

Reporting and Writing

CO 125 – Convergence in Journalism

February 25, 2021

Your First Story

- You're finally ready to get out there and produce your first piece of journalism for this class! This first one will be fairly casual, but they will get more rigorous as we go along. Here are the guidelines:
- **STORY #1:** Tell me the story of something that happened in your life this week. It can be as mundane or as interesting as the events warrant, but you should approach this event as if it were a serious, "important" news story.
 - Think of something that's already happened this week and report after the fact, or be ready for an event to happen later this week.
 - You're on the scene to tell the story of that event. Give us the details/summary in the lead, and the context in the nut graph – practice with the inverted pyramid.
 - Even though you'll be involved in the event, report the story neutrally. You are not a main character in this story.
 - But you must talk to people that are! Include quotes from *at least 2* relevant sources, and introduce and attribute them properly. Attach a source list to the end of your story.
 - Include a headline, dateline and byline - most of those are standard fare for reporters.
 - Word count: approx. 500 words. Deadline: Monday, March 1 at 11:59 p.m.

REPORTER'S checklist

STORY ASSIGNMENT:



S
T
C
A
F

✓ who:

✓ why:

✓ what:

✓ how:

✓ when & where:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Triple-checked spelling of names | <input type="checkbox"/> Typed & saved in proper location |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Triple-checked all facts & figures | <input type="checkbox"/> Ran spell check |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Identified individuals with proper titles | <input type="checkbox"/> Read draft aloud |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interviewed at least _____ people | <input type="checkbox"/> Date & time turned in to editor: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Included at least _____ quotes | _____ |



Chicago Daily Tribune Home

DEWEY DEFEATS TRUMAN

G.O.P. Sweep Indicated in State; Boyle Leads in City

REPUBLICAN TICKET AHEAD
BOYLE VOTE
RECORD CITY
VOTE SEEN IN
LATE TALLIES
BULLETIN ON ELECTORAL
Early Count
Gains in N.Y.
Boyle Leads
POTS DAM
BURNING
WHITE

Headlines

- What readers see first. That's why there's added pressure to make them captivating, but also to get them *right*.
- **Headline guidelines:**
 - Must be correct (in fact and in implication – avoid words with multiple meanings)
 - Must connect to ordinary readers (in other words, be easily understood)
 - Must attract attention (use interesting, engaging, active words)
 - Must set (or match) the tone of the article – serious articles require serious heads.
- Most headlines are generally written in present tense, even if the news took place in the past. You can use future tense if the main piece of the story will occur in the future.
- Style varies by publication, but typically, all "major" words are capitalized.
 - Conjunctions and prepositions (such as "and" or "with") are never capitalized
- Headlines are different from social teases (such as a tweet that accompanies a story), but in many ways teases have become the modern headline.



Tweet



The New York Times
@nytimes



Ivanka Trump will not run for Marco Rubio's Senate seat in 2022, according to a Rubio aide and a person close to her, who said a Senate run was never something she was seriously considering.



Ivanka Trump Will No Seek Rubio's Florida Senate Seat
[nytimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com)

11:50 AM · 2/18/21 · [SocialFlow](#)



Tweet your reply



Headlines: The TACT Test

Taste/Attractiveness/Clarity/Truth

- Is it in good taste?
 - Could anything be misinterpreted or misunderstood?
- Does it attract a reader's attention?
 - Can that be improved without sacrificing accuracy?
- Does it communicate quickly and clearly?
 - Or might it confuse a reader?
- Is it accurate and true?
 - You must still use proper words and shoot for proper subject-verb agreement
- If you answer "No" to any of these questions, rewrite the headline.

Arkansas continues to see slowdown in coronavirus cases

today



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LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — Arkansas on Monday continued seeing a low number of new coronavirus cases after a week of winter weather slowed down testing and vaccinations.

The Department of Health reported 245 new virus cases, bringing the state's total since the pandemic began to 315,759. The state's COVID-19 hospitalizations rose by 11 to 588, while deaths increased by six to 5,363.

Over the past two weeks, the rolling average number of daily new cases in Arkansas has decreased by about 78%, according to figures compiled by Johns Hopkins University researchers.

"We're distributing vaccine doses throughout the state and encourage those who are eligible to make sure they're signed up," Gov. Asa Hutchinson said in a statement. "We expect vaccine and testing numbers to increase this week with clear roads across the state."

Datelines

- Indicates where and when the news that's being reported has taken place
- Format/style:

CITY NAME, State abbrev. -- Body of text

KANSAS CITY, Mo. --

KANSAS CITY, KS --

ST. LOUIS, Mo. --

- Consider: are these all written properly according to AP Style?
- Datelines in press releases typically include the actual date of publication, but this is less common in news (the date will likely appear elsewhere on a website)
 - Example: GREENSBORO, N.C. (March 13, 2020) -

Bylines

- Simply, it's the name of the person (or people) who wrote the story. Even better on websites because it might serve as a homepage for everything you've ever written there.
- Many publications just list the author's name, but others still say "by FirstName LastName." Note the lowercase.
- Headlines, bylines and datelines do not count against your word count.

Your stories should follow this format:

Headline in Appropriate Case

by Your Name

CITY NAME, State abbrev. -- Body of Text

Sources and Subjects

- What is a "source"?
- Anyone and everyone that you talk to for a story is a source. Some people may give you more valuable and relevant information than others, but they're still a source.
- General journalism rule of thumb: You should speak to (interview) *at least* twice as many people as you plan to include in a story. You will never have the space to include every quote from every source you talk to. Part of your challenge as the writer is to determine what information is conveyed and by whom.
 - For example, in your first story, you are required to include at least two sources. Can you include information from more than two? How many people should you interview?

Source Lists

- In this course, you will include a source list for every story you submit.
- These are really simple to create, and it showcases exactly who you talked to.
- In case you think these are pointless, editors/news directors will also almost always require you to submit some kind of source list for a story. Or they will verify your sources themselves. If you get caught citing a source you did not talk to, that is plagiarism. And that is bad.
- For this course, simply give me your source's full name, age, and where they live/are from. No need for formal Style practice here. For real stories, compiling contact information (like a phone number) is a good habit. Why might that be?
 - If a source is "from" somewhere different from where s/he lives, make sure you are clear about which is which in your story – if you mix that up it's a factual error.

Example: Tim Hackett, 23, Kansas City, Missouri [or perhaps my hometown would be more relevant? You must make the call when you're interviewing.]

When in doubt, Attribute

- Any time you present a fact in your story that is not *obviously, universally* regarded as true, you must attribute that claim to someone
 - This gives credibility to your story and also shifts the blame/focus off you if that fact is wrong.
 - But why would you publish something you know to be wrong? Verify every claim that a source makes, sometimes even with another source.
- If you got the material from another publication/site, link to them. Getting scooped/beaten to a story is generally bad, but it's much worse to not properly credit others who had information you didn't.
 - Side note: getting scooped is not the end of the world. Ask yourself this: what can I do to move the story forward? What more information/context can I provide? How much further can I dig to uncover elements of this story? Give credit where it's due then move on to find out anything they may have missed.

How to Write a Quote

- Direct quotes are one of the most powerful tools you possess as a reporter. Use them whenever you can – but only use them when they are relevant and help to move the story forward.
 - You have the ability to tell a story better than your source does. Let a source/quote provide context, background, insight and color. Save the storytelling and overview for the experts – that's you.
- "Every time you end a sentence inside a quote, even if that sentence is complete, you stylistically end that sentence with a comma," said Joe Jones, professor of journalism. "After your attribution, you can continue the quote like there was never any interruption. When you're finished with a quote for good, end with a period."
 - The standard rule in print is to write that a source "said" something. Don't use flowery creative language – those words can be seen as being opinionated or "coloring" the story. "Said" is as safe as it gets. For print, keep everything in past tense, unless you're providing context about something that will happen in the future.

More Quote Context

- Never, and I mean never, introduce a subject or quote with what you include in the quote itself. It looks so lazy and unprofessional – not to mention, removing those repetitive elements will save you on your word count, which should always be top of mind.

- Never write something like this:

The new law could affect hundreds of Missouri residents. Joe Jones, who lives in Nevada, said he's very angry about the law's passage.

"This law makes me so angry!" said Nevada, Missouri native Joe Jones. "There's no way I'm going to follow something like that!"

- Leave yourself out of the story. Never insert yourself as a character ("I/we talked to..." Or "X/Y/Z told me/us..." Or "This reporter feels..."). It might seem like that would put you at the scene and improve credibility, but for print reporters, it just removes your neutrality.