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# How to Write a News Article That's Effective

**It's similar to writing academic papers, but with vital differences**

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Updated October 07, 2019

Techniques for writing a news article differ from those needed for academic papers. Whether you're interested in writing for a school newspaper, fulfilling a requirement for a class, or seeking a writing job in journalism, you'll need to know the difference. To write like a real reporter, consider this guide for how to write a news article.

## Choose Your Topic

First, you must decide what to write about. Sometimes an editor or instructor will give you assignments, but you'll often have to find your own topics to cover.

If you get to choose your topic, you might be able to pick a subject related to your personal experience or family history, which would give you a strong framework and a dose of perspective. However, this route means you must work to avoid bias—you may have strong opinions that could affect your conclusions. You also could pick a topic that revolves around a personal interest, such as your favorite sport.

## Research for Your News Article

Even if you end up with a topic close to your heart, you should begin with research, using books and articles that will give you a full understanding of the subject. Go to the library and find background information about people, organizations, and events you intend to cover.

Next, interview a few people to collect more information and quotes that give perspective on the topic. Don't be intimidated by the idea of [interviewing](#) important or newsworthy people—an interview can be as formal or informal as you want to make it, so relax and have fun with it. Find people with backgrounds in the topic and strong opinions, and carefully write down or record their responses for accuracy. Let the interviewees know that you will be quoting them.

## Parts of a News Article

Before you write your first draft, you should be aware of the parts that make up a news story:

### Headline or title

The [headline](#) of your article should be catchy and to the point. You should punctuate your title using [Associated Press style guidelines](#) unless your publication specifies something else. Other members of the publication staff frequently write the headlines, but this will help focus your thoughts and maybe save those other staffers some time.

Examples:

"Lost dog finds his way home"

"Debate tonight in Jasper Hall"

"Panel chooses 3 essay winners"

### Byline

The byline is the name of the writer—your name, in this case.

### Lead (sometimes written "lede")

The [lead](#) is the first sentence or paragraph, written to provide a preview of the entire article. It summarizes the story and includes many of the basic facts. The lead will help readers decide if they want to read the rest of the news article or if they are satisfied knowing these details.

### The story

Once you've set the stage with a good lead, follow up with a well-written story that contains facts from your research and quotes from people you've interviewed. The article should not contain your opinions. Detail any events in chronological order. Use the [active voice](#)—not [passive voice](#)—when possible, and write in clear, short, direct sentences.

In a news article, you should use the inverted pyramid format—putting the most critical information in the early paragraphs and following with supporting information. This ensures that the reader sees the important details first. Hopefully they'll be intrigued enough to continue to the end.

### The sources

Include your sources in the body with the information and quotes they provide. This is different from academic papers, where you would add these at the end of the piece.

### **The ending**

Your conclusion can be your last bit of information, a summary, or a carefully chosen quote to leave the reader with a strong sense of your story.