

57 Writing for a newspaper

WRITING A NEWS STORY

The first thing to consider is the type of story you are writing and the type of **publication** you are writing for: this will determine the style of writing.

Here are a few guidelines:

- 1 When you look at your **blank** screen, imagine your reader and what will interest them most.
- 2 If it is a **specialist** publication, you can **assume** a greater knowledge **on the part of** the reader. If it is a serious newspaper, you can also use longer sentences. But remember that space is the most **precious commodity** in a print newspaper; long sentences **take up** space. Avoid difficult words and long sentences, especially in **mass-market** publications, but don't **talk down to** your readers.
- 3 Your **opening** has to engage the reader **instantly** and summarize what the story is about. A good introduction will state why the story is being written and **grab** the reader's **attention**. This **sets the tone** for the rest of the piece.
- 4 **Quotes** are good – they add colour and personal experience – but if you are **citing** from specific sources, keep it short, **otherwise** the story will lose **pace** and direction. Sometimes the quote has to be there to provide **precision** – when the actual words are crucial to the message.

GLOSSARY

publication	a book, magazine, etc. that is available to the public; the act of printing a book, etc. or sth in a newspaper	talk down to sb	speak to sb as if they were less important or intelligent than you
blank	empty, with nothing written on it	instantly	immediately <i>instant adj</i>
specialist	having or involving knowledge in a particular area of work or study	grab sb's attention	get sb's attention or interest
assume	think or accept that sth is true but without proof <i>assumption n</i>	tone	(of a piece of writing) the general character and attitude of sth: set the tone
on the part of sb / on sb's part	experienced or done by sb	quote inf	(abbreviation of quotation) the exact words that sb uses. If you quote sb, you repeat the exact words that sb uses. <i>cite v formal</i>
precious	valuable or important	otherwise	used to state what the result would be if sth didn't happen or sth weren't true
commodity formal	a thing that is useful or has a useful quality	pace	the speed at which sth happens
take up sth	fill or use an amount of space or time	precision	the quality of being exact, accurate and careful <i>syn accuracy</i>
mass	affecting or involving a large number of people: mass-market books , mass unemployment . A mass is a large amount or quantity of sth.		

SPOTLIGHT *opening*

Opening (n) has three meanings:

- 1 the beginning or first part of sth (as above):
*The story has a strange **opening**.*
 - 2 an act of making sth open:
*I went to the **opening** of the Picasso exhibition.*
 - 3 a small hole that sb/sth can pass through:
*There's a small **opening** in the wall where you can see the castle.*
- Opening** can also be used as an adjective.
*My **opening** sentence was a bit too long.*

1 Underline the adjectives.

mass print blank precious quote instantly otherwise pace specialist opening

2 Is the pronunciation of the underlined letters the same or different? Write S or D. Use the to help you.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 <u>c</u> ite <u>c</u> ommodity | 5 spec <u>i</u> alist prec <u>i</u> ous |
| 2 <u>t</u> one <u>q</u> uote | 6 <u>o</u> therwise <u>p</u> ublication |
| 3 inst <u>a</u> ntly <u>c</u> ommodity | 7 <u>o</u> pening <u>t</u> one |
| 4 ass <u>u</u> me ass <u>u</u> mp <u>u</u> tion | 8 p <u>a</u> ce m <u>a</u> ss |

3 Complete the sentences.

- Every time I write a story, I start with a piece of paper.
- I started with a fairly gentle paragraph.
- He started with a joke and that set the for the rest of the story.
- Don't you know what people are thinking: that's dangerous.
- Certain journalists are always various authors and sources.
- One of the first rules of journalism: never down to your audience.
- I think I put in too much detail, and that slows down the of my writing.
- It's a specialist paper, so it's my that readers will already know the background to the story.
- It was a mistake on the of the readers to believe I was totally objective.

4 Replace the underlined words with a word or phrase that keeps the same meaning.

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 1 I went to the <u>first night</u> of the exhibition. | I went to |
| 2 You must <u>get</u> the reader's <u>interest</u> . | You must |
| 3 I can recognize his style <u>immediately</u> . | I can recognize his style |
| 4 It was <u>my</u> mistake. | It was a |
| 5 We'll be late <u>if we don't</u> leave now. | We must leave now, |
| 6 There are <u>thousands unemployed</u> . | There is |
| 7 Did you <u>use</u> her <u>exact words</u> ? | Did you? |
| 8 Freedom is <u>valuable and important</u> . | Freedom is |

5 Complete the questions.

- Why is it important to consider the type of you are writing for?
- What can you assume if you are writing for a magazine or newspaper?
- What must you never do if you are writing for a market?
- What is the most precious in a newspaper?
- What are two or three things your has to achieve?
- are good, but why is it important to keep them short?

6 Now answer the questions in Exercise 5 without looking back at the text.

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7 **ABOUT YOUR COUNTRY** Write your answers to the questions below, or talk to another student.

- Can you think of:
- any specialist publications written for very knowledgeable readers?
 - any mass-market newspapers?
 - any famous people who are often quoted in newspapers or on TV?

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TEST YOURSELF