In Search of an Editorial Handbook

An Honors Creative Project

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Abstract

The goal of this project was to develop a handbook for Ball State University’s expo magazine. Expo is a news and features magazine that is produced primarily by journalism students. The handbook will be printed as a booklet for expo staff members’ use.

At least 25 other colleges and universities from through the United States and Canada were contacted, and written procedures and specifications from five collegiate magazines were included in the research.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. David Sumner for his support and guidance in this project. He provided me with the contact information of many schools involved in my research. He also offered helpful suggestions in the drafts of the handbook. Most importantly, he recognized how beneficial to expo magazine the completion of this project would be, and he held me to the pursuit of that goal.

Additionally, I would like to thank all of the schools that responded to my requests for information and cooperation.

Lastly, I owe a debt of gratitude to all of the current expo staff members who provided me with extensive information regarding their responsibilities to the magazine.
Ball State's journalism majors have produced expo magazine since 1975. As with any student-run magazine, it suffers a change in staff each year and, consequently, tends to lose any consistency it has developed. While there is no escape from the change of leadership it endures, there is a way to minimize the erosion of the editorial foundation: a formal editorial handbook.

Each magazine's editorial staff follows its own set of rules, guidelines and procedures. Without this set of specifications, the magazine has nothing to abide by for consistency and structure. Found in a magazine's editorial handbook, whether physical or conceptual, is a mission statement, job descriptions, a style manual and guidelines for staff members and contributors.

A mission statement conveys the editor's overall vision for the magazine including its purpose and audience. Job descriptions detail each staff member's contribution to the magazine, including specific duties and the individual each staff member reports to. A style manual gives the copy consistency. Guidelines for staff members and contributors give details about the formats submissions should follow and the procedures to which each department should adhere.

These pieces lay the foundation for a strong magazine, as well as providing a starting point for each year's new editorial staff at collegiate magazines.

Expo magazine and its mission statement

Expo is a news and feature magazine published four times yearly primarily by journalism students for the Ball State community. Its purpose is to give students experience in managing, designing, writing, publicizing, editing and financing a
magazine. Participation with expo magazine gives journalism students experience and clips for their professional portfolios.

Others' mission statements

The mission statement of Columbia College's magazine, Echo, declares a focus on topics of interest to students of colleges in Chicago, especially the South Loop, where the school is located. Likewise, expo publishes stories of interest to students and faculty in the Ball State community, as well as general interest stories for all college students. Columbia College covers stories focused on communications and the Arts, which reflects the school's curriculum, while Ball State gears many of its stories toward a variety of the university's colleges, majors, athletics and extra-curricular activities.

Ryerson Review of Journalism is a magazine published in a year-long workshop course by magazine students of Ryerson Tech. in Canada. Ryerson Review only publishes national journalism stories, unless there is a strong local angle.

Style

The staff of Missouri University's Vox Magazine have their own style manual that is based on the Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual. However, the staff have changed a few rules to fit their needs and made other specifications for areas of the magazine other than the copy. A college publication's style manual can't cover all of the bases, so the staffers are instructed to consult three other books in the following order: Columbia Missourian Handbook of Local Style, AP Stylebook and finally Webster's New World College Dictionary.
The expo staff, to adhere to the Ball State journalism department's guidelines, strictly follows AP Style. However, the AP's style manual does not always contain the examples that would lead staffers in the right direction. In those situations, sound judgment and help from the magazine's adviser should suffice.

Job descriptions

Ryerson Review's job descriptions include a list of tasks, qualifications and required time commitments for the positions of editor, managing editor of each production, advertising and circulation; chief copy editor; visuals editor; and online editors. A statement allows the development of additional positions as the staff members see appropriate.

Likewise, both the University of Kansas and Columbia College include brief descriptions and responsibilities for similar titles.

Colorado Engineer Magazine's staff takes their editorial position details a step further by providing new staff members with extensive descriptions for each position written by past staffers. Some of the descriptions include step-by-step instructions for success in the editorial position, while others mention small details that could potentially slip through the cracks.

Expo currently operates with the traditional positions of editor in chief, editorial director, art director, photo editor, advertising director, editorial assistant, chief copy editor, public relations editor and their respective staffs. To meet its needs, expo needs written job descriptions and responsibilities to guide future staff members and clarify their duties.
Contributors’ guidelines

The contributors’ guidelines section of expo’s editorial handbook will provide all expo staff members with detailed instructions for submitting their work and working in their respective staffs. For example, writers will learn how to write query letters for their story ideas; designers will learn what skills they need to work for the design staff; advertisers will learn the general process of selling ads for expo; public relations representatives will be introduced to the primary activities in their roles on staff and their timeframe for completing them.

Knowledge of their editors’ expectations will give new staffers a better understanding of what their roles are. The objective of the contributors’ guidelines, as well as of the handbook, is that it will make staff members more prepared and confident in their contributions to the staff and to expo.

Necessity of project

No collegiate magazine staff that I contacted had any such handbook. While some advisers offered their staffs job descriptions or checklists, none presented any collected tools for staff members to consult. Expo’s handbook will offer staff members a collective set of guidelines, procedures, job descriptions, as well as lists and other helpful tools for use in completing their described duties.

With this handbook, expo magazine’s turnover from one editorial staff to the next will be less chaotic and will run smoother. The magazine’s consistency will survive changes in staff, and expo will grow stronger.
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Mission Statement

expo is a news and feature magazine published four times yearly for the Ball State community. Although primarily magazine sequence students produce expo, any students are welcome and encouraged to contribute. The magazine’s purpose is to give students experience in managing, designing, writing, publicizing, editing and financing a magazine. Participation with expo magazine gives journalism students experience and clips for their professional portfolios.

Statement of Style

expo faithfully follows the Associated Press Stylebook. When that method fails, staffers should consult an editor or, if needed, the adviser.

Editorial Staff Positions

Editor in chief

The editor in chief has the final say over all expo-related decisions, under guidance of the adviser.

- Forms editorial staff through application process
- Develops publishing calendar
- Sets agenda for and leads weekly meetings, with input from editorial board
- Serves as a main contact person for printing services
  - Meets with Printing Services and adviser to set budget specifications for the school year
  - Responsible for to collect bluelines from Printing Services and returning them
  - Responsible for arrangement of magazine’s delivery to expo’s office
- Attends student leadership events and meetings (Student Publications Team, Cardinal Roundtables, Student Leadership Committee)
- Liaison between adviser and rest of staff
- In charge of expo’s mailbox in journalism office
- Return all staff and prospective staff phone calls and e-mails within 24 hours
- Maintain staff morale and motivation and regular communication; Meet individually when needed, at first sign of problems
- Monitor possible legal or ethical problems
- Meet weekly with adviser to report progress and discuss any problems
Duties for each issue include:
- Lead brainstorming session
- Accept/reject queries for inclusion in issue, with help of managing editor; Notify writers of story assignments with angles and word counts specified
- Assign each writer an editor for guidance
- Edit stories and sidebars for content, length, style, etc. Return to writers
- Write editor’s letter
- Collaborate with art director for design, color, cover, number of pages, etc.
- Edit bluelines and return to Printing Services ASAP

Editor in chief also may designate editorial board members to help with any or all of the abovementioned duties

Managing Editor

The managing editor directly assists the editor in chief and oversees the writers, copy editor(s) and editorial assistant(s).

- Assists editor in chief with deciding content for each issue
- Works directly with writers as needed to improve stories, angles, sources, etc.
- In charge of compiling information for extra pages, such as “For more information,” contents page, masthead and the last page
- Administrative duties include:
  - Keeps track of budget
  - In charge of entering magazine into contests and keeping up with annual dues for associations, etc.
- Assists editor in chief with any other duties

Editorial Assistant

The editorial assistant supports both the editor in chief and the managing editor.

- Administrative duties:
  - E-mails list of story ideas within 24 hours of brainstorming session
  - Sends out e-mail reminders of deadlines, etc.
  - Calls staff members to check progress
- Assists with editing rough and final drafts and final layouts
- Serves as fact-checker for all content
Copy Editor

The copy editor proofreads final layouts for grammar and AP Style. This staffer may also assist with editing rough and final story drafts.

Art Director

The art director oversees all visual aspects of the magazine.

- Develops templates and style guidelines for designers’ use
  - Selects two colors from the list of Pantone Coated library for each issue
  - Chooses body copy and display fonts
- Sets and leads design meetings as needed
  - Informational, recruiting meetings
    - Recruits and trains new members
  - Rough draft meetings
    - Look at designers' rough layouts
    - Check for specifications
    - Gives suggestions for final version
    - Work one-on-one with designers when needed
- Assigns stories and pages to designers
- Determines with editor in chief for each issue:
  - Number of stories, photographs, ads, pages
  - Cover
  - Page placement
- Designs:
  - Cover
  - Table of contents
  - Masthead
  - Editor's note
  - Contributors’ pages
- Edits all layout drafts
- Compiles final layouts on computer
  - Check for design consistency, color, bleeds, margins, page numbers, extra pages
  - Make sure each story has headline, byline, photo credits, folio line, etc.
- Prints final layouts for proofreading
Sends magazine and cover to Printing Services after the following checklist is completed:
  - Check all photos for correct format: jpeg/tiff with correct resolution, either grayscale or duotone with correct color
  - Update all photos
  - Delete extra pages in Quark files
  - Run final spell check on each document, including table of contents and cover
  - Ensure that all images are in the folder to be put in Transfer Area
  - Collect for output
    - Create new folder to contain final version of the magazine
    - Under File, Collect for output, and choose the final magazine folder to collect to
    - Make folders for printer versions of the fonts and art
  - Contact Printing Services and explain how to find the document on the server
    - Deliver a print-out of the final magazine to Printing Services

Photo Editor

The photo editor oversees all photography of the magazine.

- Responsible for obtaining reimbursements for all film and processing costs
- Assign stories to photographers
- Choose from photographers' scanned pictures for each story
- Pick up stories, photo illustrations, etc. that have not been assigned
- Collect photo release forms from photographers for all models
- Get all photos scanned on computer by deadline
- Dust/tone all pictures
- Make sure all photos are in correct format, color
- Collaborate with art director for cover
- Edit captions in all layouts
- Update all photos in final layout before sending to print

Advertising Director

The advertising director oversees ad staff and the sales of all advertisements.

- Sets ad rates with editor in chief and adviser
- Develops ad packet
- Maintains copies of all ad forms
- Creates list of past/potential advertisers
  - Divides list among ad staff
  - Keep in touch with ad staff during sales process
- Oversees ad design
• Ensures that all ads are on computer by deadline
• Makes sure all images are correct in format, color, size
• Edit designed ads for content, consistency, grammar, etc.
• Manage ad money
  o Make sure money is collected from ads
  o Deposit money at Bursar's Office
  o Follow up on outstanding bills
• Make sure ad proofs are approved by all advertisers
• Keep track of all ad paperwork

Public Relations Director

The public relations director oversees public relations staff in publicizing and distributing the magazine. The PR director also maintains contact with other collegiate magazines, when appropriate.

• Gets the word out about expo by supervising:
  o Designing flyers and other advertisements
  o Posting of flyers around campus
  o Purchase of table tents and other promotional items
  o Staff members visiting classrooms to recruit staffers and/or stories
  o Notes in professors' mailboxes or e-mails asking them to make announcements in their classes
• Supervises the distribution of the printed magazine
  o Putting copies of expo in professor’s mailboxes
  o Sending copies through campus mail to CCIM faculty and key university administrators
  o Making signs to post near boxes at distribution sites
  o Creating a list of sites to distribute expo
  o Assigning staff members sites to deliver boxes of expo
• Communicates with other collegiate magazines
  o Requests copies of other schools’ magazines to keep in office
  o Supplies other schools with copies of expo when requested
• Pay attention to special promotional opportunities
  o Get campus visitors to tour the office, learn more about expo

All Editorial Board Members

• Attend all meetings
• Arrange and hold meetings for individual staffs when necessary
• Maintain regular communication with editor in chief
• Support editor in chief and other editorial board members in their duties
Adviser

The adviser offers advice and guidance when needed. However, the final decision on content rests with the editors. The adviser promotes the magazine's growth and improvement and encourages entries in annual Indiana Collegiate Press Association convention competition and other student contests and journalism awards competition.

- Recruit and help with the selection of a new editor every year
- Serve as member of the Student Publications Committee
- Train the new editor and other staff members in business and publishing procedures
- Meet with editor regularly to make sure production process proceeds smoothly
- Attend staff meetings and offer input and advice as needed
- Serve as primary liaison to Printing Services – get quotes and make sure technical requirements and deadlines of printer are followed
  - Responsible for filling out Printing Services paperwork
- Make sure all staff members understand and follow university paperwork procedures for receipt and disbursement of funds
- Advise on story and photo content
- Ensure that students understand risks and responsibilities of a free student press
  - Give training sessions on legal and copyright issues in publishing
- Provide assistance and training to advertising director to ensure traditional advertisers are contacted each year
- Oversee budget to ensure proper cost control
  - Oversee payment of bills by expo and to expo if students fail to follow through
- Attend annual Indiana Collegiate Press Association convention and encourage students to attend
- Perform general troubleshooting whenever problems arise
Guidelines for contributors to expo

Writers

- Query letters
  - Give us a clear description of the story you want to write
  - Provide a clear idea of the angle you want to take; If there are a number of angles that would work, pick the stronger ones to explain in your query; We might have a reason for choosing one over the others, even if you don’t
  - Tell us why you should be the one to write the story? (Are you especially interested in the topic? Do you have a better understanding of the topic than others do? Do you know someone who is affected by the topic of your story? Are you very motivated to do a thorough job addressing the topic?)
  - Give us some ideas for sources you plan to pursue – persons, organizations or other sources of information for your story idea
  - Try to provide some rough ideas for sidebars, photos or other graphics This will give photographers and designers a starting point for graphical items for your story

- Drafts of stories
  - Submit all drafts of stories in Microsoft Word on a ZIP disk or as an attachment to e-mail; Hard copies may also be required in addition to Word files
    - Do not double-space between sentences
    - Don’t tab at the beginning of paragraphs – use the space bar instead
  - Turn in stories with double-spaced lines in paragraph form
  - Include your name, telephone number, e-mail address and the story’s word count at the top of the first page
  - Include names and telephone numbers and/or e-mail addresses of people sources used in stories and Web addresses and/or telephone numbers of all other sources for fact-checking purposes
Designers

- Art director will supply a vision for the issue.
- Follow specific design guidelines established by art director
  - Lock text to the baseline grid
    - In Quark: Style to Formats choose Lock to the baseline
  - 1 pica first line indent
    - In Quark: Style to Formats under First line indent type in 1p
  - Follow set body copy and display fonts and sizes
  - Follow established leading
- Attend design meetings
  - Informational/organizational meetings
  - Rough draft meetings
    - Submit nearly finished rough draft by due date
    - Accept suggestions and corrections from art director
- Submit corrected final layout and files that go with it in folder through journalism server transfer area

Photographers

- Buy film, fill out reimbursement form
- Pay for processing costs and fill out reimbursement form, or use school’s processing equipment
- Collect photo release forms for all models
- Get all photos scanned on computer by deadline
- Scan several pictures for each story for photo editor to choose from
- Make sure all photos are in correct format, color
- Write and edit all captions in assigned layout

Advertisers

- Practice good communication skills and the ability to deal with rejection by potential advertisers
- Submit ad requests by one month prior to expo going to print
- Maintain an adequate number of advertising forms at all times
- Inform advertising director immediately upon selling an ad
- Design any ads sold
- Review prior issues for potential advertisers
  - Remember that the most likely advertisers are those who have advertised in expo before
Public Relations representatives

- Carry out all assigned duties in a timely manner
- Always be on time and follow through on assignments
- Think beyond BSU campus and the Village when publicizing expo
- Constantly look for new opportunities to publicize expo
- Continuously recruit new contributors to expo
Tools and Checklists to Use

Legal Risks for Expo Writers and How to Avoid Them – by David Sumner

Expo has occasionally gotten into trouble and even been threatened with lawsuits. The following guidelines and “commandments” are based on some real-life experiences we have had:

Three types of problems that create legal risks:

- Libel and slander
  - How to prevent it: Always verify the facts, and print nothing that isn’t true
- Invasion of privacy
  - How to prevent it: Always get written permission for anything you use or anyone whose photo you use
- Copyright violations
  - How to prevent it: give written credit for sources; get permission for use of borrowed material (editorial or photo material from print or Internet sources)

Ten Commandments to Stay Out of Trouble

1. People must know how their words are going to be used and who is going to read them. Never misrepresent your identity as a reporter. Always let people you interview know where and how their comments will be published. Don’t publish any article you’ve written for class without getting permission from your sources.

2. If you publish anything that could harm anyone’s reputation, make absolutely certain you have factual evidence to verify the information. Editors should check and confirm writers’ sources of questionable material.

3. Publications are responsible for the accuracy of quoted material of sources used in articles. It’s not enough to verify that a source said it. You are responsible for verifying the accuracy of the quote if it could damage someone else’s reputation.

4. If you have damaging, but true information about someone, call that person and give him or her the opportunity to respond.

5. Call back to verify factual information with people that you interview. If they grant you an interview, you don’t need their approval, but it’s a good idea to verify spelling of names, proper nouns and dates.

6. Get written permission for photos from any freelance photographers who take the photos as well as subjects of the photo. People may give you verbal permission but then change their minds. That’s why written permission is important. Give written credit to all photographers.

7. Do not lift text, photos or graphics off the Internet or from anywhere else without getting written permission from the publisher. A printed e-mail message is sufficient.

8. You can borrow quotes of less than 100 words as long as you properly credit the source. For example, “According to a Sept. 1999 Newsweek article, so-and-so said that …”
9. Do not lift quotes out of other stories and make it appear that you interviewed the quoted person. Attribute the source of all direct quotes that you – as a writer – did not personally hear.

10. Print corrections or clarification of all mistakes in the next issue.

25 Rules for Magazine & Feature Writing – David Sumner, expo adviser

1. Get to know the reader.
Magazines, unlike newspapers, are targeted for specific, niche audiences. You should study the magazines you plan to write for and know exactly whom you are writing for:

- Men or women?
- Young, middle-aged, or old?
- College graduates or high school dropouts?
- Rural or urban?

2. Figure out your angle.
Don’t write about a trend, group, phenomenon, etc. just because it exists. Choose a slice of it that you can cover with depth, detail and insight. To help figure out an angle, read at least a dozen articles in similar topics. See what has not been written on it.

3. Create an action angle and build your story around it.
Weave the story around one central idea or main theme. Create a title containing an action verb. Tell a story about something that is happening.

4. Choose an angle on which you can offer intelligent insight.
Your goal is to make readers say, “I’ve never heard of that before” or “I’ve never thought of it that way before.” Avoid quoting sources who simply restate common sense or what most people can figure out for themselves.

5. Find the “how” or “why” angle.
Many magazine stories lend themselves to the “how” or “why” angle. Don’t just focus on the “what.” But don’t forget to tell the readers what, where and when your story is happening.

6. Summarize the article’s main idea in one sentence.

7. Get over your shyness, and learn to use the telephone.
Learn to find, call and talk to people and take notes on the phone. You cannot interview too many people for a story. If you think you will need five sources, then call 10. Over-report so you can use the very best of the very best of your material.
8. Create a lead that grabs the reader’s attention
The lead consists of the first two or three paragraphs of an article. Its purpose is to:
- Grab the reader's attention
- Tell the reader what the article is about
- Draw the reader into the article
The best type of magazine lead is the anecdote, which tells a story and portrays the larger theme.

9. State the purpose of your article right after the lead.
Newspaper writers call this the “nutgraf” while others call it the “justifier” or “theme” paragraph. Whatever you call it, let the reader know where you are going. Don’t keep the reader guessing about why you wrote this article.

10. Write with clarity – make sure readers hear what you want to say.
"Clarity" is the noun, while "clear" is the adjective; they mean the same: What you intend to say is what gets into the reader’s head. The message you send is the message received. Simple sentences with active voice, action verbs and strong nouns help create clarity.

11. Be coherent.

12. Use strong, action verbs.

13. Use specific, concrete images – not vague generalities.
Specific details make or break the success of an article in getting published and read. Whenever you can replace an abstract concept with a specific noun, do so. Don’t write about broad issues and ideas. Anecdotes, examples and quotes are one way of providing concrete images.

14. Use plenty of examples and illustrations, which add color and human interest.
SHOW, DON’T TELL. Try to paint a picture with words that stimulate an image in the reader’s mind. For example, if you're writing about unemployment, tell about the student who had to drop out of college because his father lost his job.

15. Write about people.
Why do you think People magazine is America’s most profitable magazine? People like to read about people more than they like to read about ideas or concepts. If you’re writing about an issue or concepts, then use people's names and quotes as often as possible.

16. Use lots of direct quotes.
One editor said, "The most common mistake I see among nonfiction writers is that they don't use quotes. If I don't see frequent quotes in an article, I will reject it." Writing about people and using quotes are related. Direct quotes breathe "life" into your article and attract and sustain the reader.
17. Do not write an article in the first-person unless you have a clear reason to do so. The only compelling reason is that your experience offers fresh insight to the topic not possible in traditional objective style. An unknown writer shouldn't intrude upon the reader with personal experiences because it can be annoying.

18. Do your homework – verify all facts. Check every fact, the spelling of every word and the smallest detail to make sure it is correct. Many editors will not even look at an article if you have a typo or spelling error in your cover letter or first page.

19. Give the reader a “product” in exchange for the reader’s time. That means good entertainment or solid, new information and preferably both. Writing is a product, similar to laundry detergent or stereo sets on the dealers' shelves. If you want to attract customers (readers), then you've got to create a better idea and make it easy to use.

20. Be concise. Most sentences should vary between 15 and 25 words. If a sentence is longer, then recast it into two sentences. Examine every word, sentence or paragraph, and if you find any that aren't essential, delete them. Every word should have a job to do.

21. Vary sentence and paragraph length. On the other hand, they all shouldn't be short. Variety adds rhythm to your writing and decreases the likelihood of boring the reader. Clue: If you use more than one comma, ask why?

22. Be simple, but not simplistic, in your style. Write for the everyday person, not for the intellectual. If the everyday person can understand you, then so will the intellectual. But the reverse isn't true. Great and profound ideas can be communicated in simple, everyday language.

23. Use the active voice, not the passive. Instead of saying, "The man was bitten by the dog," say, "The dog bit the man." A "to be" verb located next to the past perfect of another verb identifies the passive voice. For example: "were examined," "was seen," "will be fought," etc. The passive voice is clumsier, wordier and more difficult to understand than the active voice.
24. Avoid adjectives and adverbs as much as possible.
If you need a modifier to adjust the meaning of the noun or verb, then maybe you haven't chosen the right noun or verb to begin with. Focus on choosing the right words so that their meanings won't need "adjusting" with an adjective or adverb. For example, say "ambled," instead of "walked slowly."

25. Listen to the tone and rhythm of your writing. Read it aloud.
Great writers pay close attention to how their writing sounds to the inner ear. Learn to imagine how your writing sounds to the human ear. Does it sound pleasant? Is it smooth and melodic or rough and choppy? One way to understand this is to read it aloud.

Internet Resources for Magazine Students – by Amanda Bramel, BSU magazine graduate

Magazine Writers’ Resources

www.sfwa.org/preditors Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America, Inc. Just as in every other category, this is the best Web site for writing resources. It contains an alphabetical listing of hundreds of sites specifically for advancing the writing techniques we use. Click here to see how to better your writing style. *******

www.poewar.com You need to check this site out. If you have a question regarding concrete writing, editing or visual description, please look here for the answers. While here, you may even find more helpful information and exercises for writing. *******

www.ire.org/resourcecenter/ Investigative Reporters and Editors, Inc. If you’re stuck in your article, you may want to check out this Web site’s library of 17,000 investigative reporting stories – print and broadcast. While you’re here, go to the IRE home page at www.ire.org. Like other journalism organizations and associations, this site provides you with the necessary resources to help you hone in on your skills in investigative journalism. *******

www.writerswrite.com It took a while to find resources, but eventually I found some under writerswrite.com/writinglinks. Although, not specifically for magazine journalists, this site provides excellent writing tips for all kinds of writers. It’s worth a look, because it’s never a bad idea to be well-versed. You never know what kind of magazine you’ll write for in the future. *******
www.writersnetwork.com  This is the place you want to be if you seriously want to publish something you’ve written – online. Think about it. There’s a Web of information out there that all links together. Why not publish your work here for the world to see. It’s easy to navigate and deserves four stars. * * * *

www.writers-toolbox.com  The Writers’ Toolbox contains everything you need to work on your writing skills. It also lists resources for research and jobs in the journalism field. * * * *

http://pages.prodigy.com/childrens_writers/chldwrit.htm  If you’re interested in learning how to write for children, you may want to check out this personal home page of a children’s author. She has links to other resources that she uses and can help you perfect your writing skills for the little tykes. * * * *

www.writers.com  Since 1995, this site has offered online writing classes, tutoring via e-mail, writers groups, newsletter, writing tips and information on contests. I’m not sure, however, how long the process takes or how much its services are. * * *

www.britannica.com  The expensive series of books is now at your fingertips. You have a 14-day free trial membership, then it’s $5 a month or $50 a year. I know that may sound expensive to struggling college students and you can probably find information on what you need for free somewhere else on the Internet, but I thought I’d let you know about it. * * *

Web Sites for Research

www.askanexpert.com  This site reminds me of Ask Jeeves, only Ask Jeeves was working when I visited. I’m not sure how long is engine has been down, it may have only been a day. I believe it’s probably a reputable research site, because answers come from experts. But because I couldn’t use it, I can’t say. Try it and let Dr. Sumner know if it works for you. **

www.biography.com  Biography, sponsored by the A&E channel. If you’ve ever seen “Biography” or even one of their commercials, you know this site is about people in the Arts & Entertainment industry. It may be useful to you if you’re writing an anniversary piece for a magazine. * * * *

www.reporter.org  Bookmark this site. Do it now. It is THE site for aspiring reporters and writers. It has links to more associations and organizations for journalists, and it’s also your portal to reporting resources and journalism publications. * * * *

www.powerreporting.com  Along with reporter.org, this site should be book marked as your research guide to the Web. Whether you need information on FOI, freelancing, humor, jobs, magazines, campaign donors, race, economics or anything else, you can find it here. This site is so easy to navigate, you could teach your dog how to do it. * * * * *
www.journalismnet.com  This is a combination of a news site and research site. Links to the best search engines, libraries, magazines, up-to-date news from around the world and more can be found here. JNet also has its own “pick of the week” you may find useful.

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www.albany.edu/sourcebook
www.findlaw.com
www.guidestar.org
www.healthfinder.com
www.hoovers.com
www.infoplease.com
www.give.org

www.mgportal.com  Magportal.com is where you need to be if you’re looking for magazine articles written on a specific subject. Choose from numerous categories and hundreds upon hundreds of magazines.  

Search Engines

Check out www.searchenginewatch.com for up-to-date information pertaining to search engines. If you haven’t found an engine that works for you, this site also has a link to metacrawlers, major search engines, news, kids, multimedia, regional and specialty search engines. 

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www.google.com
www.altavista.com
www.yahoo.com
www.ask.com
www.excite.com
www.dogpile.com
www.about.com
www.northernlight.com
www.directhit.com

www.hotbot.com
www.webcrawler.com
www.virtualsalt.com
www.alltheweb.com
www.newsindex.com
www.lycos.com
www.lawcrawler.com
www.go.com
www.kanoodle.com
Interviewing: Steps in conducting a successful interview — adapted from The Campus Ledger's handbook of Johnson County Community College

1. Define the purpose of your article. Know your focus or angle.
2. Do background research. Read other articles written on the subject or about the person in other publications. Don't rely on your source to give you every bit of information you need for your story.
3. Select sources carefully. Determine who will contribute the most valuable information, color and credibility to your story.
4. Request an appointment with your source(s). Be prepared to overcome objections. Clearly state your focus or angle to your source and explain why it's important for you to conduct the interview for your story.
5. Plan your interview based on deadlines and your personal schedule. Jot down dates and times when you are available to meet with a source to avoid appearing disorganized on the phone.
6. Make up a list of questions for the interview. Avoid long, confusing questions. Avoid asking yes/no questions. Strategically plan your questions.
7. Meet with the source. Arrive on time, dressed appropriately. Introduce yourself and shake hands.
8. Ask your questions. Don't be afraid to ask questions when you don't understand theory, calculation, terminology, etc. If you don't understand it, how can you expect to write about it?
9. End the interview. Double-check everything, including names, titles, concepts, formulas, figure, etc. Ask the source if you may call if you have any additional questions.
10. Follow up the interview with a short note thanking the source for granting the interview. Send a clip of the story or copy of the magazine if appropriate or requested.

A few important tips ...

- Always, always, always ask your source if you may tape record the interview before you begin.
- Take advantage of any “ins” you have. Many times, it’s whom you know that makes all of the difference.
- Start by telling your name, whom you represent and what information you seek. Address the person you are interviewing by name often, and make eye contact.
- Try not to look at your notebook too often when taking notes. Be watchful and interested in everything the source says.
- Get direct quotes. They are best for injecting opinion into the story without editorializing. Ask questions that require a thorough answer.
Writing Stories: a checklist

- Keep verbs in active voice. Use action verbs.
- Avoid fuzzy words. Select words carefully, and be precise.
- Use understandable, everyday language. Tell your reader the story in the same way you would tell it to your best friend. Don’t write over your reader’s head.
- Make sure sentences are tight — not wordy or confusing to the reader.
- Never use a long, complicated word when a short, simple one will suffice.
- Use direct quotes for color and to attribute information to a specific source. This is the only place where opinion may appear in a story, excepting editorials. Quote your sources accurately, and be certain the quotes are in context.
- Avoid use of first- and second-person pronouns, except in quotes.
- Select adjectives and adverbs carefully. When you use them, be specific. To say “big” means nothing, but to describe someone as 6-foot-7 and 250 pounds is specific and allows readers to draw their own conclusions.
- Make your stories interesting. Write stories you would want to read.
- Rewrite. Rewrite some more. First, second and even 10th drafts can always be improved.
- Check all facts. Do not hesitate to go back to your sources to verify names, spelling or other information.
- Don’t editorialize. Never write “he is well-qualified” or “the movie was enjoyable for everyone.” Tell readers the facts, and let them make up their own minds.
- Avoid vague word and opinion words: many, numerous, various, very, nice, enjoyable, beautiful, interesting, diligent and strive.
- Decide what is most newsworthy. “What’s in it for my reader?” is the most important question to ask yourself. Remember that readers want to be entertained as much as they want to be informed.
- Copy edit your stories before you give them to the editor.
- Stories may be written in any form and style. However, form and style must be appropriate to the content and the purpose of the story.
- Stories should be:
  i. Well-organized and always written from a carefully constructed plan or outline.
  ii. Simply written because the reader wants to be entertained.
  iii. Effectively written by applying unity, coherence and emphasis
  iv. Full of specific nouns, adjectives and verbs to create vivid images, sounds and feeling for readers
  v. Able to bring the reader as close as possible to the experience or idea related by the story.
Lead Writing: If you don’t grab the reader’s attention at the start, you’ve wasted their time — and yours!

- Consider the department store analogy. Both the reader and the shopper are in a hurry. Both have lots of other places to go if the store(y) doesn’t interest them. Think of the lead as a department store window display. The window provides just a tantalizing, tiny glimpse of everything the store has to offer. If the store manager is smart, the display window will reflect the most timely, most attractive, most apt to be noticed merchandise in the store. Make an effort to show the best up front!

- Remember that the lead has four basic functions: to attract attention, establish the subject, set the tone and guide the reader into the story smoothly and directly.

- Ask yourself why anyone should care about this story. What’s it got to do with the overall mission of Ball State? What’s it got to do with college students? Why would Ball State students be interested? Once you’ve thought about the “who cares?” factor, logical organization of the story is easy.

Story Organization Checklist
Use the following questions to review your story information and order following the first draft.

1. What questions will readers have as they read the story? Put the material in the order that will make the most sense to the reader and answer his questions in the order they’re asked.
2. Have I substantiated each point with a quote, explanatory material or other information?
3. Do I need more information?
4. Can I delete any information?
5. Can I state the theme of the story in one sentence?
6. Does the story drag when I read it aloud? Does it make sense?
7. Have I kept my verb tenses consistent? (used “said” throughout)
8. Do the sentences and paragraphs vary in length and structure?
9. Are the verbs and sentences in active voice?
10. Have I avoided vague adjectives?
11. Are there repetitious sentences or paragraphs?
12. Are there quotes that repeat the previous paragraph? Are there paragraphs that repeat the previous quote?
13. Are the names and titles accurate? Is the spelling correct? Did I remember to ask how names are spelled?
14. Is the story interesting?
15. Are there any typos or misspelled words? Did I remember to use the spell-check?
Layout Checklist for Designers — by Aaron Able, 2000-2002 expo art director

Designers should consult this checklist before submitting layouts to the art director.

- Are all my colors correct?
- Are my fonts the right size, leading, etc?
- Have I properly kerned my titles/display text?
- Have I made sure no elements are in the gutter?
- Do all my pictures fit completely in their boxes?
- Does my text align across columns?
- Does my story end?
- Did I add the end-of-story mark?
- Do all my photos have captions?
- Are all my elements at least 1 pica apart?
- Are all my TIF & EPS files included in the folder?
- Are all my fonts included in the folder?
- Does my story have correct bylines?
- Have I printed color separations and labeled them?
References


DeMarco, Deanna. “How To Be an Awesome Managing Editor and Still Maintain Your Sanity.” *Colorado Engineer Magazine*. University of Colorado at Boulder.

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