to report on everything until the very last day before going to print. Your work on a sports story does not end after the first turn-in. If you are unable to attend a game (i.e. away games), you must interview coaches and players for their perspective on the game. Remember that the more people you interview for your story, the more accurate it is likely to be. The *Arizona Daily Star* and other local newspapers are a great source for exact game scores and statistics.

Quotations like in any good story are required. Get quotes from both coaches and players. If you cover the same sport more than once, interview different people each time. The quality of quotes is also imperative to what makes a good sports story. "We did good" or "we played a bad game" are boring quotes and don't reveal anything a score hasn't already. Try to find out why a team played well or not. And be selective in which quotes to include. Sports are sometimes not understood by everyone so stay away from obscure references. During games and practices are ideal times to interview players and coaches, but be sure not to disturb athletes if they are busy warming up or playing. Before and after games or practices are usually best to capture the true feeling of a victory or defeat. Phone interviews are also acceptable and coaches' numbers can usually be obtained from the Sports editor.

A complete sports story should also include how the team is doing in general, in relation to the season, past years, etc., anything of relevance to the angle of your story. In addition outstanding or star players that have a large impact on the team should be covered as well as schedules of upcoming games and player/coach expectations for them. Also when writing sports it is important to cover stories truthfully. Even when a team loses a game or is having a tough season, there is plenty to write about. You are not expected to make things sound positive if you are covering a team with a bad record.

And like any other story, be clear on the type of story you are doing. If it is sports news, your opinion is only expressed indirectly. If the team's having a great season, it should be reflected in game records and team and coach quotes, not in your personal commentary of them. If it's commentary or a feature type story, you have wider reign.

## **PHOTOGRAPHY**

Photographs are the first things people look at in the newspaper. Photography is not just in the service of the print story; it is not just a postage stamp size picture that gets slapped onto a story as an after thought. It is all part of an overall way of conveying information, through visual impact and language.

Photographs should be compelling and realistic. Mug shots are bad journalism. Long shots of soccer plays with a bunch of inky bodies falling together are useless. Look for the human-interest shot. Learn of the needs of the story early and get a range of visual statements. All photographers should participate in creating a file of photos of key people as well as a file of human-interest photographs that can be used for filler or covers. Photographers should be making suggestions and critique concerning the overall layout and design of the newspaper and suggesting photo spreads and features.