



TEXAS YOUTH AND GOVERNMENT

# STORYTELLING



## • IDENTIFY YOUR AUDIENCE

· The key to any good story, persuasive or otherwise, is knowing your audience. The way you craft a story will vary greatly if you are writing for fellow teenagers versus if you are writing for your parents generation. Things like word choice, tone, and even references play a part in making a specific appeal to your audience.

· What is tone? Tone is the emotional quality or attitude expressed in a piece of writing. In the context of YG your tone might be formal, informal, optimistic, inquisitive, etc. For example, the tone of your interview might be more serious if you are interviewing a lawyer, and more informal if you are interviewing a peer.

· Why does word choice matter? Using slang or current lingo might seem easier to you as a writer, but not everyone will understand your choice in words. Be sure to write in a way that is both easy to understand, and doesn't distract from your idea. While there may be a time to use flowery descriptions and lofty words, most of the time you want to write in plain language that effectively and concisely makes your point.

## • EMOTIONAL OR LOGICAL APPEALS

o Emotional: Your emotional or logical appeal is central to your storytelling. Building a narrative that is compelling emotionally involves using vivid language, relating your story details to the life experience of your audience, and using visual aids to support your story. Remember, identity and how a story relates to your audience's identity is the key to storytelling. Drawing the lines between your ideas and the experiences of your audience allow them to form a deeper connection with your writing and make your piece more persuasive, whether you do this using fact or emotional appeal.

o Logical: Alternately, using fact and statistics to bolster your points is a great way to build a logical appeal. Try to find statistics that shape a story, rather than just any statistics relevant to your idea. For example., if you are writing a story about raising civic engagement amongst teens, using stats that show before and after on voter turnout, the kinds of civic engagement opportunities that teens are engaging in etc. tell a story of the state of civic engagement before, and the reasons civic engagement is increasing in the present.

## • HAVE AN END GOAL IN MIND

o · Stories are meant to come to a conclusive end. When writing be sure that you are actively working toward illustrating your point, rather than adding content for the sake of filling the page. Be sure to concisely layout your point in the beginning of the story, and support it with stories, facts, quotes, etc. that lead your audience to your conclusion.

**STORIES ARE POWER!**



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# PHOTOGRAPHY AND VISUAL MEDIA

## • RULE OF THREES

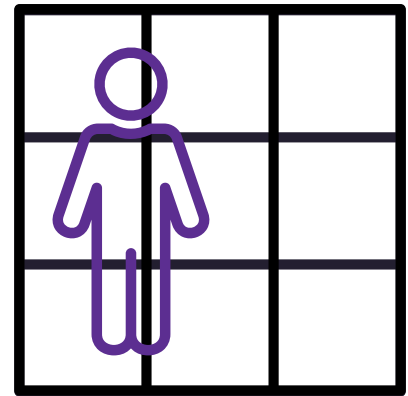
One of the most basic rules of photography for taking a well composed picture is the rule of threes. Imagine your photograph is on a grid. Rather than placing the object or person that is the main subject of your photo in the middle, try to align them with the right or left hand most line in the grid. This also works with aligning them to the imaginary lines on the top or bottom of your photo, rather than the exact middle. See the gride below to help you visualize this idea!

## • DEPTH OF FIELD

Have you ever seen a picture or video where the subject is perfectly in focus and everything in the background seems to be perfectly blurred? This effect is achieved by mastering depth of field. A narrow depth of field blurs the background and sharpens the focus on the foreground, while a wider depth of field allows the foreground to blur but the subject and background to remain in focus. If you are using a manual camera, you can adjust the following setting the achieve this effect:

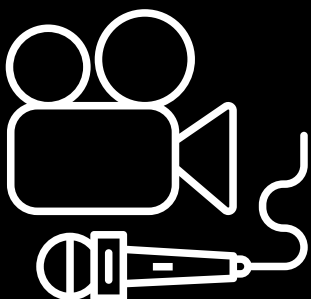
Adjust your Aperature ( F-Stop) to a lower setting like  $f/2.8$  to achieve a narrow depth of field. For your photo to remain balanced you'll likely need to raise your shutter speed to be faster, such as  $1/200$ .

Adjust your Aperature ( F-Stop) to a higher setting like  $f/16$  to achieve a wide depth of field. For your photo to remain balanced you'll likely need to raise your shutter speed to be faster, such as  $1/100$ .



## • STABILIZING YOUR IMAGE

If you are taking a video or the setting for your photo is very low light, consider stabilizing your image using a tripod or by placing the camera on a flat surface before snapping your shot! Using a tripod or stand for the camera helps to ensure you aren't getting blurry or underexposed photos and will make sure your video comes out looking smooth and continuous.



**REMEMBER,  
CREATIVITY IS KEY!**



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# HONE YOUR INTERVIEW SKILLS



## • LEADING VS. NON-LEADING QUESTIONS

When developing questions for your interview be mindful that you don't want to ask questions that specifically prove your point or require a specific answer. These kinds of questions are referring to as leading questions or questions that unintentionally or intentionally push a respondent to answer in a certain way, rather than giving a genuine response. Leading questions tend to be more yes or no questions, while non-leading are typically more open ended. For example, a leading question might look like: "It's important for 18 year olds to vote, correct?", whereas a nonleading version of that question might look like "What do you believe is the value of youth turning out to the polls during election season?"

- While this is an obvious example, often times leading questions are not as easy to identify. The way you phrase a question might include assumptions that make the question leading. For example, asking a question like "Tell me why you believe youth voter turnout is important?", assumes your interviewee believes youth voter turnout is important. Acknowledging assumptions in your questioning is important in yielding an authentic interview!

## • BEING PRESENT AND FLEXIBLE

Developing a game plan for your interview is undoubtedly important! Drafting your questions beforehand is best practice, but remember to remain sharp and flexible during your interview. Sometimes respondents will bring up points that raise new questions relevant to the theme, so be sure to capitalize on what they bring up and pursue lines of questioning that add value to your story! If the question you've drafted don't flow well with the direction of the conversation, don't be afraid to let them go, and trust your journalist intuition.

- Additionally don't be afraid to rein in any respondent who is off topic. Gracefully interject with phrases like "I appreciate your perspective on this topic, what you've said raise the following question for me..." or "Thank you for your insight. I'd love to get your thoughts on..."

## • UNDERSTAND YOUR OWN BIAS

Every person on the planet brings their ideas and beliefs to the table when interacting with others. When interviewing, remember that the objective is to understand the perspective of others, rather than explain your own beliefs. Be sure to keep your own ideas or bias out of your line of questioning and responses to remain objective.



# LISTEN CAREFULLY AND PLAN AHEAD!



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# WRITING A GREAT ARTICLE

## • CAPTIONS AND CAPTIVATING TITLE

When you walk around a book store, what makes you stop and look at a book? Is it in internal flap, or the title and cover? A title is the first impression anyone will have of your article and media so it's important that you make it an interesting one! Titles are typically between 6 and 13 words long, and clearly communicate the main topic of your article. Not only are they concise but they are meant to be memorable. In a world flooded with headlines, try and think what would stand out to you! The goal is not to be shocking but to appeal to people's personal interest. For example, "Civic Engagement is Spreading like Wildfire: A Story of Outstanding Texas Youth", is more captivating than "Texas Youth are Becoming more Civically Engaged."

- As for caption for photos in your article, remember the objective is to give key details about the image. This includes name of those pictured, the location, the action taking place etc. These should be short, concise description, allowing the article itself to tell the story.

## • STRUCTURE

Articles are typically written with an intro, body, and conclusion section. Your introduction should lay out your main idea, and discuss why its relevant to your audience. Your body should support your main idea using statistics, stories, or references to other supporting work. Typically, you want your strongest points to be your fist and last point, and your weaker ideas to be placed in the middle, as most readers make their conclusion based on the last thing they've read. In your conclusion be sure to tie in the idea to the wider world and audience.

## • VOICE

Every writer has their own unique voice that shines through in their stories. Whether that's a signature way that you end each article, a certain way you weave in a story, or even the words you choose to paint a picture, try to be consistent in the voice you cultivate. Think about writing styles that speak to you the most, and consider how to incorporate those elements into your own writing! Like all art or literature, its okay to draw inspiration from others as long as you don't plagiarize their work.



**FIND YOUR VOICE, AND  
USE IT TO MAKE CHANGE!**



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# WRITING A SOCIAL MEDIA POST

- **CONSIDER THE PLATFORM YOU ARE USING**

Each platform requires different kinds of media. Whether its aspect ratio differences, separate audiences, or specific trends, choosing the platform that best suits your content is important. Think about the audience you are trying to reach and which platform they utilize the most. Also consider what kind of media you find most engaging, is that reels, static photos, photo carousels, etc? Ultimately, there is no wrong answer here, so pick the platform that suits you interests the best and has the most reach!

- **CREATE MULTIPLE VISUALS**

Sometimes it's not until the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> iteration of an idea that we strike gold. Consider making multiple versions of your visual content so you can compare what looks the best, ask for feedback from peers and advisors, and also test your own creativity. Do you always use the same template? Branch out and test out a different style! Take some time to look at media posts that you enjoy for both content and asthetic, and use those as a sounding board for your own idea.

- **WRITING YOUR CAPTION**

The average person spends less than 20 second per social media post on their feed. This means you need to be clear and concise when coming up with a caption, and it needs to peak your viewers interest. Some strategies we suggest are including an open-ended question in your caption to prompt viewers to think about your post, engage in a condensed form of storytelling, or even a call to action!

For example a caption for a post about state conference might be: "Interested in building a better future for Texas communities? Join us as we document the YMCA Texas Youth and Government State Conference, were students just like you are harnessing thier civic power and shaping Texas today!"



**SOCIAL MEDIA IS A TOOL FOR ACTIVISM**