

Planning Your Article



1

Research your topic. To begin writing a news article you need to research the topic you will be writing about extensively. In order to have a credible, well written, well structured article, you have to know the topic intimately.

- If you've ever a research paper you understand the work that goes into learning about your topic. The first phase of writing a news article or editorial is pretty similar.
- Begin by asking yourself the "5W's" (sometimes "6W's").^[1]
- "Who"-who was involved?
- "What"-what happened?
- "Where"-where did it happen?
- "Why"-why did it happen?
- "When"-when did it happen?
- "How"-how did it happen?



2

Compile all your facts. Once you can clearly answer the "5W's", jot down a list of all the pertinent facts and information that needs to be included in the article. This fact list

will help prevent you from leaving out any relevant information about the topic or story, and will also help you write a clean, succinct article.

- Be as specific as possible when writing down all of these facts. You can always trim down unnecessary information later, but it's easier to cut down than it is to have to beef up an article.
- Now that you have your facts, decide what kind of article you're writing. Ask yourself if this is an opinion article, an unbiased and straightforward relaying of information, or something in between.



3

Create an article outline. Your outline, and subsequently your article, should be structured for like an inverted triangle. The inverted triangle allows you to build your story so that the most important information is at the top.^[2]

- If you've ever heard the term "burying the lead", that is in reference to the structure of your article.^[3] It simply means that you shouldn't make your readers read several paragraphs before they get to the point of your article.
- Whatever forum you're writing for, be it print or for the web, a lot of readers don't make it to the end of the article. When writing a news article you should focus on giving your readers what they want as soon as possible.
- Write above the fold. The fold comes from newspapers where there's a crease because the page gets folded in half. If you look at a newspaper all the top stories are placed above the fold. The same goes for writing online. The virtual fold is the bottom of your screen before you have to scroll down. Put the best information at the top to engage your readers and encourage them to keep reading.



4

Know your audience. In order to write a great news article you need to know exactly who you are writing for. Your audience will dictate the voice and tone of your article and help you to know what you should include.

- Ask yourself the “5W’s” again, but this time in relation to your audience.
- Questions like what is the average age you are writing for, where is this audience, local or national, why is this audience reading your article, and what does your audience want out of your article will inform you on how to write.
- Once you know who you are writing for you can format an outline that will get the best information to the right audience as quickly as possible.



5

Find an angle. Why is this article unique to you? What is your voice? These questions will help you to make your news article unique and something that only you could write.

- Even if you are covering a popular story or topic that others are writing about, look for an angle that will make this one yours.

- Do you have a personal experience that relates to your topic? Maybe you know someone who is an expert that you can interview.



6

Interview people. When writing a news article, interviewing people and getting a first hand source on your topic can be invaluable. And while reaching out to people and asking for an interview may seem daunting, it can greatly affect the credibility and authority of your article.^[4]

- People usually like to talk about personal experiences, especially if it will be featured somewhere, like your news article. Reach out through a phone call, email, or even social media and ask someone if you can interview them.
- When you do interview people you need to follow a few rules: identify yourself as a reporter. Keep an open mind. Stay objective. While you are encouraged to ask questions and listen to anecdotes, you are not there to judge.
- Record and write down important information from the interview, and be transparent with what you are doing and why you are doing this interview.