

## HELPFUL HINTS FOR JOURNALISTIC WRITING



### News Writing – “Hard News”

- Opens with a “Lead” that explains the “5 W’s” (Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How).
  - Current news: news that must be put into print to inform the reader of significant occurrences.
  - Follows the Inverted Pyramid (most vital information is first; then move to the least important).
  - Fact Based: though a writer can include colorful details, s/he should not use HEAVILY descriptive language.
  - Always in THIRD person – no “I” permitted!
  - Uses clear, concise sentences (No run-ons!).
  - Includes direct quotes from sources! (This can only be helpful for readers and can provide “evidence” for the story).
  - Presents information in short paragraphs (paragraphs can often be only one sentence/quote)
  - Include a Headline (title) – this often is the focus of the story.
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### Feature Writing – “Soft News”

Nonfiction news, but with a colorful, entertaining flair

- Though it includes the “5 W’s,” feature writing focuses on the “Who,” “What,” and “Why” of the article.
- Does not need to be current news; can be a story that happens anytime
- Though it opens with a “Lead” (or angle that is maintained from beginning to end – sometimes students consider this the “thesis” of their paper), features should NOT incorporate a “Summary Lead” like Hard News articles.
- Based on facts and should NOT include *writer’s* opinion. It can, however, incorporate the opinion of the *source*.
- Makes claims that substantiate/back up/explain the information offered.
- Written in the THIRD person.
- Includes direct quotes from sources.
- Uses descriptive and colorful writing (Watch out for run-on sentences! Use punctuation correctly.)
- Does NOT editorialize. Does NOT assume and simply provide writer’s own biased opinion.
- Uses transitions and connects writer’s ideas in an intellectually, stimulating manner.

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- Requires clear, concise sentences. Though writer may be writing colorfully, s/he should be careful not to go overboard and confuse/lose a reader.
  - Includes writer's own individual style & tone.
  - Includes a Headline (title) – this is often the focus of the story.
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### **Review Writing** – one *type* of feature writing (Examples include Plays, Musicals, Movies, Music, books)

- Writers are permitted to give a “critique” of the material as long as they can substantiate their claim. (They can use their opinion as long as it's backed up)
- Does not simply say, “The movie sucked.” Writer explains why s/he didn't like the movie; words like “because” that introduce a reason are helpful here.
- Writers should establish some type of reasoning framework for an audience to learn why the writer did not like the production. Maybe the script was awful, maybe the film was too dark, maybe the story was improperly paced. These are all valid reasons that the reviewer did not like the production because they substantiate the claim rather than simply saying, “I didn't like it, simply because I didn't.”
- The reviewer should rely on **THIRD** person presentation.
- Is objective. Just because a writer may be biased about a certain production, s/he must look at it objectively and *base* the review around the information gathered from viewing it.

