

(Sports) Journalism 101

The Most Basic Basics

Sports Journalism in the Internet Age

Tufts - Ex-College - Fall 2010

Week 2

Journalism Basics

- Journalistic writing differs from academic writing.
- In journalism, it is not about using a lot of big words and flowery language to impress people. Journalism should be easy to read and follow.
- Longer does not automatically equal better.
- Most newspapers are written at a high-school reading level.

Grade Level and Circulation of Current Periodicals

Periodical	Grade Level	Circulation
Los Angeles Times	12	1,292,274
Boston Globe	12	707,813
National Enquirer	12	2,760,000
New Yorker	10	1,900,000
New York Times	10	1,680,583
Washington Post	10	1,007,487
USA Today	10	2,665,815
TV Guide	9	13,200,000
Time	9	4,114,137
Reader's Digest	9	12,212,040

Source: Impact Information, 2005.

Terminology

- Lede – the introduction of a story. The first few graf. This is what sets a story up and pulls readers in. Sometimes, written “lead.”
- Graf – paragraph.
- Nut graf – the graf or graf. that sum up what the purpose of the story is. Why it’s being told. What the information the writer is trying to convey.
- Copy – the written text of a story.
- Source - where the information comes from - person, report, other article, etc.

Types of Ledes

- Hard lede – Straightforward. Gets to the information in right away. Often referred to as AP lede because almost all AP stories have hard ledes.
- Anecdotal lede – Sets the piece up with a short story.
- Scene-setter – Sets the scene.
- Question lede – Opens by posing/asking a question.

Types of Ledes to Avoid

- Quote lede – Opens with a quote.
- Buried lede – when the engaging part of a story, the part the writer probably should have started with, is further down in the piece, or “buried” in the article.

Types of Stories

- Hard news stories – breaking news of the day. Very timely. Not a lot of room for creativity. No opinion. This is often the standard news story you would expect to see on the front page.
- Game/event stories.
- Features – less time-sensitive than hard news stories. Can be tied to an event in terms of timeliness or can be completely timeless.
- Columns – Opinion pieces.

Some Journalism Basics

- Do not miss deadline. Ever. **Ever.** **EVER.**
- Always check spelling of names, teams, places, etc. Then check them again.
- With the invention of spell check, there's no excuse for having words spelled wrong.
- Never trust your memory for facts. Confirm that information. Double-check stats.

Some Journalism Basics

- Clean copy will make you an editor's favorite writer.
- Do not use three words when one will do.
 - *Closer Dave Simms was able to put the game away.*
 - *Closer Dave Simms put the game away.*

 - *Bennett pitched seven innings of shutout ball.*
 - *Bennett pitched seven shutout innings.*

Some Journalism Basics

- Some things will be obvious by context.
 - *The Spartans beat the Trojans 3-0 in the game on Wednesday night.*
 - *The Spartans beat the Trojans 3-0 on Wednesday night.*

 - *Sea City pitcher Phil Bennett struck out four Tucson batters.*
 - *Sea City pitcher Phil Bennett struck out four.*

Some Journalism Basics

- When quoting, try to put the speaker's name before said.

PREFERRED: *“The offensive line played a great game,”*
quarterback Peyton Manning said.

AVOID: *“The offensive line played a great game,” said*
quarterback Peyton Manning.

- Use full name on first reference. Then last name throughout.

Some Journalism Basics

- Structure news stories with essential information high (early) in the story.
 - For example, in a game story, the score should always be in the first graf, if not the first sentence.
- Inverted pyramid – a way of structuring a story so the most important information is at the top and information gets progressively less central to the story.