

Review

Emerson College
Foundations of Journalism
Spring 2013

Final Feature

- Topic of your choice (Already approved)
- Worth 10 percent of overall grade
- Length 500-650 words.
- Deadline: April 30, 8 a.m.
 - Do NOT be late.

Final Feature

- Make sure you have a clear angle.
- Should combine original reporting (interviews/on-site) and researched reporting.
- Minimum three interview sources
 - Not required, but **STRONGLY** recommended.

Format

- Hard returns
- No indentation

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.
- This is an essential part of all news stories.

Hard Ledes

- Directly address 5Ws & H in the lede.
- Features rarely employ a hard news lede.

Soft Ledes

- Zingers
- Anecdote
- Scene Setter

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.
- 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.

Soft Ledes

- Simplicity is still best.

AP Style

- The assignment is expected to follow AP style guidelines.
- If you have a question, refer to your AP Stylebook.

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.”

AP Style

- Few job titles are capitalized.
 - Refer to AP Stylebook for list of formal titles that are capitalized.
 - Unless a proper noun - i.e. English, American history - academic majors are not capitalized.
- AP style does not italicize publication titles, show titles, movie titles, song titles, etc.
 - Refer to AP Stylebook.

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/Voice

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

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

- Segueing into a quote with a colon :
 - That is not standard practice. You should not use this format.
- 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.
- Don't use commas where they aren't needed.
- Active voice.
- Proper capitalization.
 - Capitalize what should be capitalized.
 - Don't capitalize words that should not be.

More

- Vary sentence structure and length.
 - Short and long
 - Don't every sentence (or graf) with a clause.

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 support assertions with facts?
 - 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.