



**TEXAS YOUTH AND GOVERNMENT**

# **MEDIA**

Student Manual



## Media

Congratulations! You are a member of the Media Section.

**YOUR MISSION AND PURPOSE:** To provide an accurate account of the Youth and Government program and to gain meaningful, real-life experience in journalism through the publication of a printed newspaper, electronic newsletter, news broadcast, blog post, and/or Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram coverage at the District and State Conferences. All content will be entirely the work of student participants, from story assignments to production to distribution.

Along the way you will also have the chance to become a better communicator. As an added benefit, you may even find out a little more about what is going on in the world around you! What more could you ask?

As a member of the media, your goal is to understand and practice the role of media in the government. Through this process of "learning by doing," you have the opportunity to work within three media genres: Newspaper, TV News Broadcast, and Social Media. Your position revolves around working on some aspect of all genres of media production. This includes reporting the facts, writing, interviewing, commentary, layout and graphic design, photography, editing and production, and/pr circulation.

### THE THINGS YOU WILL DO AS A MEMBER OF THE MEDIA ARE:

- ◆ Submit media assignments by due dates. Separate attachment.
- ◆ Meet all deadlines
- ◆ Attend training sessions
- ◆ Adhere to the Code of Conduct
- ◆ Attend State if selected to be part of the State Conference Media House

### WHAT YOU WILL GAIN AND LEARN:

- ◆ Writing for the publication, blog or social media posts, and broadcast motivates reporters to improve their English composition, especially their ability to write clearly and concisely.
- ◆ Participants learn how to work together, to be accurate, and to be dependable.
- ◆ You are helping spread the word about the Youth and Government program. An effectively edited publication and broadcast adds color and helps spread information about it.
- ◆ Methods of gathering and writing news for print and broadcast
- ◆ Tips for writing editorials and on-camera techniques
- ◆ Skills in checking copy, reading proof, and editing broadcast.
- ◆ Experience in layout, printing, distribution, and broadcast

**NEWSFLASH:** If you want to tackle an extra challenge, you can also choose to run for an elected office in Media



## Levels of Media

### Club/Delegation

Most clubs and delegations have a media section. There is normally no limit on how many people can participate in media at a club level. Document your club's youth and government experience, research and cover current events,

### District

Delegations will meet at their District Conference and produce coverage on that event. Cover the business and the fun side of the conference.

### How to Participate?

The weeks leading up to the District Conference you have been working on media assignments and submitting them using one link during District Conference registration. We suggest putting all your assignments in one word document, or linking them all to one document to submit. Then create your portfolio with these assignments. At the time of District Conference Registration, we also suggest you bring a paper copy of your portfolio or your assignments on a USB.

### State

25 delegates from across the state will come together to provide media coverage at State Conference.



## MEDIA AREAS

As a member of the Media, you will work in all aspects of Media, diversifying your skills in three main areas: Print, Broadcast, and Social Media.

### PRINT MEDIA

Participants write and edit a newspaper for the District and State Conferences. All members of the newspaper leadership team work together to develop formats and decide upon newsworthy items. Students are encouraged to spend time researching and observing real newspaper reporters to understand the fact-gathering and writing processes first-hand. Participants must be self-motivated, good writers, and have the ability to produce quality work on a tight schedule.

Members should begin investigating stories and events at the local level as soon as the delegation has been formed. Contact local newspapers to see if it would be possible to write a "feature story" about the District or State Conference. Media House members will be assigned specific areas to cover for future editions of the paper and take part in program area training sessions.

### BROADCAST MEDIA

Participants are responsible for writing, reporting, producing, taping, editing television news content, and being on camera!

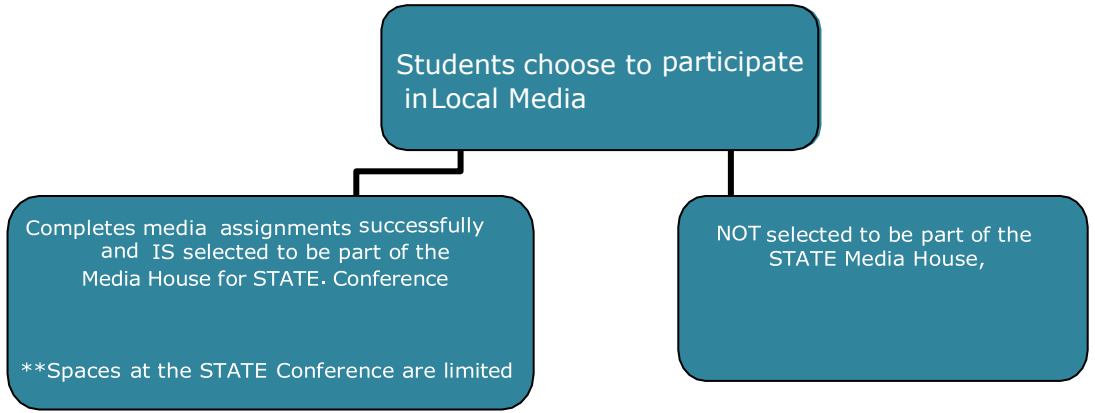
Broadcast Media begins at the local level by contacting radio and television stations to conduct personal interviews and find out what is involved in news reporting. Delegates and Delegation Directors could arrange for local reporters to allow delegates to shadow them in the field, observing their reporting style. Try taping delegation meetings or conducting taped interviews with candidates and other delegation members. **Share the tapes with the State Office via your Pre-District assignments for consideration to be posted on the YG YouTube Channel or website blog. Some of these videos may provide good ideas for the Media House at the State Conference.**

### SOCIAL MEDIA

Participants write and edit a blog, create Facebook and Instagram posts, and provide Twitter and TikTok coverage for the District and State Conferences. All members work together to decide upon newsworthy items and to report on them in real-time using current social media platforms. Students are encouraged to research and observe real journalists to understand the fact gathering and writing processes first-hand. Participants must be self-motivated, good writers, social media savvy, and able to produce quality work on a tight schedule.



## STEPS TO TAKE TO BE DISTRICT AND STATE MEDIA STAFF





## IMPORTANT REMINDERS FOR MEDIA

Journalism is a person-centered trade, therefore it's important to utilize best practices when interviewing, filming or photographing others to make them feel comfortable and respect their boundaries. Consent plays a huge role in media, and identifying that you have someone's consent before filming or taking pictures of them is crucial to being a successful journalist. While large events where there are many people all together this may make this difficult, using the following practices will help you to best respect people's consent to media.

- In YMCA Texas Youth and Government each participant's parent will have signed a media consent form opting their child in or out of media for the program year. We may distinguish those who have opted in versus opted out using wristbands, specific seating areas, etc. Be on the lookout for how we choose to distinguish people who have opted out of media during YMCA Texas Youth and Government events.
- When it comes to the media with one person or a small group of people, the best thing you can do is simply ask if you have their consent to photograph them. This is a great tactic both in and outside of Youth and Government!
- Be sure to provide specific warning when you are filming or taking pictures. You can use signage during YMCA Youth and Government events stating "Recording in Progress" or "Active Photography Zone" to give others notice that media is present in the area, and allow them to avoid the media coverage if possible.
- Lastly, what happens if you unknowingly take pictures of those who have not consented to media coverage? It's tricky to completely avoid them especially during YMCA Texas Youth and Government events with upwards of 1,500 people if not more. The most important thing to remember is that it's okay if you have their photograph, you just can't publish it for your assignments. It's best to delete those photos, but as long as you do not share them you are not violating anyone's right to privacy!

Keeping these rules in mind will help you to uphold your journalistic integrity and respect your fellow YMCA Youth and Government participants.

## Scoring

Scoring for media delegates is based on both pre-district assignments and two in person media assignments over the course of the conference day. The 5 pre-district assignments make up 30% of your overall score, whereas the 2 conference day assignments make up 70% of the total score. These scores determine rank, which decides which 25 delegates will qualify to continue on to State Conference.

## Additional Resources

Aside from the resources below in the manual, there are additional documents to provide guidance and help cultivate your media skills available on the website under the Media tab. These resources are the "Media Skills and Practices Toolkit" linked [HERE](#)



## JOURNALISM 101

The goal of a good story is to provide clear, concise facts in an easily understandable manner. The key to that last statement was "facts." You have a unique opportunity ahead of you to observe and research the activities of the Youth and Government Conferences and report your observations and the facts you obtain to more than 1,000 of your colleagues and advisors as well as to audiences beyond Youth and Government.

Your privileged vantage point comes with responsibilities to your readers:

- ◆ To present accurate accounts of Youth and Government activities.
- ◆ To produce high quality stories that informs your readers.
- ◆ To provide information that readers want to know and need to know.
- ◆ To discern between "hard news" and "fluff," keeping each category clearly separate when reporting the news.
- ◆ To organize sections of the news appropriately.
- ◆ To create content in a timely, consistent manner.

The media participants document and record the District and State Conferences. As reporters, editors, and leaders in Media, you have been entrusted with keeping that record. As a member of the Media, you will find yourself in situations requiring you to answer challenging questions about what is right or wrong to document and broadcast. You need to keep general ethics of journalism, the moral principles and values that are at the heart of the field, throughout your experience.

### **A GOOD REPORTER**

An enthusiastic reporter is one of the most valuable assets to any media staff. He or she knows what news is, likes to go after it, enjoys writing it and producing it on camera, and likes seeing it appear in the paper or on the broadcast. No matter where a reporter is, he or she evaluates daily experiences for news value. A reporter likes to mingle with people.

As the news source gives (his or her) information, reporters should take notes. Here are some helpful suggestions:

- ◆ Use a pencil or pen and write on a small memo pad.
- ◆ Take extra care to write down points that may be difficult to remember--figures, names, key words for direct quotations. Get correct quotes and name spellings.
- ◆ Take notes in a generally inconspicuous way. Focus attention on what is being said.

### **Check Your Own Personality**

- ◆ Be friendly but not gushing, quiet but mentally alert.
- ◆ Always act business-like.
- ◆ Remember to check for accuracy of name spellings.
- ◆ Be curious but not too aggressive.
- ◆ Be disciplined to be a keen observer.

### **Speech Coverage**

- ◆ Stand or sit as close to the platform as possible. Focus on writing down those points that seem most important.
- ◆ Try to record several direct quotations.
- ◆ Analyze the speech as a whole in order to discover its pattern and fundamental theme. Do not let your personal opinions color the news story. You should remain objective.



- ◆ Be sure to note reactions of the audience and interruptions from applause and/or boos.

## **Interviews**

Some interviews highlight the subject's views on timely topics, while others emphasize his or her personality. There are times when views and personality should receive balanced treatment.

Suggested interview situations:

- ◆ Getting to know the Governor and other platform speakers
- ◆ The swearing in of officers by the Supreme Court Justices
- ◆ A delegate who is participating at State Conference for the first time
- ◆ Alumni returning to the Conferences

Write the interview by proceeding from the most interesting responses to the least interesting. Try to wind up the story with a quote, important idea, or other specially chosen element that will drive home the theme.

## NEWS VS. EDITORIALS

### **News Story**

The news story, also known as "hard news," presents revelatory information about previously unknown facts or unspoken comments. It contains facts and quoted opinion and is free from opinion on the part of the reporter or editor. When opinion appears in a news story, it is attributed to persons quoted, indirectly or directly.

### **The Editorial**

The editorial is a special piece of writing or broadcast, usually featured on the editorial page and noted as editorial on camera. Sometimes, for special reasons, the editor may put an editorial on the front page of the paper. If he or she does, he or she takes pains to label it as an editorial.

In an editorial, the writer or producer makes an effort to interpret the news and express the Media section's official stand. It is of tremendous importance, both to the writer and the reader, that Media staff keep distinctions between the editorial and the news story constantly in mind. Editorializing in a news story is unethical on the part of the reporter.

\*Keep this writing process in mind as it is vital for producing good stories:

***PRE-WRITE*** ⇨ ***WRITE*** ⇨ ***EDIT*** ⇨ ***REWRITE*** ⇨ ***PUBLISH***



## GENERAL NOTES ON WRITING ALL ARTICLES AND STORIES

While we may be stating the obvious, all stories and articles should have a **BEGINNING**, **MIDDLE** and **END**.

The beginning and end of your story are very important. When you begin writing, keep these simple steps in mind:

1. Be simple. You don't want to confuse the reader—you want to captivate. Clear, concise wording is vital.
2. Be relevant. Imagine you are writing a story about the staff of the hotel and what they endure while Youth and Government is there, but your lead is all about how the halls of the capitol building reverberate with the shouts and laughter of delegates on their way to session. Although interesting and creative, your lead is not representative of what the story is about.
3. Have focus. With certain exceptions, the lead should illustrate a key theme of the story. Because the reader is conditioned by the lead, he or she expects the opening example to relate to an important matter treated fully in the body of the story.

The body of the story should fully explain the concepts presented in the lead.

### WRITING YOUR CONCLUSION

After your lead establishes the tone of the story and the body fully fleshes out the subject, it is time to end your piece. Ending a journalistic story is different from writing a conclusion paragraph for a paper. Though it may seem strange, for news and opinion stories you may just end where you are – no firm conclusion is necessary. For features and entertainment stories, however, you may employ one of three techniques to finish off the story:

- ◆ **Circling Back:** This kind of ending reminds the reader of the central message or key elements of the story.
- ◆ **Looking Ahead:** Sometimes speculating about the future of the subject matter proves interesting to the reader and encourages further thought.
- ◆ **Spreading Out:** Even though earlier you were told to keep the focus of your story tight and constantly in mind, giving the reader something to think about at the end of the story by extrapolating makes the story bigger than it was before, something worth remembering. For this technique to be effective, the reporter must be extremely comfortable with the subject matter as a whole.

## PRE-WRITING

### STEP 1: DECIDE ON THE TYPE OF STORY

This step is crucial because your decision will drive how you research and write your piece. During Youth and Government, this decision may be made for you depending on your role assignment and coverage needs. For now, however let's focus on the stories you can write and submit as your pre- District assignments and during District Conferences. You can write: ◆ News (all delegates must do at least one hard news story at District!)

◆ Features



## TIPS ON GETTING STARTED

Before you venture out to work on your story or to do an interview, spend at least ten minutes thinking about your story and writing down your thoughts on the prompts below. Your story will come together more quickly and be better written if you are organized before you begin. Sometimes it even helps to do this process in outline form.

1. Draw the shape of your story on your paper and decide where you want your story to start and how you want it to finish. This seriously affects the nature of questions you ask and what you write.
  - a. Example: suppose you are writing a story about Angela Castilleja and her position as State Director of the Texas YMCA Youth and Government program. You may want to start out explaining her background with the program, but you'll want to finish by talking about her goals for Youth and Government...how she thinks the program has changed in her years of participation. You may also want to cover her favorite color, food, music, etc. and how they make her unique.
  - b. These subjects are pretty broad and not necessarily related, so if you don't have focus before you start to work, you'll spend far too much time interviewing, collecting information and writing. In the end, your story may be too long and may not flow well.
2. On your note pad, write down **WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHY, HOW, WHEN** and leave space next to each one so that you can write down the answers when you get them. Even if you are doing a poll, you will need to start with an introduction or lead including this information.
3. Write down what you **do know** about the subject so you can confirm it. Write down what you **don't know** or would like to know. Leave space between and next to each question so that your notes are organized neatly and easy for you to follow later.
4. Don't forget to get delegation and individual delegate **names** and double-check **spelling** of each name.
5. Write a list of all the people with whom you might talk and places where you might need to go to research your story. Check your schedule for locations and times so you successfully get the details you need, and make a schedule for yourself before you walk out the door. This process will help you avoid lost time and frustration.
6. After you have completed interviews, glance over your notes to make any last minute clarifications. Sit down with your notes and decipher any messy words while your interview is still fresh in your mind.

## STEP 2: CHOOSE YOUR TOPIC

One of the most significant challenges the student journalist faces is deciding what to write or report about. Below are sample topics covered in previous Youth and Government media stories. Some stories have appeared consistently over the years, while others were good ideas that only made it once. This list is not even close to exhaustive -- don't let this limit

your creativity.  
Profile

◆ Delegation Director or Advisor

◆ Big Delegations vs. Small Delegations



# TEXAS YOUTH AND GOVERNMENT

## Candidate Interviews

- | Casino Night/Carnival
- | Committees Overviews
- ◆ Officer Interviews & Profiles
- ◆ Officer/Appointed Official Profile
- | Officer Development Conference
- ◆ Profile of Conference Meals
- | Restaurant Reviews
- | Resource Staff Profile
- | Resources Available to Delegates

## Opening

and Closing Sessions

- | "Coming Tomorrow...."
- | Mock Trials, Appellate Court, Legislative, Lobbyist
- | Delegation Profile
- | Downtown Austin
- | Evening Delegation Meetings
- | General Conference Information that Readers Will Want to Know
- | Host Hotel & Staff Profile
- | Hotel and Capitol Staff Profile

◆ Information for YG

## Veterans

- | Alumni Profile
- ◆ Info for YG Rookies

◆ Movie or Music Reviews

- | News Conferences

## STEP 3 | DO YOUR RESEARCH

- ◆ District Training Events Recap
- ◆ Op/Ed on Specific Bills or Court Cases (Either Pro or Con)
- ◆ Program Overviews (House, Senate, Lobbyist, Judicial, Media etc.)

| Results of Polls

- | Status of Bills
- | Student Advisory Committee
- | Youth Governor Candidates' Platforms
- | Top 10 Lists/In and Out Lists
- | YMCA History
- | Youth and Government Traditions
- | State of Texas YG
- | News Feature from the "Real World"
- | Story or Profile on Conference on National Affairs or National Judicial

## Conference



Now that you have the beginnings of an idea, you need to look around to be able to develop it more fully. Your research will look different depending on the type of article you are writing. Some resources you could use to develop your article include:

- ◆ Media sources- Time, Newsweek, Internet, nightly news, radio, etc.
- ◆ Thinking of things that have personally affected you or someone you know
- ◆ Discussions with local leaders, teachers, family, and friends

Once you've checked these sources, you need to move on to the most dreaded of all tasks. The thing no teenager ever wants to hear. The word that strikes terror into the hearts of students everywhere... Yes, we're talking about...dare we say it?

...RESEARCH. You may not like it, but it's vital.

You'll need to collect as many facts as you can about your subject. Try places like: ◆ Library, Internet, books, magazines

- ◆ Associations and organizations that have impact on your article subject
- ◆ Professionals, attorneys, educators

You should have some statistics, some facts, and even some informed testimonies by people who know what they're talking about. The more facts you can find now, the better your article will be. The best articles are written by people who have done their work! Here are some questions to guide your research:

**WHO IS THE AUDIENCE?** Determine the audience. The choice of audience will in turn determine the subject of the story, what points it covers, and how it is written.

**WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STORY?** Is it to inform the readers, challenge the sources, give a preview, and/or review the course of events? The purpose will shape how the story is written and how the information is used.

**WHO WILL BE YOUR SOURCES?** Information has to come from people or documents, not just "what everyone knows" or what you think. Who will be the best source of information about the subject of the story? Who will be most knowledgeable and credible? What documents are available to back up what the sources say?

**ASK YOURSELF "WHY IS THIS PERSON LYING TO ME?"** While most people won't deliberately lie to you, they may be telling you only part of the truth. They also may be giving you the truth from their perspective because they have a particular idea that they want to get across or an agenda that they want to put forward.

**THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS NEWS.** Long before the newspaper hits the street, or your story hits the 6:00 news, people will already know the facts. What will your story add to the discussion? Will it be an analysis piece? Will it put the subject in an historical context? Will it provide commentary from the people affected by the subject?



**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Who is the audience?

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What is the purpose of the story?

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Who are your sources?

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What's the "new" part of this news? What's your angle?

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# TEXAS YOUTH AND GOVERNMENT

If you're looking for the following types of information, ask questions that use these words:

## FACTS

name	locate
define	relate
memorize	know
repeat	match
record	state
list	write
recall	recognize

## COMPREHENSION

discuss	identify
describe	infer
estimate	report
give examples	review
explain	summarize
restate	predict
express	draw

## APPLICATION

translate	practice
interpret	illustrate
apply	operate
use	shop
employ	sketch
dramatize	schedule
demonstrate	solve
	show

## ANALYSIS

classify	contrast
distinguish	diagram
sort	inspect
categorize	debate
differentiate	inventory
calculate	question
experiment	relate
compare	examine
test	criticize
solve	

## SYNTHESIS

## EVALUATION

compose construct appraise score  
plan collect evaluate select propose set up rate assess create develop  
value estimate design organize measure justify formulate manage revise  
discuss arrange produce decide debate assemble revise choose recommend  
prepare originate



## INTERVIEWING TIPS

Some interviews highlight the subject's views on timely topics, while others emphasize his or her personality. There are times when views and personality should receive balanced treatment.

Suggested interview situations:

- ◆ Getting to know the Governor and other platform speakers
- ◆ The swearing in of officers by the Supreme Court Justices
- ◆ A delegate who is participating at State Conference for the first time
- ◆ Alumni returning to the Conferences

You will be conducting interviews for your articles whether or not the interviewee is the focus of the article. Be sure you have a good set of questions prior to the interview.

Here are a few tips that may make your interview go more smoothly:

1. Decide on your purpose
  - ◆ To report the facts OR to write a feature?
2. Develop questions
  - ◆ Ask questions, don't make statements.
  - ◆ Keep questions simple, but avoid questions that can be answered with a yes or no.
  - ◆ Remain neutral.
  - ◆ Ask only one question at a time.
  - ◆ If working on a pro/con piece, ask pro questions first.
  - ◆ Develop questions that require some thought to answer.
  - ◆ Ask more than you think necessary.
  - ◆ Ask questions in a logical order:
    - a. Fact to opinion
    - b. General to specific
    - c. Easy to difficult
3. Schedule an appointment ◆ Identify yourself.
  - ◆ Decide on appropriate place and time.
  - ◆ Be prompt and polite.
4. During the interview:
  - ◆ Note reactions of person(s) you are interviewing.
  - ◆ Note surroundings (if interesting or relevant).
  - ◆ Notice direction of interview—choose to stay on predetermined track or to go where it takes you.
  - ◆ Don't be nervous or uncomfortable.
  - ◆ Take accurate notes by following these tips:
    - Ask to make certain you understand.
    - One of the biggest mistakes in reporting is to misquote people – quotes must be verbatim. Follow conversation closely, and record with detail. □ Check numbers, names, titles, and spellings.



5. Six ways to ask questions
  - ◆ Compare and contrast – ask for similarities or differences.
  - ◆ Example/illustration – ask for a description.
  - ◆ Criticism – start positively, and then be tactful.
  - ◆ Discussion – ask for detailed explanation.
  - ◆ Definition – ask for definition.
  - ◆ Observation – ask for thoughts, feelings, beliefs, etc.

## WRITING 101

### BASIC WRITING TOOLS

1. Remember the 5 Ws and H (**who, what, when, where, why, how**). If you don't have the answers to all these questions, then you aren't ready to start writing your story (See "Step 1-Decide What Type of Story You Want to Write" earlier in this packet and "Tips for Writing News Stories") .
2. Always be clear and concise in your writing. If you confuse the reader with long, complicated, excessive wordiness and illogical ordering of information, you have defeated the purpose of trying to convey information and/or opinion.
3. Always write active sentences. This is sometimes a little tricky. In other words, always try to write as if something is happening now, not yesterday, not two weeks ago. And always write as if the object of your sentence is performing some action, not having some action performed on it. For example:
  - i. "The carton was delivered by United Postal Service." – passive, yuk
  - ii. "UPS delivered the carton." – active, betterBUT a sentence becomes even better if it can be worded more actively, as if the action is presently occurring: iii. "The weather watch plane reported a hurricane." active, but boring iv. "Reporting hurricane conditions, weather watch planes continue to keep an eye open." – more active, better
4. Always write short, direct sentences. Long sentences look even longer and more confusing when they are typeset in small type and narrow columns. They are distracting to the reader.
5. Always write short paragraphs. If the sentences are short (10 words), short paragraphs will follow. Each paragraph should comprise a complete thought.
6. Always write in third person. Beginning writers commonly forget to follow this rule. Never use "I," "me," or "you" in a news story. "He," "she," "it," and "they" are the appropriate pronouns. You should never refer to yourself in a news story and RARELY in a features story unless you are doing a creative writing piece or a special interview (Note: in many entertainment magazines, the reporter will refer to his or her surroundings and experiences as he or she interviews a celebrity).
  - a. Special Consideration: you would not follow this guideline if you were writing an opinion piece or a review that requires your personal statement!
7. Use neutral terms when possible. A good reporter knows that simply using certain verbs and adjectives that possibly have negative or positive connotations can change the tone of the story and express the reporter's opinion without him or her stating it.
  - a. Consider the following:



- i. "Lecturing to a full hall, the professor explained the ramifications of not studying." – neutral, okay
  - ii. "Lecturing to a full hall, the professor droned on about the ramifications of. . ." – negative, BAD
8. Use good grammar and appropriate language. Slang terms are only useful in stories about slang. Sexually suggestive language or terms are NEVER appropriate. Words, nicknames or adjectives meant to embarrass or hurt another person are NEVER appropriate.
9. Read through your story before you turn it in! Make sure it makes sense to you because if it doesn't, it will NEVER make sense to anyone else. AND, when you type a story into the computer, read through it before you consider yourself finished and make sure you catch any errors.
10. Refer to tips on getting started before you begin to write (listed in "Step 1").

## **Step 4 – WRITE YOUR FIRST DRAFT**

Ok, you've picked the type of article you are writing, decided on a topic, and gathered a whole bunch of information and research. It's time to WRITE! The following tips cover general information you need to know to write your print, broadcast, or social media piece. There are also a few more specific tip sheets on writing different types of newspaper articles in the appendices.

### **WHAT MAKES NEWS WRITING DIFFERENT?**

Writing journalistic stories differs from writing essays or term papers in very specific ways, and you must keep these differences in mind when you begin.

- ◆ In newspaper articles, because columns are narrow and can be hard to read if they are very long, paragraphs tend to be short – no more than 50 words AT THE MOST.
  - ◆ Because paragraphs are so short, paragraphs do not necessarily develop whole ideas as they usually do in a conventional school essay or term paper.
  - ◆ Quotes typically make up their own, separate paragraphs in news stories to help them stand out and make them easier to read.
  - ◆ All journalistic writing is very active.
  - ◆ News writers must work especially hard to "get to the point" because there is far less space/time to do it in.
  - ◆ Instead of having a title paragraph and thesis, you will combine the two in what is known as a "lead" when writing news.

### **MORE PLANNING!**

- ◆ Decide on main points
- ◆ Decide on organization (more details coming up!)
  - i. inverted pyramid
  - ii. lead plus relevant facts
  - iii. chronological
  - iv. narrative
  - v. other??
- ◆ What is the point of the story?
- ◆ What is the central idea?
- ◆ What is the appropriate focus for emphasis



## WRITING NEWS ARTICLES, ON-AIR REPORTS, AND BLOGS

A news story is not about opinion or conjecture. It is about facts: WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHY, WHEN, and HOW as they pertain to a particular subject. Construct your stories using the 5W's and H. News writing shows no bias – it should only present the facts on a given subject. You can provide facts in a variety using highly innovative methods and angles, but your story should still strive to present the basic five Ws accurately and economically. Long descriptions of scenery or poetic verbiage are not the goals of a news story.

The most important part of any news story is the **LEAD**, or introductory paragraph.

Leads should:

- ◆ Attract people's attention.
- ◆ Include 28-32 words (1 to 3 sentences) – NO MORE!
- ◆ Include answers to the five Ws and H (Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How).
- ◆ Offer a quick round-up of major facts of story.

### SIX TYPES OF LEADS AND THEIR USES

1. Summary of "5 W's and H"
  - useful when writing hard news
  - who, what, where, when, why
  - don't forget "how" - important for any analysis
  - list most important facts
2. Quotation
  - useful when writing feature news
  - choose a quote that provides an interesting attention-grabber
3. Punch or astonisher
  - useful when reporting tragedies or disasters
  - shocking statement or fact
4. Contrast
  - useful in pure analysis - seldom used
  - link two seemingly separate events or ideas
5. Question
  - useful when writing feature news
  - asks a question that makes audience want to know the answer
6. Descriptive or Narrative
  - useful when writing feature news
  - describe background of an event

### KEEP THESE POINTS IN MIND WHEN CREATING YOUR

LEAD ◆ Make it concise.

◆ Use simple sentences.

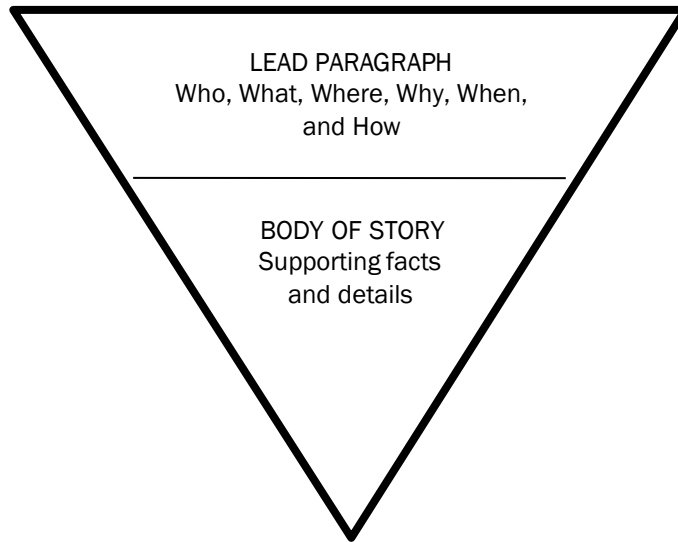
◆ Use strong verbs.

◆ Don't begin with "When" or "Where." ◆ Don't use clichés.

◆ BE CREATIVE - TRY TO DO SOMETHING THAT HAS NOT BEEN DONE BEFORE!!



Using a lead will allow your story to take a specific shape, the INVERTED PYRAMID. Place the answers to the questions Who, What, Where, When, Why and How at the top, and then discuss the details underneath. The body of your story, the details, should support the information provided in the lead, fully describing and exploring the subject. News stories deal in the PRESENT. They are event-related and written to inform the reader.





## WRITING EDITORIAL ARTICLES, REPORTS, AND BLOGS

Opinions and editorials can be enjoyable story formats to express your ideas and creativity. These features and stories are statements that give personal views or try to persuade the audience. In Youth and Government, we encourage you to be controversial and innovative, but we also ask you to remember the spirit of the program and keep in mind the Y's core values (Caring, Honesty, Respect, Responsibility).

If you are assigned an opinion article, write it with the following Youth and Government Media guidelines in mind:

1. Never write an article with the goal of slandering an individual, group, or delegation. Do not include specific details for the purpose of slamming or criticizing policies, procedures, or behavior you don't like.
2. Never include inflammatory or profane language of ANY KIND.
3. Do not criticize an activity, policy, procedure, etc. WITHOUT offering a solution. For example, perhaps you didn't like the food at the Conference. So what. Anyone can complain. Be specific in your concerns. Interview the catering company about how they make their choices. Offer suggestions for improvement.

Suggestions on how to write your editorial:

1. Lead with an objective explanation of the issue/controversy. Include the five Ws and H, pull in quotes from available sources, and do additional research if needed.
2. Present your argument first. Express the viewpoints with which you, as a writer, disagree. Identify the people or groups that specifically oppose you and use FACTS and QUOTES to state their opinions.
3. Directly refute your opposition. Pull in other facts and quotes from people that support your viewpoint and concede a valid point of the opposition. This shows you are rational and gives you a chance to refute that point if possible.
4. Offer other original arguments in defense of your position.
5. Conclude your editorial with some PUNCH. Give solutions to the problem.

Opinion writing should use the following structure:

- ◆ The introduction should begin with a general statement and narrow to a thesis.
- ◆ You might also begin with a concession. For example, "Admittedly it is true that . . . . "and then counter the concession with, ". . . but. . . "or ". . . however." ◆ Start with your weakest pro argument and end with your strongest.
- ◆ Your conclusion should close your article as it begins, with a general statement followed by a restatement of the thesis

## **WRITING FEATURE PIECES**

These pieces are created in the style of short fiction and can be a tremendous amount of fun. These articles and stories are often longer than other types and should be written to entertain and explain. They are idea-related, meaning they center on a topic, person, or concept. They should include very colorful language and LOTS of QUOTES.



- ◆ Format for Feature Stories
- ◆ Fun, catchy lead.
- ◆ Body copy with lots of quotes and ideas.
- ◆ Conclusion that relates back to the beginning of the story.

There are six different types of Features:

1. Human Interest - people and their troubles or successes
2. Personality - semi-biographical
3. Historical - past related to present
4. Explanatory - explain how/why something has happened
5. Analytical - dissect a problem
6. Entertainment

This type of writing can combine elements of news writing and editorial writing. For example, an entertainment story can be . . .

- ◆ Like a news story, if the reporter is simply giving information on a specific event: "On January 4<sup>th</sup> at the Renaissance, Youth and Government delegates will be dancing to tunes provided by the latest DJ's."
- ◆ Like a feature story, if the reporter chooses to add adjectives to create a specific tone and profile in the story: "On January 4<sup>th</sup>, the walls of the Renaissance will virtually shake from floor to ceiling, as Taylor Swift, Justin Bieber, the Chainsmokers, and many more will join Youth and Government delegates, sounds blaring and lights flashing."
- ◆ Or even like an editorial, if the reporter chooses to take a very clear positive or negative opinion on the subject matter: "On January 4<sup>th</sup>, fans of alternative music beware. Stock up on your ear plugs. Barricade yourselves in your rooms. Make sure your favorite CDs are nearby or your phone or iPod is available. And whatever you do, beware of the wild sounds that will erupt from the dances being held...definitely not for the faint of heart."

Consider also the kind of stories that make good features section pieces:

- ◆ Reviews of food, specific restaurants, and things to do in and around the Capitol.
- ◆ Polls of delegates' favorite movies or music groups to see if tastes vary by delegation.
- ◆ Reviews of new music releases.
- ◆ Whatever else your imagination comes up with.

When taking a definite stance on an issue, such as when writing a review, it is important to remember that this is a YMCA program—the publication and the page don't have to be dripping with malice for your piece to provide an effective review. Since entertainment writing can employ any or all of the styles we have described, make sure you review the news, feature, and editorial writing tips in this manual.



## FINDING YOUR STYLE

*Modified from The Elements of Style by William Strunk and E.B. White*

1. Place yourself in the background.
2. Work from a suitable design.
3. Create with nouns and verbs.
4. Revise and rewrite.
5. Do not overwrite.
6. Do not overstate.
7. Avoid the use of qualifiers.
8. Do not affect a breezy manner.
9. Be creative.
10. Do not explain too much.
11. Have fun creating your story.
12. Make sure the audience knows who is "speaking."
13. Avoid fancy words.
14. Do not use dialect unless your ear is good.
15. Be clear.
16. Do not inject opinion (unless the piece is an editorial or OpEd).
17. Use figures of speech sparingly.
18. Do not take shortcuts at the cost of clarity.
19. Avoid foreign languages.
20. Prefer the standard to the offbeat.



## EDITING & PUBLISHING

### Step 5 – EDIT YOUR ARTICLE

This is a CRITICAL step in the process! Your article will go through a typical newspaper editing cycle. When writing and submitting an article through your delegation, you would follow part one of this step and then turn it in online or to District Conference Section Leaders. When you are at the State Conference, you'll follow the other parts to this step.

1. You will want to read, re-read, and re-read your article again to find any inconsistencies in spelling, grammar, and/or organization. You can also ask a fellow reporter to read your article. In fact, sometimes it's better to have someone read it that doesn't know anything about your subject – they'll be able to give you honest feedback about the clarity of your story.
2. Once you are satisfied with the article, you are ready to submit it to your Media House head. Your head editor will give your article a close read, and if there are any changes or corrections to be made, he or she will return the article to you for revision (see Step 6, Revise and Submit, for more information). If your editor approves the article, it will go through one more read. The District Director (at District Conference) and State Director (at State Conference) will have final approval about what goes into the paper and what does not.  
They may or may not defer to the opinion of the Media Section Leaders in cases of questionable material.
3. Once your editor is satisfied with the piece, he or she will approve to print.

### EVOLUTION OF A NEWS ITEM

The following stages illustrate the development of a local news item from the time the reporter gathers information to the moment the story gets printed.

1. The reporter gathers the news. A. Contacts sources.  
B. Checks matter of record.  
C. Reads the day's news and seeks local application or response.
2. The reporter writes the story.
3. The editor edits the story and notes the contents of the story for the purpose of designating a headline. He or she then gives it to an assistant who checks for accuracy of the facts and correctness of expression and writes a headline. The assistant returns the story to the head editor for approval.
4. The story is then sent to the typist if one is available, or the reporter may type the article.  
The story is typed on a computer and spell checked.
5. If a proofreader is available, he or she will check the proof and notes errors by means of proofreading signs.
6. The proofreader or reporter will return the corrected copy (proof) to the typist (or the reporter) who makes the corrections. Copy is checked again.
7. Copy is placed along with headlines and art.
8. Paper is taken to the printer, along with art or photos.



## HOW TO AVOID AN UNHAPPY EDITOR

### I. AVOID USING UNNECESSARY WORDS VI. AVOID EMPTY WORDS

- ◆ in excess of = more than ◆ Nice
- ◆ for the purpose of = for ◆ Many
- ◆ in order to = to ◆ Somewhat
- ◆ in addition to = also ◆ Very
- ◆ during the time that = while ◆ Little
- ◆ in the vicinity of = near ◆ A lot
- ◆ in the near future = soon

### VII. AVOID ADJECTIVES THAT JUDGE

- II. AVOID VAGUE AND INDEFINITE REFERENCES ◆ It was a delightful performance (*your opinion - others may not*)

- ◆ It was decided that (who decided?) *agree*
- ◆ It is hoped that (who is hoping?) ◆ This will be an important meeting (*you think it is - will others?*) interesting?)

### VIII. AVOID "-ING" WORDS

- III. AVOID REDUNDANCIES ◆ The orchestra will be playing for the dance ◆ is presently or currently

= now = *The orchestra will play . .*

- ◆ invited guests = uninvited people are not . ◆ Hearing the news, Sue rushed to tell her

◆ basic fundamentals = fundamentals are mother = *Sue heard the basic news and . .*

- ◆ future plans = are plans ever made in the past?

### IX. AVOID INACCURACIES & EXAGGERATION

- ◆ yellow in color = yellow is a color ◆ His resignation was the result of ill ◆ large in size = large always refers to size health.
- ◆ true facts = if a statement is not true, it (*Death could be a result of ill health but is not a fact could a resignation?*)

### IV. AVOID WORDY NEGATIVES

- ◆ The president appointed a committee
- ◆ INCORRECT: The program is not unlike that, hopefully, will raise the one they gave last the money. month. (*Who hopes - the president, the*
- ◆ CORRECT: The program was similar to *committee or someone else?* the one they gave last month.

### X. AVOID PASSIVE VOICE

- ◆ The program was planned by the

- V. AVOID CLICHES – The words, phrases and students. = *The students planned . . . ideas you hear all the time.* ◆ The refreshments were enjoyed by the students. = *The students enjoyed . . .*



## STEP 6 & SUBMIT YOUR ARTICLES

You are all done! Submit your articles in advance of your District Conference and then by deadlines during Conferences. Make sure to bring this resource to the State Conference.

### SAMPLE ARTICLE

#### *Delegation Achieves Chevron - Albert Lea delegation receives lettering status*

When walking down the halls of your designated school, possibly you and others are wearing letter jackets with a Youth and Government chevron on them. At Albert Lea High School, this is the first time this has happened in many years.

"You see all the other schools with letters, and it's rewarding that we finally get to too," sophomore Chelsey Neihbur said. After two years of trying, Chelsey and some other delegates from Albert Lea got their community school board to approve Youth and Government as a school activity. However, this past year, when they approached the board and asked if they were able to letter, the answer was surprising. They were denied the right to letter through the school because Youth and Government was deemed not as involved as the other activities that are allowed to letter.

"Nobody ever said it wasn't a good activity," Superintendent Dr. David Prescott said. However, it still did not pass. To most, this was very surprising because Dr. Prescott has had two children in the program. Additionally, of the six board members, two have children currently in Youth and Government.

"It makes it difficult [not being a school activity], but it's great that the group is still getting recognized," delegation director Dennis Dieser said. The delegation has decided to go out on their own and order a patch for Youth and Government without the school's support.

"Some students, even athletes, don't really care about lettering; but to some people it's a big deal, so I'm happy the students worked so hard to get it started," said Prescott. The downfall for the Albert Lea delegation would be the restrictions of not lettering through the school. Without the school, they are not able to give out the chenille; so a first time letterer would not be able to receive a jacket until they acquired a letter in another activity.

But even though there are some negative elements of the situation, most people are thoroughly excited about this improvement.

"I would imagine that lettering would get the word out and get more students interested in joining," Attorney General Alex Christiansen said.

"I think students will work harder, try to achieve more at State, and represent our delegation better," said Neihbur.

### ART & PHOTOGRAPHY

Photographers and artists are the people that will do any type of graphic design for the Media section—from photography, to masthead design, to cartoons.



# TEXAS YOUTH AND GOVERNMENT

## WHAT MAKES GOOD ARTWORK FOR THE NEWSPAPER?

### **Medium**

Because we produce our newspaper publication using laser printers and copiers, pen, ink, and dark pencil artwork reproduces with the best clarity (i.e., line art on computers). If shading is used, the drawing must still be high contrast. Black and white with no gray tones is really the best.

### **Content**

Be creative! If you receive an assignment for something that you don't think that you can reasonably produce, what can you do? If you can't get exactly the drawing, what can you do that will be dynamic and draw interest to the page? HAVE FUN, but do not plan to do things that will be too time-consuming for you. You may have multiple assignments every day that editors are counting on you to complete. Pace yourself and be realistic. You WILL NOT have multiple hours to complete each drawing.

## WHAT MAKES GOOD PHOTOGRAPHY FOR THE NEWSPAPER?

### **Contrast**

Because we produce our publication using laser printers and copiers, photos MUST BE HIGH CONTRAST. Photos with lots of gray simply will muddy up too much when copied – meaning photos in the hotel lobbies, Court lobby, and hallways of the Capitol building simply will not turn out.

### **Content**

Dynamic! People shots! Close-ups! Try for action shots. Even if you are asked to shoot a location, try to include one or more delegates in the photo. Use advisors too. They like to see themselves in print! Try for candid, fun shots because they are overwhelmingly the best and might even be usable elsewhere. If you receive an assignment for something that you don't think that you can reasonably produce, what can you do? If you can't get exactly the shot, what can you do that would be dynamic and draw interest to the page?

### **Scheduling your Time**

Plan your day effectively. You will have LOTS of assignments each day. Before you head out, draw yourself a map and figure out everything that you can possibly accomplish in each location so that you aren't constantly running all over the Capitol. And ..... WEAR COMFORTABLE SHOES. You will definitely be on the move all day long.

## WHAT TO EXPECT AT STATE

### **PRESS OPERATIONS IN AUSTIN**

By the time you arrive in Austin, you ought to be familiar with the daily tasks that need to be completed. The District Conference is the training ground for State. At State, students are responsible for producing broadcasts and articles, one for distribution on Saturday and one for distribution on Sunday. Papers will be both printed and digital. Each paper is created using a Mac computer, Microsoft Word, and



Pagemaker. The paper is completely designed, written, edited, photographed, and produced by students. Advisors are there to keep the students on track and motivated. Editors selected at District and State offer student leadership.

All equipment, including laptops, desktop publishing computers, laser printers, and duplicating equipment, will be installed and working in the appropriate press office before the start of State Conference.

All assignments for news articles, features, opinions, and photos are assigned from this location.

## **FIRST MEETING**

When the Media House meets for the first time at the State Conference, the following happens:

- ◆ Youth and Government guidelines are reviewed, roll is taken, schedules and deadlines are reviewed, and everyone is released to start their job.
- ◆ Media members work to meet deadlines based on schedules set by editors and Media Section Leaders. Deadlines are discussed during the first meeting as stated.
  - The Media schedule is based on the overall State Conference schedule and is set up to highlight the current day's activities.
  - Features, opinions, and classified advertising complement the daily news. Their inclusion produces the most complete newspaper possible.

## **DEADLINES! DEADLINES! DEADLINES!**

Meeting personal and team deadlines is key to any successful news operation. That means meeting all deadlines for rough draft articles and photos, live posts, edited drafts and photos, rough and final draft layouts, and production and distribution. It is very important to understand that a news production that is 90% finished but does not hit the streets on time is no better than a news production that is only 10% finished. The ultimate goal of each edition of content is to meet the final delivery time.

Conference attendees will be expecting certain types of coverage at a given time each day, and Media delegates are responsible for meeting those expectations.

Given our focus on on-time delivery, your primary responsibility is to meet your individual deadline. Without a total commitment from each individual, the Media section runs the risk of not getting content out on time. Not adhering to schedules reflects poorly on the entire group.



## NEXT YEAR

Before you pack up the pens, notepads, soundboards, camera lenses, and power cords and put them into storage, you should think about next year and what you might want to do.

*If you really enjoyed seeing legislation passed...*

**You may want to consider becoming a Lobbyist.**

A lobbyist is the person behind the scenes who pushes the legislative process. You probably saw some lobbyists in committees or debate this year, and hopefully you got to talk to your own teammates. Lobbyists represent clients, and they work to get certain bills passed or killed depending on how the bills affect their client's interests. As a lobbyist, you can use all your debating and negotiating skills to convince legislators to think your way one-on-one, or you can organize campaigns about legislation to reach groups. Your primary focus is legislation, and you get to use your debating skills. If you like networking, have a cause you believe in passionately, and love to convince others to join your cause, being a lobbyist might be right for you!

*If you like the debating and public speaking...*

**You may want to consider being in the Judicial Program.**

The Judicial program gives delegates a lot of time to debate (our fancy word for arguing!). As an attorney, you represent one side of a case and try to convince a panel of judges that your arguments are better than the other side's. If you become a judge, you get to listen to the arguments of others and poke holes in them with your piercingly intelligent questions. It's all about the debate!

*If you really enjoyed the process of seeing laws made*

**... You may want to consider being a Legislator.**

Legislators are the people in the forefront of the legislative process. They represent the state residents and try to improve how the government serves them by making, changing, or getting rid of laws. Legislators get to come up with their own good ideas for legislation and use debating skills to get bills passed. If you like coming up with new ideas, enjoy debating and speaking in public, and want to improve our society, being a legislator may be right for you!

*If you loved being a part of Youth & Government and want additional duties . . .*

**You may want to become an Elected Officer or Appointed Official**

YOUTH OFFICERS (grades 9 – 12) - Officers for the program are elected by participants in each program area at the State Conference and take office at the conclusion of the State Conference to serve until the following January. Please refer to the Candidates and Elections section of the Resource Portal for full candidate descriptions and criteria.

## APPENDICES



## JOURNALISTIC ETHICS

(Adapted from the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics)

### **PREAMBLE**

Members of the Society of Professional Journalists believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. The duty of the journalist is to further those ends by seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues. Conscientious journalists from all media and specialties strive to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty. Professional integrity is the cornerstone of a journalist's credibility. Members of the Society share a dedication to ethical behavior and adopt this code to declare the Society's principles and standards of practice.

### **SEEK TRUTH AND REPORT IT**

Journalists should be honest, fair, and courageous in gathering, reporting, and interpreting information.

Journalists should:

- ◆ Test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error. Deliberate distortion is never permissible.
- ◆ Diligently seek out subjects of news stories to give them the opportunity to respond to allegations of wrongdoing.
- ◆ Identify sources when feasible. The public is entitled to as much information as possible about a source's reliability.
- ◆ Make certain that headlines, news teases and promotional material, photos, video, audio, graphics, sound bites and quotations do not misrepresent. They should not oversimplify or highlight incidents out of context.
- ◆ Never plagiarize.
- ◆ Tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience boldly, even when it is unpopular to do so.
- ◆ Avoid stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, or social status.
- ◆ Support the open exchange of views, even views they find repugnant.
- ◆ Give voice to the voiceless; official and unofficial sources can be equally valid.
- ◆ Distinguish between advocacy and news reporting. Analysis and commentary should be labeled and not misrepresent fact or context.
- ◆ Recognize a special obligation to ensure that the public's business is conducted in the open and that government records are open to inspection.

### **MINIMIZE HARM**

Ethical journalists treat sources, subjects and colleagues as human beings deserving of respect. Journalists should:

- ◆ Show compassion to those who may be affected adversely by news coverage. Use special sensitivity when working with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.



- ◆ Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.
- ◆ Recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance.
- ◆ Recognize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than do public officials and others who seek power, influence, or attention.
  - ◆ Only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone's privacy.
  - ◆ Show good taste. Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity.

## **ACT INDEPENDENTLY**

Journalists should be free of obligation to any interests other than the public's right to know. Journalists should:

- ◆ Avoid conflict of interest, real or perceived.
- ◆ Avoid associations/activities that compromise integrity or damage credibility.
- ◆ Refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel, and special treatment, and shun secondary employment, political involvement, public office, and service in community organizations if they compromise journalistic integrity.
- ◆ Disclose unavoidable conflicts.
- ◆ Be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable.
- ◆ Deny favored treatment to advertisers and special interests and resist their pressure to influence news coverage.
- ◆ Be wary of sources offering information for favors or money. Avoid bidding for news.

## **BE ACCOUNTABLE**

Journalists are accountable to their readers, listeners, viewers, and each other. Journalists should:

- ◆ Clarify and explain news coverage and invite dialogue over journalistic conduct.
- ◆ Encourage the public to voice grievances against the news media.
- ◆ Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.
- ◆ Expose unethical practices of journalists and the news media.
- ◆ Abide by the same high standards to which they would hold others.

## **WHAT MAKES THE PUBLIC PAY ATTENTION?**

We have identified the five elements below that make the public pay attention. These forces work together and against each other to provide excitement and satisfaction for readers.

**INFORMATION.** The audience hungers for specific information. The more concrete and detailed the information, the more it will interest members of the public who delight in facts, statistics, and brief quotations. Precise descriptions satisfy the public's curiosity, give the impression of authority, and provide people with information they can pass on to someone else. The media must satisfy the public's appetite for specifics while also remaining responsible for the accuracy

of those specifics and contextualizing them.

**SIGNIFICANCE.** The audience wants to know the meaning of the information it receives and how it affects them. Readers are particularly interested when the media reveals surprising connections between pieces of information. These connections make the biggest impact when the public recognizes the significance of a connection they felt but had not articulated themselves.

**PEOPLE.** Audiences want to see people, hear them talk, watch them in dramatic action and reaction with other people. They like to read or hear anecdotes, stories or scenes in which people reveal both themselves and the subject. Audiences want to meet people with whom they can identify. Audiences also enjoy a strong sense of place and time. They like to see the people they hear about in their world -- to be shown as well as told.

**ORDER.** Audiences enjoy writing that has a clear and firm structure and provides a sense of order. Writing gives shape to experience. Readers want writing to have resolution, a sense of completion. Above all, an audience's questions are anticipated and answered in a wellmade piece of writing.

**VOICE.** People respond to the voice of media—one individual speaking to another individual. Audiences pay attention to a voice that has authority, concern, and energy.

Taken from [English Journal](#)

## BIG THREE JOURNALISM NO-NO'S – BEWARE!

In Media, we have the ability to reach large numbers of community members. Delegates and advisors trust that the information we provide is accurate, true, and complete. When it is not, be it a misspelled name or an absolute misrepresentation of the facts, we as a program are held responsible in any lawsuits (or hate mail) that ensue. It is our policy to make a retraction in the following issue/broadcast/post for any substantial misrepresentation and to handle disgruntled audience members in a polite, firm, and courteous manner.

There are three big journalism “no-no’s” (types of expressions that have never been protected by the First Amendment.) These fall under the headings of **libel**, **invasion of privacy**, and **obscenity**. These offenses can lead to serious consequences including lawsuits, acts of censorship on the part of the program staff (known as “prior restraint”), and even termination of the program itself. Let’s not let this happen!

Let’s review and understand each one of these categories.



## LIBEL

Libel is a falsely printed statement of fact that attacks a person's reputation or good name. There are four components of libel: publication, identification, injury, and fault.

- ◆ **Publication:** The statement must be published in a public document such as a student newspaper. It does not matter whether the issue is a poorly researched fact included in a story or a fact in someone's quote – ultimately the publication is held responsible.
- ◆ **Identification:** The libeled person must be clearly identifiable, although not necessarily by name. If even a small group understands who the article is about, it still counts as libel.
- ◆ **Injury:** Damage to the reputation of the libeled person can occur even if only a small number of people understood the libel.
- ◆ **Fault:** Although fault is based on circumstance, it is generally understood that a private individual can claim damages if a reporter did not adequately verify a story before printing it, while a public figure can claim damages only if they can prove that the journalist acted with malice or with reckless disregard of the truth. While movie stars and popular music artists are obvious public figures, some state Supreme Courts have ruled that teachers and even students are public figures in cases involving student newspapers.

## INVASION OF PRIVACY

All people have the right to privacy unless they waive that right. Some different forms of Invasion of Privacy are intrusion, false light, private and embarrassing information, and appropriation.

- ◆ **Intrusion:** Intrusion involves unwelcome entry in some way into a private area (e.g., taking a picture of someone at home without consent.) People in public places, however, have no expectation of privacy (e.g., taking a picture of someone at school). You can also intrude into someone's privacy by quoting him or her or by taping your conversation without consent. Although an informed minor can give consent, courts have challenged this consent. If the material is controversial, get the minor's parents to sign a release form. Quoting a third party without consent is also intrusion (e.g., "Ralin said that Tanya is on crack," Andrea said).
- ◆ **False light:** False light is taking true information but presenting it so that the article implies something false. Avoiding false light is very important in news and feature articles (i.e., avoid presenting only facts that support one side of a story/including photographs of innocent people that suggest they are doing something wrong.)
- ◆ **Private, Embarrassing Information:** Any type of private, embarrassing information should only be used if the information is newsworthy. If this is the case, the media should obtain consent from all parties involved. Documents such as school reports and medical reports are private, and journalists have no right to reveal information from these types of sources.
- ◆ **Appropriation:** Appropriation is the unauthorized use of someone's name or photograph for commercial purposes without written consent.



# TEXAS YOUTH AND GOVERNMENT

## OBSCENITY

Supreme Court decisions grant school administrations the right to censor vulgar language and allow schools to set a standard for public conduct. Questionable language or innuendoes are subject to censorship by all editors, staff, and advisors.

- ◆ When writing a story or editing a page, keep everything LEGAL.
- ◆ Get consent from all persons you quote, both directly and indirectly.
- ◆ Exterminate all bias and opinion in every news story, and present all sides of a story fairly.
- ◆ Go over any humorous remarks. A remark can be considered libelous if others might interpret it as malicious.
  
- ◆ Accept a quote for your story or page only after double-checking that facts included in the quote are accurate. Also make sure to record the quote accurately (if you're not sure, reading back what you wrote is a good way to make sure the source is being correctly represented).
- ◆ Label all staged photos clearly and in large print.

## Resources

[Girls Write Now | Writing & Mentoring Community for Diverse Voices](https://girlswritenow.org/) - <https://girlswritenow.org/>

[Medium: Read and write stories.](https://medium.com/) - <https://medium.com/>

[11 Types of Marketing Activities for High Schoolers | Indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/marketing-activities-for-high-schoolers) - <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/marketing-activities-for-high-schoolers>

[INROADS](https://inroads.org/) - <https://inroads.org/>

[HubSpot Academy](https://academy.hubspot.com/) - <https://academy.hubspot.com/>

[Grammarly: Free AI Writing Assistance](https://www.grammarly.com/) - <https://www.grammarly.com/>