

# 5Ws & H, Types of Stories

Foundations of Journalism

Emerson College

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# 5 Ws & H

- Who
- What
- Why
- Where
- When
- How

# 5 Ws & H

- All of this information should be included in your nut graf.
- Hard news stories often answer all of these questions in the lede.
- A feature might not obviously answer each one.
- When you write a story, ask yourself, “Am I answering the 5Ws and H?”
  - If you can’t answer all of the questions, do some more reporting.

# Hard News v. Soft News

- Hard news: Coverage of an event/story while it is occurring.
- Soft news: “News that you’ve chosen to do/pursue”
  - Doesn’t mean it’s not tied to hard news,
  - Goes beyond the coverage of just this is what happened.
- When we get into ledes (Week 4), we’ll discuss hard and soft ledes. Don’t confuse hard/soft news with hard/soft ledes.

# Hard News

- Can be called “straight news”
- Always past tense in print.
- Straightforward.
- Little room for voice.
- Answers the 5Ws and H.
- The author should be invisible.

# Soft News

- Just because it's call “soft” does not mean it is lesser news than hard news.
- Can be more subjective.
- Often more room for voice, style, etc.
  - However, before you can have a “voice,” you need to master the basics.

# Soft News

- Features
  - Profiles
  - News features
  - Spot features
  - Trend stories
  - Service features
- Opinion
  - Columns
  - Editorials
- Reviews

# Features

- Profiles
- News features
- Spot features
- Trend stories
- Service features

# Profiles

- A profile is an article about an individual.
- One of the staples of feature writing.
- A behind-the-scenes look at what a person is really like.

- Definition adapted from “What Are the Different Kinds of Feature Stories?” Tony Rogers

# Profiles

- Provide background on the profile subject.
- Then go beyond the basics. Who and what influenced the person, their ideas, and their choice of vocation or profession.
  - What new is this profile looking to convey/put out there?
- Seek to create a complete picture.

- Definition adapted from “What Are the Different Kinds of Feature Stories?” Tony Rogers

# Profiles

- Whenever possible, conduct the interview in person.
- Observe so you can describe appearance and mannerisms.
  - Watch the person in action.
- Talk to people who know the person you're profiling.
  - If your profile subject is controversial, talk to some of his/her critics.

# News Features

- Focus on a topic of interest in the news.
- News features often cover the same subjects as deadline hard-news stories, but do so in greater depth and detail.
- Tend to focus on individuals. Humanize the subject.

- Definition adapted from "What Are the Different Kinds of Feature Stories?" Tony Rogers

# Spot Features

- Feature stories produced on deadline that focus on a breaking news event.
- Often are used as sidebars to the main deadline news story about an event.

- Definition adapted from “What Are the Different Kinds of Feature Stories?” Tony Rogers

# Trend Story

- Story about a trend.
  - Can range from anything from fashion to older people joining social networks.
- Usually a little more voice in the writing.

# Service Feature

- Basically a how-to-story or informational story.
  - Five things you should look for in a pediatrician.
  - Navigating your polling place.
- Provides a “service” to your readers in that it tells them how to do something.
- Often consumer-oriented.

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# Columns

- Columns are written by individuals. They are the writer's opinions on a given topic.
- *Occasional* opportunities for writer to insert self/use I.
- Far more flexibility as far as writing - style, tone, etc.
- Columns should still contain reporting.
- Opinions need to be supported.

# 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.

# Soft News

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# 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.

# Types of Reporting

- Basic/Standard
- Investigative
- Enterprise

Following definitions based  
“Career Pathways in Journalism”  
USA Today Education

# Basic/Standard

- Most of the reporting you will do falls under this category.
- General day-to-day reporting.
  - Work on story, then move onto the next.
  - Research, interviews, on-site reporting, daily beat coverage, etc.

# Investigative Reporting

- Incredibly in-depth reporting.
- Often seeks to uncover a truth or expose a wrong.
  - Public impact/greater good
- Involves extensive reporting and research.
- Frequently involves records, data reporting.

# Enterprise Reporting

- Reporting a trend or an issue that affects (or might simply be of interest to) many readers, but often has been overlooked
- Involves extensive reporting and research.
- Stories where the idea is identified and spotted by the reporter, rather than the coverage of a news event.