

Researching the News Story

First you must decide what to write about. Sometimes an editor (or instructor) will give you specific assignments, but other times you'll have to find your own stories to write about.

If you *do* have a choice about the topic, you might be able to write an article that is related to your own personal experience or family history. That would certainly give you a strong framework and a dose of perspective. However, you must try to avoid bias. You may have strong opinions that affect your conclusions. Beware of fallacies in your logic.

You could also pick a topic that revolves around a strong interest, like your favorite sport. Even if you are able to start out with a topic close to your heart, you should conduct research right away to read books and articles that will give you a full understanding of your story. Go to the library and find background information about people, organizations, and events you intend to cover.

Next, interview a few people to collect quotes that reflect the public's perception of the event or story. Don't be intimidated by the idea of interviewing sources! An interview can be as formal or informal as you want to make it, so relax and have fun with it. Find a few people with strong opinions and write down the responses for accuracy. Also let the interviewee know that you will be quoting him or her.

Parts of a Newspaper Article

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

Headline or Title: The title of your news article should be catchy and to the point. You should punctuate your title using AP style guidelines, which means a few things: the first word is capitalized, but (unlike other styles) words after the first word are typically not. Of course, you will capitalize proper nouns. Numbers are not spelled out.

Examples:

- Lost dog finds his way home
- Debate tonight in Jasper Hall
- Panel chooses 3 essay winners

Byline: This is your name! The byline is the name of the writer.

Lede or lead: The lede is the first paragraph, but it is written to provide a detailed preview of the entire story. It summarizes the story and includes all of the basic facts. The lede will help readers decide if they want to read the rest of the story, or if they are satisfied knowing these details. For this reason, the lede may contain a hook.

The Story: Once you've set the stage with a good lead, you 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 active voice—avoid passive voice when possible.

In a news article, you would typically put the most critical information in the early paragraphs and follow with supporting information, background information, and related information.

You do not put a list of sources at the end of a news story.

<http://homeworktips.about.com/od/paperassignments/a/How-To-Write-A-News-Article.htm>