# Writing For Journalism

At its most basic level, journalistic writing includes any writing with the intent to spread the news. When journalists are writing for a print publication, they prioritize providing their readers with new and relevant information that services them in some way. Whether it’s reviewing a movie or live-tweeting a Supreme Court decision, journalists need to be able to write clearly and quickly. Even if you’re more interested in broadcast or multimedia journalism, being able to write well will always be one of your most valuable skills.

**So, what kinds of journalistic writing are there?**

Most types of journalistic writing found in any news publication, including magazines, fall into one of three categories. These categories are:

**1) News**

[These are stories that discuss events relevant to the publication’s audience.](http://www.schooljournalism.org/15-tips-on-news-writing-for-young-journalists/) They inform the public of details of recent events, which the reporter acquires from interviewing those involved. They should be unbiased and provide necessary background information to add meaning for the reader. (See George Washington University’s Writing Center’s [guide to writing news stories](http://www.gwu.edu/%7Egwriter/Resources.html).)

Consider this [well-executed news story from a high school paper](http://contests.studentpress.org/imgupload/2012/get.php?id=1353a97d1159f9887382be1351514582&name=CE088814.pdf). It hooks the reader with the lede, provides the most important information first, provides enough background to give the story meaning and includes a variety of perspectives to ensure those responsible for the incident are neither praised nor castigated.

Another example of excellent news writing is [this story](http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci_21124893/12-shot-dead-58-wounded-aurora-movie-theater) about the tragic shooting in Aurora, Colo. in 2012. It provides compelling details about the incident, which happened about 24 hours before the story was published. Not only is the story well-written, but it also required intense and sensitive reporting. It won the ASNE award for Deadline News Reporting in 2013.

**2) Editorials**

Editorials discuss an issue and create an informed argument for one side of the issue – presumably the author’s opinion. To write an editorial, you must research the topic thoroughly and be familiar with opposing sides. Cite facts to support your argument and use first person when necessary.

Consider this [brief political OpEd](http://www.latimes.com/opinion/editorials/la-ed-syria-20130912-story.html) that uses facts to support the author’s opinion about an issue with many different sides. The author recognizes other opinions in the extensive rhetoric surrounding the issue but makes the strongest argument for his own. He also makes informed speculations about what might happen in the near future, a tactic that is only acceptable in editorials because it is not a fact. [This story](http://www.cleveland.com/morris/index.ssf/2012/07/clevelands_retired_super-cop_j.html) won the 2013 ASNE Award for Commentary/Column Writing and is another example of strong editorial writing.

**3) Features**

Features cover a wide variety of topics and tend to use a more narrative structure than news or opinion writing. Features allow writers a chance to get creative and cover less time-sensitive topics. Long-form features tend to have a longer revision process and include more sources. When we think of features, we might think of [“arts and entertainment” topics](http://www.schooljournalism.org/28-tips-for-writing-theater-movie-and-performance-reviews/), but features don’t cover exclusively that. A story’s distinction as a “feature” story is based on its structure, not its topic.

Consider this [Pulitzer Prize-winning feature](http://www.pulitzer.org/works/2009-Feature-Writing) from 2009. Notice the use of present tense, vivid imagery and emotive language to create an intimate look at this family. The nonfiction narrative follows Dani’s integration into her new family and establishes the family members as individual characters, similar to the way a work of fiction might.

[This piece titled “West Africa”](http://asne.org/files/WEST%20AFRICA_ASNE.pdf) includes five feature stories. They are more poetic, emotional and longer than the average news story. The author won ASNE’s award for non-deadline writing for the compilation.

**News article:**In a newspaper, a story about an event that has just taken place.  
  
**Feature article:**In a newspaper, a detailed report on a person, an issue, or an event.  
  
**Editor:**One of the people who runs a newspaper.  
  
**Editorial:**An article in which the people who run a newspaper give their opinion on an important issue.  
  
**International:**The international section of a newspaper tells you about news in different continents, such as Africa, the Americas, Europe, and Asia.  
  
**Business:**The business section is for things that are happening business-wise. For example, the business section might contain media and advertising, world business, the economy of the country that you live in, the stock markets, company researches, mutual funds, and stock portfolios.   
  
**Technology:**The technology section contains things that are going in and out of style in the technology world, things that are coming out, and things that have been out, but they're coming back in style.   
  
**Science:**The science section in a newspaper contains things that are happening in our medical world today. For example: a science section in a newspaper might contain what's happening in outer space, and it might contain things that are happening in and around our environment.   
  
**Health:**The health section in a newspaper would usually contain the things that are happning to a modern day person's health. For example: they might have come out with a new medicine that could clear the human race totally of allergies. In a health section, there might be news containing things about fitness and nutrition, new health care policies, and mental health and behavior.   
  
**Sports:**In a sports section, you may find out about last night's baseball, basketball, and football game. That's the second thing besides asking your buddies down at the pizza parlor. It may also tell you about a player on a team that might have gotten injured and cannot play. In a sports section, you can find out things about basketball, professional basketball, golf, soccer, tennis, professional football, and different sports that maybe you'd want to look for.   
  
**Education:**The thing that a student favors the most: the education section. In the education section you might be able to find out the overall average for students in a partucular school, and maybe even a couple of awards that a student won for the school that they attend, or doing something that would help their school do better.   
  
**Weather:**In a weather section, you can find the weather, where ever you may need to know.   
  
**Obituaries:**In an obitary, you cn find out about people who passed on recently, and people think that their death should be mentioned to the community. When you would go to this section in a newspaper, you can most likely find a picture about someone and a short biography.   
  
**The cover page story:**In this section, you'd just find the story that has the cover page has on it. It has more detail, and is usually found in the first few pages in the newspaper. **Table of contents:**This is the most important part of a newspaper. This part of the newspaper shows where to find all of these newspaper sections. Without it, reading the newspaper would take hours to read! **Since no newspaper can survive just on selling its papers, newspapers also carry advertising, usually divided into "showcase" or "display" ads that can take two pages, a whole page, half a page, a quarter of a page, etc., and "classified" ads that are only a few lines each and a lot cheaper than the display ads.   
  
Modern newspapers also carry things to entice people who don't care for news, but are interested in entertainment, self-improvement, etc.   
  
To provide some stimulus to people to buy their papers, many also carry "op-ed" columns, opinion-editorial pieces written by people who are well-known and often respected for their opinions.**

**News Articles**

These articles are all about the news. Specifically, you want to write about school news. You can write about local, national, or world news—but we recommend only doing so where they are relevant to the student body.

You have the opportunity to go so much further than what is posted on social media sites. Social media reports rumor, gossip, and assumptions. You will report the truth, having done all the relevant research and fact checking. You want your article to be the definitive source on the issue—the source others will point to and say, “But that’s not what so-and-so said.”

To learn how to write a school news article, [click here.](http://www.makemynewspaper.com/how-to-write-a-school-news-article)

**Editorial (Opinion Piece, Commentary)**

These articles are about influencing popular opinion and represents the consensus view of the newspaper editorial staff. It can also be about entertainment. People need to read your article and become engaged with it, even if they completely disagree with you. Some may read your piece because they completely agree. Others will read it because they just like the way you say it. Still others will read it because they feel a need to respond and disagree with you. Regardless of the reason, you have engaged the reader in such a way that your opinion has an impact. This is the main purpose of an editorial.

To see tips on writing editorial pieces, [click here.](http://www.makemynewspaper.com/how-to-write-an-opinion-piece-for-a-school-newspaper)

**Feature Story**

A feature story is probably the longest article you will write. It takes a news article and expands upon it, trying to explore reasons as to why the particular news story happened. To some degree, your opinion is inserted into the article, but in general, your opinion is based on the facts you have been able to gather, not on a personal bias.

A feature story will also make predictions on the consequences or ramifications of the news story. Likely scenarios are presented that might in some way effect the student body you are writing to. In general, a school newspaper will have one, maybe two, of these types of articles.

To learn how to write a feature story, [click here.](http://www.makemynewspaper.com/how-to-write-a-feature-story-for-a-school-newspaper)

**Columns**

A column can be written by the same author each issue of the newspaper. It will reflect the personal opinion of a single individual and can follow a similar theme through each issue. In general they are editorials, but written from one person’s perspective and opinion, and it may be laser-focused on one particular area: advice, polls (and responses to), school announcements, school policy, question and answers, rival school news, and so on.

For more tips on writing columns, [click here.](http://www.makemynewspaper.com/how-to-write-an-opinion-piece-for-a-school-newspaper)

**Review Article**

A review article is a first-hand experience (good or bad) of a product, service, person, group, or idea. Your job here is to give as an unbiased experience of the good and negative aspects of your experience. You want to inform readers of what to expect. You also want to be thorough and honest about aspects you did not experience.

To learn how to write a review article, [click here.](http://www.makemynewspaper.com/how-to-write-a-review-article-for-a-school-newspaper)

**Promotional Article**

The idea here is to encourage your readers to join in, engage in, participate in, purchase, or otherwise become involved with an activity, a group, a product, or an opportunity. For instance, the Newspaper Club can write an article about why joining them would provide members with an expanded resume that could help them land a job someday. An upcoming school activity might also be written about to encourage students to participate.

For tips on writing a promotional article, [click here.](http://www.makemynewspaper.com/how-to-write-a-promotional-article-for-a-school)

**How-To Articles**

These types of articles have become much more popular in recent years. For a school newspaper, writing about how to study, how to memorize better, how to utilize certain school resources, or how to best take advantage of the school cafeteria. All of these ideas, and many more, might be of interest to the student body and are potential articles for your newspaper.

To learn how to write a how-to article, [click here.](http://www.makemynewspaper.com/writing-a-how-to-article-for-your-school-newspaper)