

International Newspaper Articles

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INTRODUCTION

This guide is designed to help people write effectively within the newspaper article genre, specifically for U.S. international newspaper sections. The first part of the guide is dedicated to the pre-writing phase, with particular attention paid to purpose and audience. The pre-writing section is intended to help the reader organize their thoughts before they actually begin their writing. The other half of the guide is devoted to the textual guidelines of the genre, focusing on format and structure. Examples will also be included in the appendix of the guide because some readers find a template an effective tool when producing their own writing.

A world news article serves a specific purpose in a newspaper. These articles are written to inform the audience (in this case, American citizens) of events that are going on and that the audience has an interest in. Because news articles are written to be objective, they are written in the third person. In order to simulate the style of a news article, this guide will also be written in the third person.

In order to write an effective guideline for the genre analysis, we chose 15 articles from some of the top newspapers in the U.S., such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. After observing some consistent features in our newspaper article selections, we were able to generate and complete our genre guide.

PRE-WRITING

HISTORY

The “news” has always been present in human society. Ancient civilizations were curious about the events that had the potential to affect their lives, and after many years of oral transmission, the news was finally committed to print. The first regularly published newspapers were published in the late 1600’s in England. As technology and literacy increased, newspapers slowly became a staple of human civilization. At first, newspaper articles mostly reflected the editor’s personal opinions, but in 1851 *The New York Times* was established, and owners Henry Raymond and George Jones set a precedent for balanced, nonbiased reporting. The highly readable, journalistic style emerged with the introduction of the telegraph, since overseas war correspondents needed to transit information in a more economic manner. Investigative journalism, which originated in the early 1900’s, demonstrated the influence and power of the media. Nowadays, the number of independent news corporations has been drastically reduced, and with the advent of the Internet, the genre of newspaper articles is constantly being modified and altered. The Internet has created a

wider availability of news articles from major newspaper companies but, at the same time, changing the format to fit the technological circumstances better (for example adding links).

PURPOSE

One of the most important functions of a news article is to inform the public of events that are happening worldwide. However, there are certain aspects of a news article that readers and other writers expect to be a certain way. A news article must be informative, exciting, accurate, and cover an important event. The readers want to know about events that are interesting and exciting, rather than events that are mundane and ordinary. Since the purpose of the article is to inform the public of remarkable events, then the reader expects the information to be worthy of note. The format of each article is generally fixed. The author uses columns containing short paragraphs to provide easier reading and to help the reader predict the content of the successive paragraphs. Also, the author normally places pictures with captions above or to the side of the article; this helps to draw the reader's attention and gives the reader a sense of being physically present at the reported event.

Most reporters write news articles because it is their source of income. However, reporters, in general, try to write quality articles that will best meet the interests of their audience. This way, it will help develop and reinforce the relationship between the newspaper companies and their respective readers.

Before any writing commences, a writer must have a good understanding of what their purpose is. An effective article can only be written if the writer recognizes their motive and intention for writing the piece. If the writer's purpose is to inform readers of the ongoing genocide in Sudan, then their article will look quite different from an article where the purpose is to generate sympathy for the United Nation's efforts in Sudan.

AUDIENCE

U.S. newspaper readers are generally educated people who can read, write, and speak English. Since newspaper information is exposed to both national and international readers who have different cultural backgrounds, political opinions, and attitudes toward religion, it is important that the writer reports something interesting and current to the readers and keeps an objective, unbiased perspective.

Depending on the target of audience, it is possible that sometimes the writer has the power to change the topic and perspective of the article specifically for a smaller and more controlled audience.

Knowing the audience is a key to writing a good news article. Since the purpose is to inform the readers of an interesting event, the writer must know the audience to determine what kind of topics they will find interesting. The audience expects to read about events that they will find important and appealing. The topics covered may vary depending on to whom the writer is writing. If the writer cannot identify the audience, then they may not be able to write an effective article. For example; a writer at the *New York Times* knows that his readership is

very large and diverse and that he must write to interest a large audience. Keeping this in mind, he will write on a topic that will interest everyone and will write it objectively. However, someone writing for a very conservative newspaper may only choose issues that will appeal to Republicans, and will possibly take a conservative side in an issue. The way that the article is written depends on the audience and what they expect of the writer.

WRITING

FORMAT

Because the newspaper has been around for so long, the format has become ritualized and there is very little room for variation. The format became set this way because of a cycle of writer production and reader expectation. The article was produced in a certain format; the reader then came to expect that same format from future articles. The writers then reproduce that format in order to satisfy the reader expectations. This is the never ending circle that helped produce and reinforces the set format and structure of a world news article.

In the formative years of the newspaper industry, different newspapers employed different formats. As newspaper circulation and popularity grew, the different layouts and styles became more similar, and eventually resulted in a standard, ritualized format.

Columns

One of the most recognized elements of a newspaper article is the column (see examples in appendix). Columns make the article more reader-friendly, since it is difficult for the human eye to read all the way across a page of the newspaper. Not only do columns help readers from skipping lines, but columns also allow for arrangements of pictures, graphics, and advertisements.

Justified Alignment

Newspapers also use a justified alignment (see good example in appendix) to help make reading easier for the article's audience. A justified alignment stretches or shrinks lines inside the columns so the text fits within the actual column dimensions. This also helps prevent line-skipping or loss of place while reading an article.

Paragraphs

Laying out a newspaper page is a particularly difficult task, so layout editors may ask journalists to either cut or lengthen their articles in order to best fit the page. Because of the chance that their story may be cut, journalists write their articles with many, short paragraphs. The paragraphs are typically written to be independent of each other, so if the article needs to be cut, a loss of a few paragraphs will not harm the entire story. Having the paragraphs written this way helps the reader predict the content of successive paragraphs. Also, short paragraphs are more appealing to the reader, because one long condensed page of words can be quite daunting.

Photographs and Captions

Newspapers also make use of photographs and pictures to complement the articles. If a picture is used, it must include a caption, which can be from one to three sentences long. A caption is usually started with an active verb because this grabs the reader's attention. The graphic is typically placed above or within its corresponding article.

The use of columns, justified alignment, short paragraphs, and pictures all help the reader identify a newspaper article. If the format of a newspaper article is changed, then the reader will question the credibility of the article. If the format change is used to bring to attention a certain aspect of the article, then it may be an appropriate change since it will attract the reader's attention. As always, this is important to keep in mind while writing in the newspaper article genre.

All of these formatting devices help the reader read the article more smoothly and with ease. Because the format helps the reader read through the article easily, the reader comes to expect the article to be set up this way. If the format changes, the reader will wonder why the article is different, questioning the credibility of it. Without the format, the reader will question whether what they are reading is really news. The reader expects these formatting devices from a world news article, this is what identifies a news article for the reader visually.

STRUCTURE

Headline

One of the most interesting parts of a newspaper article is the headline. The headline, a device that is used to catch the reader's attention, is the part of the article that convinces the reader, in a handful of words, that the story is worthy of perusing. It must entice the reader to read further and find out more, making the reader ask questions about the story's contents. A headline must use a large, bold font that's at least a few sizes bigger than the actual text's font size. The headline usually gives a brief summary of the article, but often times, it focuses on the most interesting part of the story. Using alliteration or word puns can make a headline more appealing, but if overdone, the headline can become a little too "cutesy." Without a headline, the reader will not know what the article is about and will be reluctant to read on. The reader expects a headline to introduce them to the topic, and to answer their questions about the article's contents.

Good Example:

British police arrest another suspect in airplane plot investigation

Bad Example:

Brit cops go crazy with handcuffs in airport, terrorists!!!

The good example addresses the issue and informs the reader of what happened in a concise manner. The bad example uses informal language and does not effectively describe the situation. The bad example is too vague, the reader does not know what exactly happened.

Sub-headlines

The next element of the news article is the sub-headline. Sub-headlines are generally used for the larger articles, and are typically utilized as the second attempt to attract the reader's attention. The sub-headline, placed immediately below the main headline, usually elaborates on the main headline and gives the reader a little more information about the story. The sub-headline is an optional element of the news article; if the writer thinks that their headline is descriptive enough they may omit the sub-headline. The reader will only expect a sub-headline if the title is vague or says something that needs elaborating. The sub-headline helps to answer the reader's questions about the headline and introduce them into the article. If a sub-headline is used, it should be written in a font that's still larger than the actual text, but smaller than the main headline and not in bold.

The headline is: **Lebanon battered, Hezbollah defiant**

Good Example of sub-headline: **Israeli strikes leave nation in tatters yet guerrillas carry on**

Author's Name

After both the headline and the sub-headline, if included, comes the author's name. In the late 1700's, England required that all articles be attributed to an author and include a date. Nowadays, the date is usually written in the top, outside corners of every newspaper page. The attribution to the author, though, is still a standard, required convention. If the article is written in a collaborative manner, then the article is usually credited to the company that wrote the article (i.e. "Reuters" or "The Associated Press"). There is also another option for this convention, and that is having the authors name at the end of the article. Both of these options are acceptable to the reader and the choice is left to the writer or the editor.

Leading Paragraph

After the headlines and author acknowledgement, the article's subject city or country is usually written in bold and all capital letters. If a reporter was writing about the bird flu in China, they may write **BEIJING-**. If the city isn't very well known, then the reporter would specify with the country: **BEIJING, CHINA-**. This serves to introduce the reader to the setting of the article. One of the reader's first questions is where is this event is taking place, and this convention serves to answer that question. After stating the place, the article's next element is the lead sentence. The lead sentence is like the thesis of the article- it sets the tone and subject content for the following story. The "who, what, where, when, and why" of the article does not need to be fully addressed in the lead sentence, but a few of the classic questions should be answered. A good lead sentence will further intrigue the reader in hopes that they

will read on.

BINT JBAIL, Lebanon- Lebanese civilians jammed onto roads to stream back to war-rabid areas Monday after a U.N. cease-fire halted fighting between Israel and Hezbollah that claims more than 900 lives.

This sentence is key, if the reader does not like what they read they would stop reading after the first paragraph. This convention allows the reader a peek at what the subject of the article is and if this part is omitted the reader will go into the article blind wondering about the content and direction. The purpose of the opening paragraph is to introduce the reader to the topic of the article and answer their initial questions, the who, what, when, where, and why of the story. This serves to introduce the topic and interest the reader so they will read further.

Body of the Text

After the lead sentence and paragraph (the lead sentence is usually a paragraph unto itself), the next few sections of the article must address the most important details of the story. The reporter should not give all the juiciest facts at once, though. The distribution of important information in a newspaper article is very much like setting a trail of crumbs: you can't just dump them in one spot because the follower will not continue on, but you can't separate the crumbs too far apart or the follower will lose the trail. The reporter must gain the trust of the reader in the beginning sections of the article, and to do so, the writer must integrate quotes and excerpts in order to establish credibility. The body is written in short paragraphs, each written to be independent from the rest. The paragraphs are written so that they can be moved around without affecting the story. Because of this structural element the article does not need to be written in chronological order, it can be written in any order the writer feels. However, the most important information is generally given near the beginning or middle of an article because editing may require the end to be cut from final production. Having the article written short paragraphs allows for this interchangeability, it also allows for the reader to only read certain paragraphs or read them out of order and still understand the article. If this convention is not used the reader may be unwilling to read the article, the text may appear to long and dense if it is not broken up in small paragraphs.

Tone, Diction, and Sentences

A good article should use an informative tone with simple, straightforward diction. Active sentences are preferred over passive ones, and sentences should, generally, be simple and short. Jargon, colloquialisms, and flowery language should be avoided while writing a newspaper article. If a difficult, little-known word or term is used, then the author should explain it. Also, acronyms (like the PTA) should be written out first with their abbreviated form in parentheses, after that, they may be referred to as an acronym: Parent Teacher Association (PTA). If a person is mentioned, then their title, first and last name must be stated. Afterwards, they can be referred to by their last name unless they hold an important position,

such as the President of the United States, who is identified as “President Bush” or “the U.S. President.”

Short, factual sentences and informative diction helps create an “important” feel to the article. The more important the writing seems, the more credible the article appears to the reader. Quotations and suitable excerpts also establish logos that helps convince the reader that the article’s information and story is believable and true.

These conventions are what make a news article sound like news. A news article uses an informative tone, making the topic discussed sound important and sometimes urgent. Without the informative tone the issue loses some of its importance and seriousness. The word choice helps to develop the article into something the reader can relate to and yet still consider news. Writers choose words to make an instance seem more important or exciting, or use sympathetic words to derive feelings from the reader. The writer uses formal diction to enhance the seriousness of the issue but can also use pathos to derive sympathy/empathy for the issue being discussed. The sentences should also be short and active. Having active sentences gives the story more action and help to make it more interesting. The reader expects an exciting story, and using active sentences helps by putting an event in the present and explaining who did it. The sentences are also on the short side, so as not to confuse the average reader and make them get lost in the words.

Following these conventions is imperative when writing a world news article; these conventions are what help establish a news article as a news article. These conventions help to make the article sound important and credible. They help to keep the reader interested in the story and satisfy their expectation for a piece of good writing.

VARIATION

Although the international news genre has a fairly rigid structure, variation articles can be produced. A variation article, if written correctly, can achieve the same purpose as a standard text using different conventions or can achieve a new purpose using the same standard conventions. The type of variation text produced depends on the writer’s intentions and their respective audience. Some ways of creating a variation text would be to take the same international news story and put it into a different format or structure. This variation would still address the same purpose, but would attract the reader with its unique format. Another option would be to use the same format of the international news article but change the content and purpose (for example, making it fictional or humorous). These variations are ways of stepping away from the socially expected conventions and creating a new text with a different intention.

CONCLUSION

The newspaper article genre is a central component to modern society. People depend on newspapers to inform them about significant world events. This dependence has created a very strong and important relationship between journalists and readers, and the expectations

of both sides have molded the newspaper article conventions into what they are now. A quality newspaper article can only be written by careful pre-writing planning and utilization of necessary newspaper article format devices. An author must not only understand their purpose for writing an article, but must also recognize and appreciate the audience for which their article is intended. A good writer must also be comfortable with columns, proficient with paragraphs, skillful with sentences, and dexterous with diction. If used correctly, this guide should help its readers create an effective, provocative newspaper article. And, much like a newspaper article, a conclusion ends best with a quote: "A newspaper is a mirror reflecting the public, a mirror more or less defective, but still a mirror." -Arthur Brisbane

Appendix A: Bad Example



This is a chicken

Bird Flu Is Bad

Researchers have found that Bird Flu may cause illness!

By Carolyn Bauer

TIMBUK2- The bird flu that has been feared over and across all the continents of the world has seemed to cause fear in many countries. Are birds to be feared? Yes!

“We’re studying bird flu intensely,” yelled Adam, a guy in a science lab, “It had been found

that the primal source of this exasperatingly difficult disease is found inherently among the creatures of the avian persuasion, especially those that seem to delight in cross-continent migration routes that they take in order to spawn offspring. The members in my lab have been working hard, day and night, to stop bird flu, but first we must find what sort of perigenroccallgernits vaccine scheme we must put into being.

The ICHDA has accredited this regime, and we hope to put out a paper or something very soon.”

The President, George Bush, says he’s worried.

Many people in Vietnam, China, Thailand, and other places like that, have experienced illness that may be due to bird flu. Indeed, some people have died, and now many people are not only sad but also scared.

I feel that the bird flu has the potential to be lethal, too, so I am purchasing many face masks and plastic gloves in case of a disaster. I advise you, Mr. or Mrs. Reader, to do the same.

So, in other words, watch out for the bird flu.

BAD EXAMPLE

This article is a very bad example of an international newspaper article. First of all, the headline is generic and inaccurate. Saying that the bird flu is “bad” implies that the author is stating their opinion. Also, people already know that bird flu is a nasty, serious disease. The opening sentence isn’t very informative, and the author is flagrantly biased. The author then uses an incredibly long quote that fails to elaborate technical terms and acronyms. The article fails to use any other evidence, and, instead, makes a series of broad assumptions. The worst transgression of this article is in the second-to-last paragraph where the author addresses the reader and blatantly states their personal opinion of the bird flu. The picture is a rip-off of a T.V. show and has no relevance to the content of the article.

Appendix B: Good Example

British Prime Minister In Hospital After A Brutal Attack

Peterson is in critical condition after the terrible attack that occurred last night.

By Amanda Griner

August 17th, 2006

LONDON- Prime Minister Andrew Peterson is in the hospital today after suffering severe injuries from the vicious attack that occurred on Wednesday night during the Prime Minister's nightly jog outside his home.

Allen Johnson, a member of Peterson's security, said, "the attacker was dressed entirely in black, keeping his identity concealed." The attacker was able to distract the guards by detonating a small bomb near by. When the guards went to inspect the area the attacker struck.

Police are still unsure how the attacker was able to breach this highly secure area. "We believe the attacker may have had help from the inside, but it is still too early to say for sure," Police officer Bert Barrington said.

The police investigation is still under way to try to uncover exactly how this attack occurred, but investigators believe that the attack reflects a disagreement with the Prime Minister's current support of the United States' war on terrorism.

Todd Johnson, the chief investigator on this case, stated, "This kind of brutality is usually seen in cases with extreme emotional disagreements, this cannot be a random attack." This suggests that the attacker, who has not yet been caught, had an ulterior motive to this attack.



Officers Aden and Gladsoe investigating at the crime scene.
Photographer: Jams Douglas

Because of the brutality and careful planning that seems to have gone into this attack, the police believe that it may be related to Prime Minister Peterson's support of the United States in the war on terrorism.

"This could not have been a random attack, in order to evade the Prime Minister's guards the offender had to have carefully planned this attack, down to every move that he was going to make," said Todd Johnson.

Most of Peterson's threatening letters relate to his support for the U.S. Because these letters are all the police have for now, they can only suspect that this attack is related to Peterson's political decision.

The Prime Minister receives threatening letters on a daily basis, however there is no way for his security staff to tell which ones are more than just threats. The police are currently going through all recently received

letters to see if there are any clues giving insight into the attacker's identity.

"We will be checking for fingerprints and running all the forensics we can in order to narrow our list of suspects in order to find the person who committed this terrible crime" Johnson stated at the press conference this morning.

While the investigation continues Prime Minister Peterson is in critical condition at St. Peter's Memorial Hospital. Suffering from severe cranial damage inflicted by a blunt force object, Peterson's condition is adverse. However, doctors believe that Peterson's condition is improving and he should eventually make a full recovery.

While Peterson is in the Hospital recovering from his injuries, his second in command, Robert Taylor, will be taking over his position. Taylor political views are similar to that of Peterson, so security will be heightened until the attacker has been caught.

Investigators told reporters that they believe that "the damage was inflicted by a large metal pipe" and that they will be investigating any possible dump sites looking for the discarded weapon.

For continuous updates on Prime Minister Peterson's condition and the ongoing investigation please check our website www.agnews.com.

GOOD EXAMPLE

This article utilizes all of the conventions that are necessary and expected of an international news article. The title is informative and concise, causing the reader to take interest in the story. The basic and important facts of the story are addressed in the first few paragraphs of the article. The text is divided into short paragraphs, incorporating quotes from various sources. The author uses active sentences and appealing word choice to keep the reader interested in the content of the article. The photograph is relevant and has an informative caption underneath it. The author also employs an unbiased perspective which reflects the accurate and truthful nature of good journalism.

