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

LIVEWORKSHEETS

1 Underline the adjectives.

massprintblankpreciousquoteinstantlyotherwisepacespecialistopening

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

1 cite commodity .....
2 tone quote .....
3 instantly commodity .....
4 assume assumption .....
5 specialist precious .....
6 otherwise publication .....
7 opening tone .....
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 first night of the exhibition. — I went to ..... .
2 You must get the reader's interest. — You must ..... .
3 I can recognize his style immediately. — I can recognize his style ..... .
4 It was my mistake. — It was a ..... .
5 We'll be late if we don't leave now. — We must leave now, ...
6 There are thousands unemployed. — There is ..... .
7 Did you use her exact words? — Did you ..... ?
8 Freedom is valuable and important. — 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.

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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 knowlegeable readers?
any mass-market newspapers?
any famous people who are often quoted in newspapers or on TV?

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TEST YOURSELF

LIVEWORKSHEETS