

Basic Concepts of Journalism

The material contained in this book synthesizes what you need to learn to prepare for a successful career in mass communications. It doesn't look so difficult, does it? It is sad to note, however, that many journalism graduates enter the job market, never having fully mastered these simple basics. Yet, as an editor and publisher of a group of suburban weekly newspapers, I hired numerous reporters

who had never taken even one journalism class. They were older individuals with a lot of "life experience" and good spelling and grammar skills. I wrote essentially this one chapter to help get them started as professional reporters, and several of them ended up winning journalism awards for their efforts. It would be to your advantage to go over this material several times as you learn and practice these basic journalism skills. Then you will be ready to begin refining your reporting, writing and editing techniques as an intern and then as a professional.

Where is 'News'?

- 'News beats'
- Meetings
- Issues
- People
- Planned events
- Unplanned events



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Finding 'The News'

News is whatever journalists say it is. Certainly not every new discovery, new program, new proposal, new assertion and new thought could be carried in the news media. Yet, loosely speaking, it is all news. And, in actuality, a lot of what is overlooked by journalists every day could be as newsworthy as that

which does appear in the news media.

From what events they are aware of, journalists try to choose the most newsworthy to actually present to the public as “news.” They usually start off with the happenings of the day which, from experience, they presume to be of most importance or of interest to the public. These stories are also some of the easiest stories to cover with limited staffing. The journalists cover specific “beats,” gathering news from crime blotters, government meetings, speeches and press conferences, strikes and rallies, etc.

Sometimes, instead of starting with an event, the journalist will start with an issue. The journalist’s reporting of the issue makes it news even if no one other than that journalist has ever thought about it before.

Another alternative is to interview an individual and allow him to create the news of the day. The reporter may have no idea what the person is going to say, but for some reason he suspects the public would be interested in that individual’s opinions and insights. The individual may be famous, powerful, highly credible or just interesting. But, for whatever reason, the journalist decides that person is news – almost regardless of what he says.

And, of course, there are unplanned incidents and major disasters that need to be covered. Some of these fall within one reporter’s “beat,” but frequently they do not. In some cases multiple reporters must be assigned to cover a major unplanned incident, such as an airplane crash, natural disaster or a governmental crisis.

The same news stories can be approached from many different perspectives. There may be literally millions of people with some expertise who could render a credible opinion. The reporter must choose. He can take a single source and interview in depth. He can talk to many sources and combine their views into one story. Or he can personally immerse himself into the story – become part of the news, reporting on what he himself may observe or experience. He can look at a problem from an industrial, consumer, political, social, scientific or individual perspective. He can review what has happened already, what is happening right now, or what is likely to happen in the future – near or distant.

Basic News Values

Basic news values are considered when determining what should or should not become part of today’s news:

- **TIMELINESS:** What is closest to NOW is generally of the most interest. If something is of the too distant past or too distant future, there is little public interest. Timeliness is a relative concept, however, relating to what has been reported previously. An important or interesting fact from World War I can be very newsworthy if no one has ever reported it before. On the other hand, a fact about an event yesterday may have lost its newsworthiness because it was reported widely in the news media already.
- **PROXIMITY:** What is closest to us is generally of the most interest. An

- up coverage to satisfy long-term consumer interest.
- **CURIOSITY:** Oddities and unusual happenings appeal to the public's curiosity. But even fairly typical happenings have some degree of curiosity appeal. The human mind wants to understand what is going on around it. This is true with everyday happenings that we may not understand -- something so simple as why the sky is blue. Much greater curiosity is stirred by things for which we have no satisfactory intellectual explanation -- UFOs, ghosts, magic and miracles -- as well as such everyday occurrences as crimes, disasters, crises and essentially everything we call "news." Certainly curiosity must be one of the strongest news values.
 - **CONSEQUENCE:** If there is a stronger news appeal than curiosity, it is probably consequence. We are curious about some strange thing happening on the other side of the world, but we are much more concerned if we think it may affect us. The power of proximity is rooted primarily in consequence. What is near to us is more likely to affect us than that which is far away and, thus, probably of little personal consequence.

Harvey Priority of News Values

**Consequence
Curiosity
Suspense
Pathos, Love & Humor
Timeliness & Proximity
Achievement
Prominence**

News values are basic human values and emotions that extend far beyond the news, per se. All communications are influenced by them -- religion, education, art, marketing, entertainment, fiction and even gossip rely on these human appeals. The more we recognize these elements in the world around us and the better we can manipulate language to utilize these values, the more effective we will be as communicators.

The difference between a journalist and some other kinds of communicators should be a commitment to truth and its value in our society, the recognition that we ourselves may not know the truth and are subject to our own biases, but a conviction that truth will triumph if given a fair and unbiased forum.

This **Crash Course** will help you to gather news fairly and effectively and then to prepare the news report professionally.

Gathering the News

- Pursue, pursue, pursue!
- 5 W's
 - Who & What?
 - When & Where?
 - Why & How?
- Most important questions: Why & How?
 - Why did you do such & such?
 - How did this occur? Describe it to me.



State, nation losing jobs for lack of educated workforce

Lack of immigration reform preventing Microsoft, other high-tech firms from importing engineers, scientists

By Ken Harvey

Washington state and the U.S. are losing jobs already for lack of enough employees educated in math, science and technology, says a senior vice president for Microsoft.

His company has imported employees from 144 different countries to work in Washington state, but the lack of a trained workforce and the inability of Congress to pass immigration reform have forced Microsoft to open a plant in Vancouver, B.C., says Brad Smith, the company's senior vice president, general counsel and corporate secretary.

Smith also chairs the education committee of the Washington Roundtable organization of the state's top corporations.

"The reality is, we're having to move jobs," Smith says, "because this country is not producing enough engineers and the immigration laws are tightening."

In talking to people throughout the computer industry it is clear, he says, that "many of our best jobs will leave this country if we don't do more to graduate a new generation of people who have those skills we're looking for."

Improved technological skills are needed throughout the economy, says Smith. Today, even mechanics and construction managers need technology skills to succeed.

"We know it is not fair and not possible to expect our schools and our teachers to do this alone," he says. Smith calls on businesses, volunteers, parents and communities to help solve the problems.

Microsoft itself donates about \$50 million a year to enhance education in the state.

"We do believe passionately in the importance of public education," Smith says.

Speaking recently before hundreds of educators attending the January conference of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), he



Microsoft Executive Vice President Brad Smith says the U.S. is already losing jobs for lack of trained workers and immigration reform.

said, "We don't get to interact with children in all the same ways that teachers do, but we do occasionally get to interact with kids in a variety of ways," the Microsoft vice president says. "How rewarding it is to open a child's eyes and see the world of potential in them."

The first time it hit home to Smith was when he was representing the company in a Malaysian orphanage.

"These children didn't have a home, and they were having a hard time learning how to read," Smith recalls.

"As they began to move the mouse and learn how to use the computer, you could see their eyes light up. It helped them to learn to read and write. In a way it helped them begin to conquer the world."

Computers are increasingly important in education, Smith told the OSPI conference, "but we know when it comes to helping children, the most important thing is not what we do. It is what you teachers do."

Smith says one man changed the destiny of the United States, but few people in the U.S. know much about him. It was nearly two centuries ago that Horace Mann left a successful political career that many thought might lead to the U.S. presidency. As a Massachusetts legislator, he secured passage of a bill supporting public education in that state and

resigned his legislative position to become the leader of the State Board of Education.

"Horace Mann had the vision to see how different the world would be if we could establish universal public education," says Smith. Mann called education "the great equalizer."

Mann studied the top education systems in the world and then visited Germany, which had what he

thought was the very best. He began writing about education and shaping the

system of public education not only in Massachusetts, but across the country.

"Everybody in this country has been a beneficiary of his vision," Smith says. "Universal public education is what made our nation what it is."

Microsoft shares that vision, he says. "We want to stand up in Olympia and across the state and be a voice in education."

On a recent visit to Thailand, the leader of science and technology there told Smith he knew who Horace Mann was. Indeed, Thai officials had been studying the U.S. to learn what made this country great, just like Horace Mann did in Germany, and help them shape their future.

"We care about transportation. We care about the state budget. But our No. 1 priority is always the same — education, education, education," Smith says.

"We also try to give voice to the continuing need to adapt because one thing we do know is that the world is changing," he adds.

Smith has visited small towns and villages in India where families still live in two-room houses. Where do they spend their money? Food? Transportation? Housing? No. It's on education — tutors, books and college tuition funds, he says.

'Lost jobs' continues on Page 9

Gathering the News

The key to gathering information effectively is to ask questions -- the right questions to the right people until you obtain the right answers. You must be prepared to ask your questions quickly but without leaving any dangling, unanswered questions to undermine your efforts. It helps to bone up on your subject and on your sources in order to have intelligent questions prepared ahead of time and in order to interpret the responses intelligently after the interview.

Whether or not you have time to prepare, don't forget the **basic 5Ws**:

Who?

What?

When?

Where?

Why?

How?

If you forget one of these questions or fail to pursue it adequately, you will have a big hole in your story. Memorize the 5Ws and really use them. Recognize, however, what it means to pursue the question. If you ask WHO broke into Watergate (and the Democratic National Headquarters), don't forget to ask WHO put them up to it and WHO is trying to cover it up or you will fall short of your journalistic responsibility.

Pursue, Pursue, Pursue! "How?" and "Why?" are the two most neglected questions. Why did this happen? Why did they do it? Why isn't anybody doing anything to correct this? Why are you giving me the run-around? Precisely how did it occur -- detail by detail? How does this compare -- currently and historically? How would you feel if [fill in the blank...]? How did you arrive at that conclusion? Why do you reject this other possibility? How would you resolve this problem? How would you explain this to a layman, perhaps a high school student? How would you persuade the opposition? How would you summarize your position or explanation? How would you summarize your opponent's position?

Perhaps it is impossible to ask all the questions you would like to ask, but don't be too easily satisfied. There are literally hundreds of questions to be asked and usually hundreds of sources that could answer at least some of the questions, each in a very different way. Certainly most journalists -- young and old -- error in asking too few questions of too few people.

And don't forget, to pursue your non-people sources, too: libraries, government and other public records, and, when available, private documents. Some journalists literally go through garbage cans in their search for private documents. Learn your rights under the various state and federal sunshine laws -- laws regarding open public records and open public meetings.

It doesn't do much good to ask questions, however, if you fail to report the answers fully and accurately. QUOTE when possible. In most cases your stories should be 20-40 percent direct quote. The rest can be indirect quote, paraphrase, summary or direct observation, but just about everything not personally observed by the reporter should be attributed to someone else. Again, **attribute essentially everything!**

Quote/summarize/quote/summarize/quote/summarize/quote. You can mix it up a little, but in writing a news story, the more quotes you have to choose from, the better. Direct quotes are important. They carry greater credibility and they humanize the source. The difference between paraphrase and direct quote is essentially the same difference as between a TV anchorman telling about a speech by the president as opposed to the TV audience seeing and hearing the speech on video.

Generally you save a lot of time if you just take notes and don't have to go

back and transcribe a recording. So, most print journalists do not use recorders. On the other hand, I asked newspaper editors in a survey how important it would be for journalism schools to teach their future employees shorthand or speed writing. I was surprised that they were largely opposed to the idea. They felt the deadline pressure was too great for reporters to take too many notes. Some explained that the process of taking notes is essentially a process of deciding on the fly what information is most important. If you take too many notes, it takes too long to write the story.

Gathering the News

- **Accuracy, accuracy, accuracy!**
 - **Our credibility means everything! You must be accurate.**
- **But NOT necessarily complete. You're not a transcriptionist.**
 - Most editors don't want reporters to know shorthand.
 - Reporters, in essence, filter the information as they hear it & take notes. Stories take too long to write for a busy reporter if they have a complete transcript.
 - But you need SOME complete quotes: 4 complete quotes is better than 20 partial quotes.
 - After you leave interview, sit down to "interpret" and complete own notes for later usage.
- **Notes vs. Tape Recorder or Both?**
 - Use notes as 'Table of Contents' to find key parts of tape. In 30-minute tape, transcribe about 5 minutes.

The ability of reporters to make the best decisions while rapidly trying to keep pace with a speaker is questionable. What I find is that many reporters -- particularly new reporters -- start writing down a quote, hear something else of interest, abandon the first quote and start the second, then abandon that quote for yet a third one. They can go through an hour-long interview with no complete quotes at all.

I think direct quotes are very valuable in a story; some journalists do not. I think accuracy is very important; some journalists are not as meticulous. Indeed, one award-winning New York Times reporter told me he doesn't take any notes while interviewing people. He's afraid that will cause sources not to be as forthright as if the reporter talks to them casually and maintains eye contact. After the interview he quickly finds a spot where he can write down all the information he has been able to retain in his mind.

Different professionals have different approaches. All that said, here are some tips for your note-taking:

- While taking notes, listen carefully. When you hear a good quote, capture it in your mind and write it down quickly while you are only half-listening to the ongoing discussion.
- If you don't know formal shorthand or speedwriting, speed up your note-taking by leaving out words such as "the," "a," "an," and "of" and any other words you think you can fill in later. You can also learn to leave out letters within words, particularly vowels, and still be able to decipher your notes.
- Be pragmatic. Understand that you won't have time to take down all the notes you would like. It is better to get a half-dozen complete quotes than two dozen half quotes.
- After your interview you can still do what the N.Y. Times reporter suggested and quickly write down other information to be used as indirect quotes and paraphrases.
- Be sure to keep track which notes are quotes and which are paraphrases.
- Be as careful with your quote-taking as possible, but don't be too frustrated by perfectionism. Few reporters take down quotes absolutely word perfect. In fact, after a White House interview, reporters frequently get together to make sure they are all quoting the president the same in order not to be embarrassed later. If there were only one reporter – which is the case in most interviews – a reporter would be on his own. But the only person who could dispute the quote normally would be the interviewee himself. I tell new reporters to be accurate enough so the source will not be sure whether you were exactly accurate or not. Think about a conversation you had with someone yesterday. How exact is your own memory? You probably don't remember every word you used, but you do remember the essence and intent of what you said. So, if a reporter is a few words off, the source probably won't know or care as long as the essence is accurate.
- Most professional reporters feel they have the obligation to both their sources and their readers to do some quote doctoring anyway -- cutting down run-on sentences, correcting grammar, cutting out dead wood and irrelevant information, etc.
- Many reporters combine separate partial quotes into single complete quotes and don't bother to use an ellipsis (...) to indicate missing material in between. Others question the ethics of "marrying" such quotes, especially if there is a lot of material separating the quotes or if the "marriage" changes the sense of the quotes. Again, the key, I believe, is whether the source himself will know the difference.
- If most of the words are quoted accurately and the essence of the quote is true, it should be OK. That gives you quite a bit of latitude.

But be sure not to misrepresent the source. It is possible to take a precise and accurate quote even out of a recorded interview and misrepresent the intent of the source. That's not fair even if accurate.

- If you are reporting on a prepared speech or statement, you should ask for a copy ahead of time to follow, and you will obviously want to report precisely.
- As you are taking notes, also think ahead to how the story will be written. Ignore irrelevant remarks -- even if they are funny or profound. Establish in your notes certain newsworthy themes and listen for quotes and details that amplify the themes. Consider what is important and of interest to your readers. Remember the basic news values: consequence, prominence, proximity, timeliness, and the general human interests -- curiosity, suspense, pathos, humor, love and achievement.
- If you have time, especially as you first get started in the business, you may want to use a recorder, but also take notes. Write your story mostly from your notes, turning to the recording only for very important quotes and details you have missed in your notes. Your notes also act as a table of contents to your recording, helping you to find the right part to transcribe without having to listen to the entire recording. Most reporters are particularly concerned that a recorder will make a source hesitant to speak openly. I still use a recorder a lot and find it is NOT much of an inhibiting factor. Most sources do not presume they are in an antagonistic interaction, or they think they can control the situation even if being recorded. I find that sources tend to forget the recorder since I am able to maintain better eye contact and make the interview more conversational. My recordings have allowed me to get two city mayors out of office who tried to deny what they told me. All I had to do on my editorial page was to invite anyone who wanted to hear the recordings to come to my office. In a more recent incident, I posted an entire recorded interview on the Internet after a public official denied statements she had made.
- Recorders are illegal in many states if the sources are not aware they are being recorded. However, if you have no intent on telling anyone you recorded a conversation, who is hurt by it? I frequently use a recorder on telephone interviews, for example. If the source is antagonistic, I can still get a lot out of a brief interview even if the source hangs up on me in 30 seconds -- IF I have recorded every word. In one state where it is legal, I recorded an abrupt 15-second interview, which not only gave me good story material but actually kept me OUT of a lawsuit. I was able to prove my quote was accurate. Personally, I don't think a recorder used by a reporter should ever be illegal if the purpose is to enhance accuracy.
- If you can always keep in mind what is relevant and of reader

interest, a handful of good, complete quotes, plus a few informational notes and your memory, can provide adequate material for a good story. You can't cover everything; be realistic.

- Be sure to obtain adequate information to fully identify those to whom you will be attributing quotes and information, as well as those to whom your sources may refer. Relevant information for full identification, depending on the circumstances, may include name, nickname, address, occupation, job title, age, race or nationality, relationships, and involvement in past news.
- If you come away from the interview or meeting with unanswered questions, call your sources back, email them or follow up in some other way until you have filled the holes. Don't stop pursuing information until you have all the information you need or until your news sources flatly refuse to answer your questions. Refusal to answer questions is sometimes bigger news than the response itself would have been.
- And, finally, in this Internet age, I frequently conduct entire interviews by email. In these "eviews," as I call them, I send a source a series of questions and suggest they will be able to respond more accurately and in exactly the words they want to use if they respond by email, but, if they prefer, I'll give them a phone call. Most like the opportunity to answer by email, and it makes my work both easier and more accurate.

Inverted Pyramid

- **Most important details at top**
- **Less important details in descending order**
- **Can be cut at any point beyond complete lead and still feel complete**



Writing the Story

Find your WHAMMY! Your whammy is the most interesting item in your notes. It is the aspect most likely to grab your readers' attention and pull them into the story. It is the item you believe should, therefore, be featured in the headline and in your first paragraph – the "lead" of your story.

I ask my writers and my students to write a prospective headline at the top of their stories before they start writing the story itself. It helps them to identify their whammy, and it sometimes suggests how to word their lead paragraph. At the same time, it may help an editor in creating the actual headline to be used in the newspaper. However, don't get confused. The headline is NOT part of the story and not normally the reporter's job to write.

For a long time it was taught that a summary of all of the 5Ws should be included in the lead – the first paragraph. However, research has shown that lead paragraphs longer than 25-35 words lose readership. They appear too long graphically. They are intimidating. They are not easily skimmed. They dilute the impact of the whammy.

Therefore, it is better to have a short, high-impact lead of 25 words,

emphasizing the whammy, and then to finish the summary of the remaining 5Ws in the second paragraph. Accordingly, you should think of the first two paragraphs as your “complete lead” and your first paragraph (almost never more than one sentence) as simply your “lead.”

Your story then extends out of your complete lead in what is referred to as “inverted pyramid” style. Your most important information has already been included in the complete lead. Now essentially begin the story again but in more detail, working your way down until you reach your least important detail in the very last paragraph.

Readers rarely read an entire newspaper story, so provide them with the most important information first. Also, when space is tight, editors will cut your story from the tail end. Your story should be written so it can be cut anywhere past the second paragraph and still sound somewhat complete. In fact, a typical radio news story wouldn’t have more than three paragraphs of about two sentences apiece (six total sentences), and even a major television story may be limited to eight paragraphs (or about 16 sentences). So, a newspaper’s “complete lead” of 3-5 sentences is not much shorter than some broadcast news stories.

And, in conclusion, don’t write conclusions! There are no conclusions in inverted pyramid news writing. The exceptions are feature stories, analyses and editorials. But standard news stories do not have conclusions.

Copy Preparation & Editing

Here are some general and Associated Press style rules to follow in preparing your news stories.

- 1 Don't write a headline for a story unless you are assigned to do so. Most editors will not want you to spend time writing headlines. That's the job of an editor. Instructors may ask you to do so, however, as an exercise in identifying the "whammy" of the story. The headline and the lead both typically give emphasis to the whammy -- the main point of interest or concern in the story. In my classes I DO ask students to write a headline to help them clarify the whammy.
- 2 Always fully IDENTIFY everyone mentioned in the story. That is, not only a person's name but additional information, such as title, occupation, address, age, previous news involvement, etc., as appropriate. Be extremely careful with the spelling of names and exact titles. It's such a simple point that it is often overlooked, which makes you look awfully stupid. If in doubt, verify names and addresses, using phone books or institutional records.
- 3 SIMPLICITY is a journalistic virtue. Newspaper readers have a wide educational range that must be served, but even for the most sophisticated reader simplicity is appreciated. Newspaper readers are skimmers. If your writing is too complex, readers will simply go on to another story.
 - Keep sentences simple. Don't use more than two clauses in one sentence. If there is more to say, break it into a separate sentence.
 - Keep vocabulary simple. If precise jargon must be used, define it clearly for your readers. Your writing should be about junior high level. Your topic may be complex, but your writing must not be.
 - Eliminate any "cute," flowery, profound, or verbose language. Professionals are primarily concerned with the facts and use creative writing techniques with restraint.

Writing the News

- **Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity!**
 - **Simpler words & phrases**
 - 'Because' vs. 'due to the fact that'
 - 'Now' vs. 'at the present time'
 - 'Brilliant' vs. 'really brilliant'
 - 'Work' vs. 'vocation' or 'employment'
 - 'Said' vs. 'opined' or 'maintained'
 - Eliminate empty phrases as 'needless to say'
 - **Simpler sentences**
 - Avoid compound sentences
 - **Simpler paragraphs**
 - 1 sentence per lead (1st paragraph)
 - 1-3 sentences thereafter – 1 is plenty

Love, Innovation Keys

By Editor Ken Harvey

Migrant students who enter Tamara Steen's remedial English class up to five years behind grade level are passing the state's WASL test in less than one year, and many are moving up to the Advanced Placement class.

"Mabton School District is incredibly fortunate to have a teacher like Tamara Steen who believes teaching children of poverty is her life's work. An avocation and not a vocation. A passion, not a job," said State Superintendent of Public Instruction Terry Bergeson in announcing Ms. Steen's selection as Washington's 2005 Teacher of the Year.

Dr. Bergeson notes Ms. Steen's 22 years of devotion to helping students



Tamara Steen, Teacher of the Year, dresses up as Grim Reaper during class. Tamara Steen, Maestro del Año, vestida como Grim Reaper en su clase.

'Teacher' continues on Page 13

Notice in the story above the first paragraph has only 1 sentence, and the second 3 short sentences, yet with the narrow newspaper column both seem almost too long.

- 4 **SHORT PARAGRAPHS.** Never have paragraphs over three sentences long -- generally 1-2 sentences. Paragraphs must be cut down from standard English composition or readers will not read them in a newspaper. A standard English paragraph might run 8 inches long when set in a narrow 2-inch newspaper column. That would appear too complex for typical newspaper skimmers to undertake.
- 5 **SPELLING, GRAMMAR & PUNCTUATION.** Bone up on your basic spelling, punctuation and grammar. That is the No. 1 complaint of editors. Don't guess. If in doubt, look it up. If too much needless editing has to be performed on your copy, your job is in jeopardy.
- 6 When the story is complete, read it to yourself to check grammar and continuity. If a sentence sounds at all awkward to you, it will certainly sound worse to your editor and to your readers. Because you know what you intended to write, your mind will often fill in missing words, overlook typos or not catch misspellings or poor grammar. One method to keep your mind from filling in those blanks is to read backwards through your story one sentence at a time, starting with the very last sentence. Another strategy, if your deadline will allow it, is to put your story aside and come back to it a few hours or a day later.

- 7 Do not underline for the sake of emphasis, and avoid any similar graphic devices. If any is needed, the editors will take care of it.
- 8 **LEARN NEWSPAPER STYLE.** In order to avoid apparent conflicts in style, most publications have adopted some standard, such as the AP Stylebook, which you should be using in conjunction with this workbook. Refer to the Stylebook for greater detail, but Chapter 4 includes a number of examples of important style rules you should keep in mind. The rules relate to such situations as:
 - (a) **DAY & DATES** -- Do you ever need both day and date? When should you use one; when the other?
 - (b) **PROXIMITY & TIMELINESS** -- How do you give them emphasis?
 - (c) **NAMES & TITLES** — When do you use proper and courtesy titles? When do you capitalize a person's title? When can you abbreviate?
 - (d) **ABBREVIATIONS** — When can you abbreviate names of organizations, words like “street” and “avenue,” dates, states, proper names and directions?
 - (e) **CAPITALIZATION** — When do you capitalize names of organizations, names of political bodies and subdivisions, nicknames, titles, seasons, languages and abbreviations?
 - (f) **PUNCTUATION** -- When do commas, periods and other punctuation marks go inside quotation marks? When do you use parentheses? Should compound adjectives be hyphenated? Are apostrophes used with numbers and names of organizations? Is a comma need in a simple series, such as “red, white__ and blue?”
 - (g) **PRONOUNS** -- Is it proper to use a plural pronoun or adjective to refer to a collective noun, such as the “city council”? In other words, do you refer to city council as “it” or “they”?
 - (h) **FIGURES** — When using numbers, in what circumstances do you spell out the numbers, and in what circumstances do you use figures?
- 9 **AGAIN, DON'T GUESS.** There is one kind of writer who is sure to make an editor angrier than one with poor punctuation and spelling skills — that's one who doesn't care, someone with perhaps even superior English skills but who guesses when uncertain, someone who is simply sloppy, someone who makes errors and thinks it's someone else's problem. A dictionary and an AP Stylebook should be by your computer or available online at all times, and the best journalists will make frequent use of both companions.
- 10 **KNOW HOW TO USE COPY EDITING SYMBOLS.** Most editing is done nowadays on a computer. But there are times when you must edit printed text – whether your own or someone else's. There are fairly standard editing

symbols that journalists use. Below is a list of basic copy editing symbols you should know and use consistently when such circumstances arise. You can find a similar list in your AP Stylebook.

COPY EDITING SYMBOLS

- a) When you ~~need~~ need to ~~get rid of~~ eliminate something, you slash and close up the space.
- b) When you say 6 sailors arranged dates with thirty-six ladies in one evening, you should remember your style rules and when you should write a number out or make it a numeral.
- c) When you refer to 111 Oak Street, "street" should be abbreviated.
- d) When you refer to Oak St. without a street address, "street" should not be abbreviated.
- e) When you need to split a paragraph, you can use an L-shaped sign. You should capitalize proper names, such as "Tampa city council," and proper titles when they precede a name, such as councilman George Jones," but you should lower case descriptive titles and names, such as ~~Astronaut~~ John Glenn" or "the ~~Board~~."
- f) "To insert commas, hyphens and dashes is not a full time job but don't forget the apostrophes, the periods and the quotation marks," warned John's teacher.
- g) It is also a simple matter to remove unwanted spaces, insert desired space, replace letters in a word, replace words in a phrase, insert a letter, insert an entire word, or transpose letters or words that are up mixed.

Chapter 1 Assignments

USING COPY EDITING SYMBOLS

1. Using the editing symbols above, edit the exercise below:

- a) Transpose the inverted letters and words in this sentence.
- b) Insert two commas, a dash, a hyphen, and a period in this error-filled sentence even if you would prefer to take a nap.

- c) make the corrections in capitalization in This SENTENCE that harvey has provided.
- d) I want you to put quote marks in this sentence yelled the professor And dont neglect youre other punctuation and copyediting responsibiliitees
- e) Inn this senntence I would like you too delete all of thee the unnnecessary words words and letters.
- f) You also need knowhow to separate run-onwords and to insert missing.
- g) Mising leters also nedd to be added somatimes in plase of others.
- h) At ti mes you you need to use a clo sure markings to indicate that the editor or secr etary should reed read over the empty or deleated space.
- i) A circle is a simple way of indicating to Mister Smith, your prof., that a no. or abbrev. needs to be spelled out, that a spelled out word needs to be abbreviated, or that a spelled out number needs to be put into figure form. Generally, numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 should be spelled out, while ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, etcetera, should be made into figures.
- j) Remember that paragraphs should, in journalism, should not be more than too sentences longwith the possible exception of 3 extremely short and related sentences. Maybee you ought to putt a symbol in this parragraf to show it should bee at least too and may be 3 paragraphs. their are also lotts of othor errors in this paragraph. You should obviously makee thee oter corrections, two, as needed

2. Again using proper editing symbols, correct the errors in the following sentences, Look particularly for grammar errors referred to in the sentences themselves.

TWENTY RULES FOR WRITING GOOD AND FOR YOU TO EDIT, COPY-WISE

- a) Always deliver that which you promise
- b) Each pronoun should agree with their antecedent.
- c) Between you and I, case is important.
- d) Verbs has to agree with their subject.
- e) Don't be a person whom people realize confuses "who" and "whom."
- f) Never use no double negatives.
- g) A writer mustn't shift your point of view.
- h) When writing, participles must not be dangled. Don't do it even if it's hard not to.
- i) Join clauses good, like a conjunction should.
- j) Don't write run-on sentences, you need to punctuate them properly.
- k) About sentence fragments. Don't. Unless it's for effect.
- l) In letters themes and reports use commas to separate items in a series as well as phrases and clauses when required.
- m) Don't, use commas, that aren't necessary.
- n) Its important to use apostrophe's in the right place's.
- o) Don't abbrev. unless approved by the Associated Press Stylebook.
- p) Check to see if you any words out.
- q) Try to never split infinitives.
- r) Avoid using a preposition to end a sentence with. That's a practice up

with which some readers will not put.

- s) Parallel structure will help you in writing more effective sentences, to express yourself more gracefully and in pleasing your editor.
- t) In my own personal opinion I think that an author when he is writing should not get into the habit of making use of too many unnecessary words that he does not really need to use.
- u) Last, but not least, lay off clinches and mixed metaphors. They might kindle a flood of anger in your editor.

(Anonymous, adapted)

3. Refer to the first 10 sets of reporter's notes in the exercise portion of Chapter 2. Write one sentence describing what you feel is the most powerful "whammy" of each story. Don't make this assignment more difficult than it already is. You are NOT writing a lead. You are NOT being evaluated for your writing. You ARE being evaluated on your "nose" for news. What should a writer emphasize in each of these stories?
4. Refer back to the first 10 sets of story notes in Chapter 2. Using the "news values" discussed in this chapter, compare Story #1 and Story #2, defending your choice as to which story should be given better placement in tomorrow morning's newspaper. Likewise, compare #2 vs #3, #3 vs #4, #4 vs #5, #5 vs #6, #6 vs #7, #7 vs #8, #8 vs #9, and #10 vs #1. Now, finally, select your top three stories and rank them in order of priority. This could make for good classroom debate.
5. Refer to the first 10 story notes of Chapter 2 one more time. This time think about what questions have not been answered in the reporter's notes. In other words, what questions would you still want to ask. Write down the most critical one of two "unanswered questions" for each story. Include, if possible, who you would ask the questions, and, if you feel it is necessary, explain why the questions are important.
6. Cut 10 leads out of a local newspaper and explain (a) what the whammy is for each of the leads and (b) why you feel the lead is good.
7. Cut 10 mediocre or poor leads out of a local newspaper and explain what's wrong with each. Now rewrite each your way, and your instructor will decide

which version is better.

8. Cut 10 stories out of the newspaper and write down what you feel are the most important “unanswered questions” for each.
9. Using this textbook, any other specifically assigned textbooks, and other sources available to you in the library or in the “real world,” write a short, 5- to 8-page term paper on each of the topics below. Use writing examples from your local daily newspaper to illustrate your points. You should write the papers as a journalist, but pretending that each printed source is a source you have personally interviewed. You should quote and attribute liberally, keeping your own opinions out of the story. With the first attribution to a particular source, you should place its bibliographical information in parentheses, in the following manner:

According to Professor Ken Harvey (Crash Course in Journalism, Buffalo, NY: Newstext Press, 1984, p. 7), there are relatively few rules to becoming a good Journalist. Harvey says hard work, an understanding of news style, and an insatiable curiosity are the essential characteristics.

The second time you refer to a particular author or source in one of your term papers, you may refer to him by his last name only and place only the page reference in parentheses:

Harvey says (p.10) that all human communication is controlled by a handful of human values.

If it helps, pretend that you are writing the articles for a magazine, such as Writer's Digest.

10. MINI-TERM PAPERS

- a) How to “grab” and keep readers' interest.
- b) How to write simple, clear, powerful summary leads.
- c) How to investigate and gather news effectively.
- d) How to organize your information into an effective story.
- e) How to maintain accuracy in your news work.
- f) How to handle quotes and attribution.
- g) How to use background information to write a follow-up or second-day story.
- h) How to rewrite stories from other publications.
- i) How to be a “complete” reporter.

These term paper assignments are particularly important if an instructor is using the Crash Course as the sole text of a course.