

YLA YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT

Press



*Preparing the Next
Generation of Civic Leaders*



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Responsibilities

Press Delegates prepare the Youth in Government newspaper. Issues are prepared during program sessions and one issue may be made after the weekend program.

The Press program needs to be limited to fifteen (15) or fewer participants. Press Delegate positions are reserved on the Participation Agreement. Students who register as Legislative, Judicial, or Lobbyist Delegates may not transfer to the Press Corps.

Press Delegates are to be those students who want to be in the Press, who have the skills to prepare the newspaper, and who can manage their time to fully participate in the Press program during the Youth in Government weekend.

Writing Tips

Create Interest in the Reader

The stories you write must be interesting to the reader, or they won't read them! Your news must be timely – don't wait until tomorrow to write what happened today. Write it while the facts are still fresh and clear in your mind. Remember local names attract attention and unusual articles also present appeal.

Correctness of the Article

Correct spelling, good sentence structure, and proper grammar are musts!! Also, be accurate when reporting the facts. Check and double check your sources.

Be Objective

Report only the facts. Do not let your opinion enter into the article. As soon as you begin writing your opinion, your work becomes an *editorial* – not an objective news article. Do not use the pronouns "I", "We", and "You" unless a direct quote is being written. Keep articles in the third person.

Building a Story

There are two main parts to most newspaper articles – the **lead** and the **body**. The lead is the most important part of the story. The lead is the first group of sentences in the story. The summarizing lead gives in interesting, concise language the gist of the story. The informal lead introduces the story to the reader without intimating anything of the outcome, but with the hint of suggestion that something interesting is coming.

If the article begins with a strong lead, the body is little more than a simple narration of events in chronological order with added explanation or description. Use care to maintain the interest developed in the lead. The body may take two forms:

Order of importance: The most important things are mentioned first. This way, if space is short, the story may be cut by leaving off the last paragraph.

Chronological Order: This tells things in the order of their occurrence. Care should be taken not to "bog down" the reader in details when using this form. The first commandment in writing an article is that the story begin with the most important facts and gives the "five W's and one H" of the details (Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How).

Subjects

Bills – interesting, controversial, and unusual make for good reading.

Officers – Those already serving and those running for office.

Interviews – You represent the readers who cannot meet the person interviewed. Ask questions your readers have about the person.

There are two principal types of interviews. Choose the one that fits the person being interviewed.

Factual news: Opinions on a subject that are recorded for their news value.

Feature or personality: Personal traits and point of view of the one interviewed.

News Stories

- ◆ Lead off with the most important one or two facts or a concise summary of the story. Catch the reader's attention with the first few words of the first sentence.
- ◆ Use the lead to sketch the organization of the rest of the story. Consider the lead a miniature or summary of the story.
- ◆ Write short sentences (about 19 words average) and short paragraphs (about 50 words).
- ◆ Alternate long and short paragraphs to avoid monotony.
- ◆ Be brief. Eliminate unimportant, dull details. Never use two words where one will do or a long word if a short one is more familiar to readers.
- ◆ Use active voice verbs.
- ◆ Be specific and thorough. How much money will the proposal cost taxpayers? Will the proposal require more government and who specifically will regulate it? Exactly how is the new course more effective than the old, and will it be tested to see if it is better?
- ◆ Write news stories in third person, not first or second.
- ◆ Check all facts. Do not hesitate to go back to verify names, spelling, or information.
- ◆ Do not editorialize (state opinion). Never say, "He is well qualified for the position." Report his background to show the reader his qualifications. Do not write, "The play was enjoyable." Let the reader decide.
- ◆ Avoid vague words and opinion words: many, numerous, various, very, nice, enjoyable, beautiful, interesting, diligent, and strive.
- ◆ Indicate authority for all important statements with proper attribution.
- ◆ Identify each person, even if they are well known. Identification usually is done in appositives listing position or title, address, office, achievement, connection with past news, reputation or age (usually least important).
- ◆ Use direct quotations only when they say something that is not common knowledge or trite. "Our fine young lads face the toughest schedule in the school's history this season," Coach Will Luz said, is too trite to be quotable.
- ◆ Write news features with human interest angles. Use news features treatment to report news that has lost its timeliness, playing up significance and interest.
- ◆ Type or write all copy double-spaced.
- ◆ Write or type "more" at the bottom of each page of a story that is continued.

Example:

- more-

- ◆ Write or type "Add" and the page number at the top of each additional page.

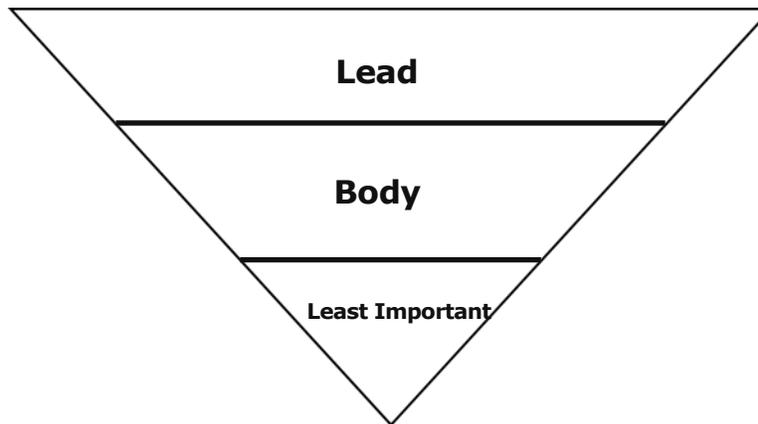
Example:

Add 2

- ◆ At the end of the copy, write or type "###" or "- 30 -"

REWRITE YOUR STORY.

- ◆ Cut out all padding – unnecessary words.
- ◆ Now, cut out every extra article "a", "an", or "the".
- ◆ Are the facts arranged in order of importance?
- ◆ Can the story survive the cut-off test?
- ◆ **Is the story ACCURATE, CONCISE, AND CLEAR?**



Interview Guide

To assure a complete news story:

- ◆ Take this guide with you whenever you interview anyone for a news or feature story.
- ◆ While you are interviewing, consult this outline repeatedly. Do not consider that you have completed the interview satisfactorily until you are sure you have exhausted the story possibilities suggested below.
- ◆ Continue to use the guide during every interview until you have a complete command of its contents.

WHAT happened? What might or will happen as a result of this occurrence? What relative importance does this happening have concerning: (1) intellectual, (2) moral, (3) social aspects of Youth in Government? What are you going to feature in your lead paragraph? What headline do you visualize for this story? What other things or events brought about this happening? What other sources can you contact to get additional information? What possibilities does this information have for human interest treatment? Be more interested in results than in causes.

WHO figures in this happening? Who is the delegate or department that is connected with this event? Who were the delegates that were instrumental? Who will be affected by the happening? Who gave you the information? Who of your readers will have any interest in this story?

WHEN did the event take place? When is it going to take place? When was the action first started? When is it going to stop? When did your authority first learn of, or first start, the action that resulted in this story? When

can you get final details if they are not available now?

WHERE did the event take place? Where is it going to take place? Where did your source get the idea for this event? Where is the happening going to take place (1) the subject or subjects of the story, (2) the readers of the story? (Keep in mind all the readerships served by your paper.) Where are you conducting this interview? Where will you go for more information?

WHY did this happening take place? Why is it going to take place? Why would your readers want to know? Why is your source giving you this information? Why didn't you hear about it sooner? (Are you visiting your beat daily?) Why didn't you find it out yourself? (Are you keeping your eyes and ears open all the time for all news possibilities?)

HOW will the event affect: (1) Youth in Government; (2) the delegates; (3) the readers of the paper, no matter who or where they may be? How do you know? How is your paper going to handle this story? How are you going to write it? How many other possibilities could you unearth to make this story: (1) more information; (2) more complete; (3) more interesting; (4) of greater service to your readers and your Youth in Government program?

REMEMBER:

Get it first, but first get it right – and, get it all!

Understanding the Style of News

- ◆ Good news writing is characterized by simplicity because it is aimed at the masses. The degree of simplicity varies with the readers of the publication. Write for your readers.
- ◆ Good news writing is direct and economical. It is written as briefly as possible. "Say what you have to say as simply and concisely as possible and stop", is good advice to a journalist.
- ◆ Tight writing is difficult and takes much practice. It means using one word for several, and eliminating redundant words.

Good news writing is colorful.

- ◆ Use the active voice verb for the passive. "George Burns hit the ball 300 feet into the bleachers," instead of, "The ball was hit 300 feet..."
- ◆ Use vigorous verbs that suggest action: saunter or swagger for walk; swamp or smother for defeat; fled, sprinted, or rushed for ran.
- ◆ Use concrete nouns to represent specific and readily identifiable objects: collie for dog; scarlet for red; or blue jay for bird.
- ◆ Choose significant, meaningful details when writing description.
- ◆ Use colorful, fresh figures of speech and illustrative phrases. Avoid clichés!

Preparing the Copy

HINT #1 – Type a rough draft first on regular paper with the standard margins. It is easier to edit from type-written copy than from handwritten copy.

HINT #2 – Proofread your work! Better yet, have someone else proofread your work. What you've typed is what people will see in the final newspaper. If you find errors, retype the sections that contain errors. Then, check your work again.

HINT #3 – Keep your writing simple and clear. Use short sentences and easy words to make your story more interesting and easier to read.

HINT #4 – Use the newspaper method of building your articles. That is, get the main facts into the first sentence or paragraph of the article. Write the rest of the article with the most important or most interesting information first and less important information later. You'll have the option of cutting the ends of articles later when you're trying to fit all your copy into the newspaper.

Checklist for News Writing

The Lead

- ◆ Aim for no more than a 30 word lead covering who, what, when, where, why, and how.
- ◆ Avoid leads beginning with "a", "the", "there is", or "it was".
- ◆ Do not use time leads (e.g. "On November 15", "Yesterday", "Recently").
- ◆ Do not use leads such as "The Columbus YLA held a meeting..." Say what was done.
- ◆ Do not use a list of names in the lead sentence.

The Body

- ◆ See that each paragraph features one phrase of the news with emphasis in the beginning.
- ◆ Count words in paragraphs (60-65 maximum), but vary length of paragraphs throughout the story up to this maximum.
- ◆ Check paragraph beginnings for a variety of grammatical openings.
- ◆ Avoid "it" and "there" sentence beginnings.
- ◆ Strive for interpretation in news stories, such as, "more students made the honor roll than ever before in the history of Mayfield," rather than just a number.
- ◆ Cut all first person reference (I, we, us, me, my, our) in news stories and avoid them in features.
- ◆ Aim for nouns and verbs rather than adjectives and adverbs (e.g. "scholar" rather than "learned man").
- ◆ Identify all names – names make news – spell correctly.
- ◆ Write in the active voice rather than passive (e.g. "Seniors represented Mayfield High in last month's . . ." rather than "Mayfield was represented by. . .").
- ◆ Avoid personal comment, otherwise known as editorializing (e.g. "Everyone loved the show").
- ◆ Avoid "moral tags" or editorial comment like "everyone should attend".

Revision

- ◆ Cut out all padding and unnecessary words.
- ◆ Next, cut out every extra "a" and "the".
- ◆ Are facts in news stories arranged in order of importance?
- ◆ Can the story survive the cut test?

Press Editor and Associate Editors

The Editor provides leadership to build an effective Press Corps to accurately report the Youth in Government experience. Associate Editors assist the Editor.

Application

The Editor and Associate Editors are selected from those who submit the appropriately checked (PressEditor/ Associate Editor) Officer Candidate Form.

Qualifications

- ◆ Able and willing to provide leadership to the Press
- ◆ Have the personal and technical skills required to effectively serve.
- ◆ Will meet deadlines
- ◆ Assist in every way possible for a successful Press and Youth in Government.

Opportunities and Responsibilities

- ◆ Recognize the Leadership Summit in June, the Fall Leadership Conference in November, and the February Bill & Case Rating/Officer Training day are opportunities to -
- ◆ Learn
- ◆ Position the Press as a significant part of Youth in Government
- ◆ Meet other students
- ◆ Meet and work with the Officers
- ◆ Begin the Press program before YG by including these programs in the coverage of the total program.

A Special Note – While attendance at these programs is not required, it is recommended that the Press Editor represent their position and the Press in as many of these opportunities as possible.

Prior to Youth in Government develop a plan to involve all Press members during YG.

During Youth in Government:

- ◆ Supervise Press delegates; help them succeed with meaningful things to accomplish.
- ◆ Help the Press meet their deadlines.
- ◆ See that the articles and the total newspaper are ready.
- ◆ Create the final layout of the paper.
- ◆ Have Press evaluate their experience and make suggestions to improve the next year's Press program.