

Review

Emerson College
Foundations of Journalism
Fall 2012

Final Feature

- Freshmen preparing for finals/finishing their first semester.
- Length 600-750 words.
- Deadline: Dec. 15, 8 a.m.

Basics

- Nut graf – the graf or grafes that sum up what the purpose of the story is. Why it's being told. What the information the writer is trying to convey.

Soft Ledes

- Zingers
- Anecdote
- Scene Setter
- Quote Ledes
- Question Ledes

Zingers

- Grab readers with snappy or clever phrase.
 - Often a play on words.
 - Must be kept short.
 - Must actually “zing.”
 - Don’t force funny. It rarely works.
- Make sure the story fits with a zinger.
 - Some might not, especially where humor is concerned.

Anecdotes

- Short interesting story to pull readers in.
 - Can be story of one or more people.
 - Can recap an event.
 - Should be entertaining/intriguing/insightful.
- Probably most common soft lede.
- Can humanize a story.

Scene Setter

- Also referred to as descriptive lede.
 - Lead with describing the scene/providing color.
- Best scene setters are unforced.
 - They also contain specific details
- Opportunity to get creative as far as writing.

Scene Setter

- Don't fall back on out of laziness.
 - It's easy to set the scene, but is it the best lede for your story?
 - Ask what is it about this scene that makes it different/stand out?
 - If the answer is not much, lead with something else.
- Avoid getting overly wordy/literary/romanticizing the scene.

Quote Ledes

- Phenomenal quotes that open a story better than any writer could.
- Your textbook says “they should be used on in *rare* instances when the newsmaker has said something that introduces the story better than the reporter can.”
- I say NEVER use them.
 - I have not used one in seven-plus years since I was called out by a fellow (more experienced writer) for them.
 - He was right.

Quote Ledes

- To often reporters use quote ledes when they can't come up with something.
 - Laziness.
- You as the writer need to open the story.
 - If you have a great quote, set it up with one sentence. Then quote.

Question Ledes

- Open with a question.
 - Question needs to be central to your story.
 - Should be a very unique question.
 - Idea is to grab readers attention/intrigue them.
- Avoid.
- Similar to with a quote, preface question with a lead-in sentence.

Soft Ledes

- Simplicity is still best.

Numbers

- Spell out one through nine. Use numerals for numbers 10 and up.

Number Exceptions

- Dates
 - April 2, Sept. 9
- Numbers with decimal points
 - 4.2, 6.25
- Money
 - \$4.
- Statistics
 - Bush rushed for 3 yards.

Number Exceptions

- Percent
 - 9 percent (spell out the word percent.)
- Proportions
 - Every year, 7 out of 10 children get the flu.
- Time
 - 1 p.m.

Numbers

- Also, use figures for house numerals, degrees of temperature, votes, scores, speeds, time of races, dimensions and serial numbers.
- Always spell out numbers when they start a sentence.
 - Exception: Years are always a numeral.
 - Sixteen years ago, she bought her house.
 - 1999 was a great year.

AP Style

- States
 - AP has specific abbreviations for 42 states.
 - Spell out: Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Utah, Texas.

AP Style

- Do not capitalize a.m. or p.m.
- Full name on first reference. Last name thereafter.
- Spell out acronyms on first reference.

AP Style

- Abbreviate Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec.
 - Spell out all other months.
 - Standalone months (no specific date) are always spelled out.
- Do not abbreviate days of the week.
- Do not use “yesterday” or “tomorrow.” Some outlets will use “today,” but that is becoming less common.
 - Instead say, “on Tuesday.”

Concise

- In journalism, we are all about saying it as tightly – in as few words/characters – as possible. Use the shorter way to say it.
- Ask yourself, “Can I say this in fewer words (or even characters)?”
 - If the answer is yes, do it.
 - Almost always, you’ll find the shorter way is stronger.

Agreement

- Make sure your verb refers to your subject.
 - Each, None =singular
 - Group, family, team = singular
 - Pluralizing incorrectly is far more common.

- Make sure your pronoun refers to your subject.
 - The freshmen were talking about the books they had read. They were bored.
 - As written, “they” refers to the books.
 - As a general rule, try to limit use of pronouns such as it and they. Reference the subject specifically.

Supporting the Lede

- The grafs immediately following the lede have to support the lede.
- Support grafs will flesh out the information provided in the lede.
- Stories that don't support the lede frustrate/confuse readers.
 - They don't deliver on what you promised in the lede.

Elaborating

- Once the lede has been supported, you can expand the scope of the story.
 - Additional information.
 - Less significant details.
 - Answers to less pressing questions.
- Lede support is necessary. Elaboration is optional.
 - Depending on space, it might not even be optional.

Paragraphs

- One idea per graf.
- Grafes generally should be no more than four sentences.
- One sentence grafes are fine.
 - Of course, not every graf should be a single sentence.

Transitions

- Each graf is its own idea. You need to transition from idea to idea for your story to flow.
- Sometimes a single word can work as a transition.
- Other transitions need to be a sentence or even a graf.

Tense

- Make sure tense is consistent.
- Avoid using present tense.

Clarity

- Avoid it, they, that, this when possible. Instead, what does it/they/that/this reference? Use the description/identifier instead.

Format

- The format for quotes is as follows.
 - “This is what your person tells you,” Person said.
 - “This is the first sentence,” Person said. “This is the second.”
- Attribution comes at the end of the first sentence or first part in a compound sentence.
- Speakers name comes before said unless he/she has a lengthy title/descriptor necessary.

Format

- Quotes get their own grafs.
- First sentence ends like this:
 - ,” Person said.
- There is **ALWAYS** a period after said.
 - No comma after said.

Formats to Avoid

- The book uses an example with a colon :
 - That is not standard practice. You should not use this format.
- The book uses an example starting with
 - He said, “Quote.”
 - You should not use this as a standard format.

Formats to Avoid

- Do not stack quotes for different sources on top of each other.
 - “I hate pizza,” Jones said.
 - “I love peanut butter sandwiches,” Smith said.

- Use transitional sentences to set up next quote.

“I hate pizza,” Jones said.

Smith said, “I love peanut butter sandwiches.”

- **NOT ACCEPTABLE**

“I hate pizza,” Jones said.

But not everyone is adverse to the takeout staple.

“Pizza’s my favorite food,” Smith said.

ACCEPTABLE

Transitional Sentences

- Transitional sentences and/or grafs, transition your readers from one idea/quote to another.
 - So it's not jarring for your reader.
 - You want your writing to flow.
- Transitional sentences and the quotes follow may express similar ideas, but they should not say the same thing.

“I hate pizza,” Jones said.

But not everyone is adverse to the takeout staple.

“Pizza's my favorite food,” Smith said.

 - Transitional grafs that wouldn't work.
 - But pizza is some people's favorite food.

More on Quotes

- If you are changing voices/source of quotes, that must be made clear before the quote starts.
 - Otherwise, readers will think Person 1 is still speaking.
- Sources quoted must have been previously introduced or be introduced following the first sentence of the quote.

Length

- Quotes should ideally be 1-2 sentences.
 - Rarely more than three.
 - Use news judgment to pick the best part of the quote.

More

- You should do additional reporting for this assignment beyond just talking to students.
 - This assignment should be more than glorified MOS.
- Do not use partial quotes.
- Because this is a feature, you need a conclusion.

More

- Make sure you have the basic factual information.
 - Who is your story about?
 - What is your story about?
 - Where is your story?
 - When is your story?
 - Why/How as/if necessary for the purpose of this feature

More

- Commas with clauses.
- Active voice.
- Proper capitalization.
 - Capitalize what should be capitalized.
 - Don't capitalize words that should not be.

More

- Review and revise before submitting.
 - Check AP style.
 - Review Powerpoints from the semester.
 - Spelling and grammar check
 - Do you support your lede?
 - Do you transition from idea to idea?
 - Are quotes formatted properly?
 - Is there proper attribution for quotes and information?

More

- Don't editorialize.
 - Make sure you're not injecting opinion.