

Opinion

Foundations of Journalism

Emerson College

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Opinion

- Editorials: Represent the entire view/stance of the newspaper.
- Reviews*: Critiques by experts on a subject.
- Columns: News opinion pieces written by journalists.

Editorials

- Editorials are written by members of the paper's editorial board (may include publisher, executive editor, etc.), and represent the opinion of the paper as a whole.
- No byline.

Reviews

- Reviews are written by critics.
- Lay out the good and bad.
- Combination of description and well-informed opinion.
- Critics are specialized by beats.
 - Considered experts in their fields. Their opinions are valued.
- Critics should offer critiques with consideration of their audiences, not solely individual opinion.

Columns

- Columns are written by individuals. They are the writer's opinions on a given topic.
- They should still be reflective of the dialogue within your readership.
 - It's not so much YOUR opinion people want to read about, but THE opinion.
- Need to be timely.
 - Usually directly pegged to news event or story.

Opinion

- Need to have a CLEAR opinion.
 - This is not a time to be wishy-washy.
 - Ambiguity weakens/kills a column
- State the opinion clearly and high.

Support

- Just like you have to support the lede, you have to support your opinion.
- This is not just here is my opinion and here are my generalizations as to why.
 - This is still a work of journalism.
 - You need to back up your assertions/opinions with facts.

Support

- You need to do research and reporting.
 - Clips
 - See what past stories have been done on the top
 - Examples you can cite
 - Similar instances
 - Interviews.
 - Quotes
 - Other people's perspectives
 - These can very well strengthen your argument
 - You might find your original opinion was flawed/misinformed.
 - But don't rely on other people to make your opinions for you.
 - Data
 - Numbers/statistics that back up what you say.

Support

- You will use information that backs up your opinion, but don't manipulate data or quotes.

- Quote Example:

Original quote: "If he were 6-foot-6, he could be the greatest player to have play the game." (Say the player is 6-foot-2.)

Manipulated Quote: X analyst said Player A "could be the greatest to ever play the game."

Support

- Data Example:

Original data: Player A has is 240-of-495 from two-point range and 6-of-8 from three-point range.

Manipulated data: Player A is 48.5 percent from two-point range and 75 percent from three-point range. (6-of-8 is not an effective sample size.)

Original data: Candidate Y has a 1 percent lead in two of 11 polls. Candidate Z has a 1-3 percent lead in the other 9 polls.

Manipulated data: Polls have Candidate Y up by 1 percent over Candidate Z.

Columns

- If your opinion shifts in the course of your reporting, don't feel obligated to stick to a "wrong" opinion.
 - Let your editor know and change the angle.

Columns

- Occasional opportunities for writer to insert self/use I.
 - HOWEVER, this should be a rare exception.
 - The column is likely not about YOU. It's about the story/event.
- You're not necessarily looking to blatantly sway someone.
 - You are looking to build a compelling (as close to airtight) case as to why you are right.
 - Look to answer the points dissenters might make.
- Far more flexibility as far as writing - style, tone, etc.
 - As with features, tone should still fit the subject

Columns

- Good columnists can effectively argue almost anything.
- Depending on your outlet and/or beat, you may write columns from time to time - even if you are not a columnist.
 - Well-informed opinion