

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 instant adj
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 assumption n	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.
precious	valuable or important	otherwise	cite v formal
commodity formal	a thing that is useful or has a useful quality		used to state what the result would be if sth didn't happen or sth weren't true
take up sth	fill or use an amount of space or time	pace	the speed at which sth happens
mass	affecting or involving a large number of people: mass-market books , mass unemployment . A mass is a large amount or quantity of sth.	precision	the quality of being exact, accurate and careful SYN accuracy

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 spaces specialist opening

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

1 cite commodity	.....	5 specialist precious	.....
2 tone quote	.....	6 otherwise publication	.....
3 instantly commodity	.....	7 opening tone	.....
4 assume assumption	.....	8 pace mass	.....

3 Complete the sentences.

- 1 Every time I write a story, I start with a piece of paper.
- 2 I started with a fairly gentle paragraph.
- 3 He started with a joke and that set the for the rest of the story.
- 4 Don't you know what people are thinking: that's dangerous.
- 5 Certain journalists are always various authors and sources.
- 6 One of the first rules of journalism: never down to your audience.
- 7 I think I put in too much detail, and that slows down the of my writing.
- 8 It's a specialist paper, so it's my that readers will already know the background to the story.
- 9 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</u> <u>unemployed</u> .	There is
7 Did you <u>use</u> her exact words?	Did you
8 Freedom is <u>valuable</u> and <u>important</u> .	Freedom is

5 Complete the questions.

- 1 Why is it important to consider the type of you are writing for?
- 2 What can you assume if you are writing for a magazine or newspaper?
- 3 What must you never do if you are writing for a market?
- 4 What is the most precious in a newspaper?
- 5 What are two or three things your has to achieve?
- 6 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.

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?



TEST YOURSELF