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# Beacon Article Requirements

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## Writing:

1. Please write articles in google documents and share with all editors when completed
2. You need a creative, catchy, and short title
3. Minimum 250 words, preferably longer
4. Minimum 3 pictures per article- you need to put the source/photographer's name in the picture (can save images on iPhone and edit in Photos app), can number them as well and source at the end of your article
5. You need to include ALL writers names underneath the title, "By: Jane Doe. & John Poe."

## When finished:

1. Email **google documents** to section editors, who edit and send to EIC
2. Make sure photos are email attachments, photos should be separate from writing
  - Please note that you need to specify where the pictures go in your article "(INSERT PICTURE 1 HERE)"
3. Then articles will be posted with writers names!

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## NEWS

### RESEARCH AND FACT GATHERING

Perhaps the #1 rule of writing a newspaper article is that you are factual. You do not want to make assumptions or fabricate information. Before you can write your article, you must have as many of the facts as you can gather. Here are some facts that you will need to find out:

- **What?** The specific event that took place.
- **Who?** The people involved.

- **Where?** Places.
- **When?** Date and time.
- **Why?** Reasons for the event taking place.
- **How?** Connecting the facts.
- Interviewing people connected to the story.
- Gathering quotes from people (be exact...never paraphrase what they said). Cite names, unless they specifically request to remain anonymous.
- Resolving conflicting facts from individuals.
- Researching public information (always cite your sources, so write them down).

### *THE TITLE*

For a news article, this is where you have most of your creativity. The title must grab the attention of the reader. It needs to be catchy, emotion evoking, or creates curiosity. Be creative with it.

### *THE ARTICLE BODY*

The main news article itself is written from bottom down. In other words, the most important information comes first and each paragraph gives less and less details. Whereas a novel, for example, starts you out with little information and you must read to the end to get all of it.

In news article writing, however, you want to provide the key information right up front. You start with the 6 questions you should have already answered in your research:

- **What?**
- **Who?**
- **Where?**
- **When?**
- **Why?**
- **How?**

Your first two paragraphs need to answer all these questions. For example:

*The Varsity football team beat Smith High School last Saturday, 21 to 7, in a rematch that vindicated Coach John's prediction of a win during Friday's pep-rally. Our first home win this season at our very*

*own Jane Doe Field was a morale booster to the entire student body. Quarterback, Joe Baker completed 18 out of 24 passes to cement the win.*

This was only a simple example, but almost all the questions are actually answered in the first two sentences. From here you can add more inconsequential details, such as receiving yards, rushing yards, and so forth. You will at some point include quotes from people such as the coach, the quarterback, a receiver, a fan in the stands, and perhaps the principal. Although for quotes, you don't want to include too many, but having two or three is important. By the time you get to the end of the article, you are simply expanding upon what the reader already knows from the first two paragraphs you wrote.

Don't make your paragraphs long—two to three sentences each. Your word count will need to stay around the 300 word count or more, generally speaking.

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## SPORTS ARTICLES

Quotes: Ideally, any sports story would have quotes from the winners and losers. Indeed, many sports articles are written around what athletes say rather than what they have achieved on the field of play.

However, you also have sports articles written without quotes. When rookies learn how to write like a journalist, especially in sport, they are likely to come across the structure that we will show you here.

We will adapt the NBA game between Boston Celtics and Cleveland Cavaliers on April 1 as our example article.

### 1. Intro

The most important news aspect of a sports game is the score. Who won? How did they win and what effect did the victory have? Also important is whether we are writing from a Boston perspective or Cleveland. In this case, we will go with Cleveland.

“Cleveland Cavaliers lost 98-96 to the Boston Celtics after Delonte West’s sank two free throws in the final seconds, dropping three and a half games behind the Pistons for the best record in the Eastern Conference.”

## 2. More info

The above is enough for those who have a passing interest in the sport. However, NBA fans would want more information and you could give it to them in one or two paragraphs.

“The Cavaliers were without star player LeBron James, suffering from a knee injury, while the Celtics were minus Paul Pierce. Gerald Green led the way for Celtics with 25 points while Kendrick Perkins had 12 points and nine rebounds.

The Cavaliers, for whom Larry Hughes scored 24 with Sasha Pavlovic scoring 17, have already qualified for the play-offs while Boston are out of the running.”

## 3. Quote

This is where you can provide a quote from the coach or a key player from both teams. You can precede each saying with a lead-in paragraph or go straight into the quote.

“Celtic forward Al Jefferson, said: ‘They were missing their best player and we were missing our best play. We just stuck in there.’

Cavs coach Mike Brown said James’ absence was a key factor in their loss.

‘We miss LeBron. We miss LeBron every time he doesn’t play. He’s our guy,’ said Brown.”

## 4. The rest

Once you got the main information and key quotes out of the way, you can go on to describe the game. Even better would be to describe just one or two plays and include more quotes.

The thinking behind sports articles is that people would have watched the game on TV anyway and would not want boring game description. Therefore, quotes from the people who matter, such as athletes and coaches, would offer better reading value.

There are many types of sports news writing that is offered around the world everyday. We have merely showed you its simplest form. Certainly, it is a rewarding form of news writing for journalists who love their sport. And the structure they use allow them to adapt their skills to any type of

## **HOW-TO/STUDENT LIFE**

How-to articles are some of the easiest writing you can do—assuming you know what you are talking about. In this article, we will look at the most important elements of this type of article and how to prepare for and then write it for your school newspaper.

### *KNOW YOUR STUFF*

A how-to article, by definition, casts you in the light of the expert—the one who knows what they are doing and how to do it right. So you really do need to know. Do whatever research you can to make sure you are comfortable with the process.

If you are going to write about How to Study, then you probably need to do some research on studying and memory retention techniques. Make sure what you write about is relevant to your audience.

### *OUTLINE THE SPECIFIC STEPS*

Once you have a topic and you know the subject well enough, outline the specific steps needed to be taken in order to accomplish the task. For example, on How to Study:

- Take Good Notes
- Transfer Notes into a Graphical Representation (visual things are remembered easier)
- Study in Spurts – 10 to 15 minutes (we remember first and last easiest)
- Switch Subjects Often (to eliminate mental fatigue)
- Teach It to Someone Else (you know what you teach)
- Review Often (little moments here and there)

### *WRITING THE ARTICLE*

Begin with an introduction to the subject and why your method will help someone and then begin explaining each step that you outlined above. Write somewhere between two and five paragraphs to

explain each point. If you think you need to write an entire article on just one point, then that is probably what you should do.

You don't want each of your points to be so long that they become an entirely different matter and pull your reader away from the steps. Be concise and be thorough in how you write. Make every word count.

### *GIVE EXAMPLES*

When opportunity presents itself, give examples of each of your steps. Sometimes, images work well, but certain exercises, personal experiences, or examples from other people are also nice additions.

People need to, as much as can be done, see your steps in action. So provide tips on implementing each step where applicable. For example, you can give tips on Step 5 of How to Study by saying something like this:

If you can sit where you want to in class, it might be best to sit next to the student who seems to be struggling the most in class. Invariably that person may ask your help. In teaching him or her how to do it, you've learned the material better than any cramming session ever could. So instead of sitting by your best friend and being distracting during class, sit next to someone who you can help teach.

### *BE POSITIVE ON THE OUTCOME*

Focus on the positive outcomes of following your steps, rather than the negative consequences of not doing so. You are trying to help someone do something, not lecture them because they don't want to do it your way. So be positive in your writing. Not only will you find it rewarding when people are helped, but you will find that it strengthens your own character in that area.

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## **FEATURE STORY**

A feature story is usually the longest article in your newspaper, above 1000 words. Typically, you only want to have one of them per issue. It is a blend of a news article with a bit of interpretation of the facts without giving an opinion as to what the solution should be.

It can be written like a News Article, but it does more than just report the news. It interprets the news. It makes predictions on the consequences of the event or action being reported. It provides a reader with a clearer understanding, hopefully, of the long term effects of the subject of your article.

For example, if the principal of your school institutes a new dress code policy, a feature article on the subject might include (in no particular order):

- The facts of the new dress code (the who, why, where, what, when, and how).
- A prediction on how it will be received by the student body and the staff and faculty.
- Predictions of potential problems the dress code might create.
- Comparison to other schools with similar dress codes.
- An analysis of the reasons behind the new dress code.
- Quotes from various sources.
- References to other articles from other reputable sources on dress codes.
- An analysis of problems the dress code is supposed to solve and if it will be effective based on data supplied by other schools doing something similar.

Like most news articles, you start with all the important facts first so that your readers don't have to guess what the articles is about or why you're writing it:

*Tomorrow, the principal's new and stricter dress code will go into effect school wide. Among the newly banned clothing items are gang colors and short shorts. All students have by now signed an agreement to abide by the new dress code, and teachers have been tasked with the responsibility of enforcing the new requirements. This new code does, however, come with some unintended consequences that the administration may not have considered.*

This answers most of the main questions, and from here a feature article can launch into the analysis and predictions as to the outcome of the new dress code policy. Take the reader on a journey of in-depth analysis and thought. You want your article to be thought provoking, but also very thorough, covering as many angles as you can. End with a concluding paragraph that wraps up the most salient points of your article.

A feature story is the main, front-page article found on your newspaper. It should have the largest title, the most compelling images, and provoke the most thought and discussion.

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## OPINION

### *EDITORIAL OR COLUMN*

The difference between an editorial and a column is simple. An editorial is the collective view of the newspaper and is generally unsigned. A column is the opinion of a particular person and usually reflects only his or her particular view.

If you write an editorial, it should reflect the consensus of the editorial staff of your newspaper. You should never use the pronoun “I” while writing. If you write a column, then it should reflect your personal opinion and should be known that it is written by you. In a column, you can absolutely use “I” seeing as it is a personal viewpoint.

### *CHOOSING THE SUBJECT*

Generally speaking this is probably the most important part...what to write about. Choose topics that are relevant to your school and the students. This shouldn't be hard to find, but keep things relevant.

There are four basic types of editorials:

- **Clarification** – This is where you give your opinion on what a school rule means or perhaps you interpret a particular action of the school board.
- **Critique** – This is where you become critical of something, perhaps a school policy, a teaching method, or the food served in the cafeteria.
- **Convincing** – This is where you try to convince and sway someone to your particular viewpoint. Generally speaking, the predominant viewpoint contradicts yours, so you are trying to explain why yours is better.



- **Commendation** – Here you write to put your stamp of approval on someone, something, or an idea. You explain why you agree with the person or action, defend the individual or action, and perhaps even endorse the individual or action.

### *LAYING OUT YOUR ARGUMENT*

Your argument needs to be persuasive and entertaining. If your writing is not entertaining, who will want to read it? So begin with arguments or a stance that might be somewhat controversial or outrageous, and then, as you get deeper into the argument, you clarify your position and why it is not so outrageous.

Make sure you have a catchy title that causes someone to pause, question, or become curious. But once you've drawn the reader in, there are several things you need to focus on:

- **Explain your position in one sentence.** This should be right at the beginning of your piece...or very near the beginning. It can be, as mentioned, outrageous, controversial, or even humorous. It should grab the reader's attention. For example:
  - Teachers should break the rules more.
  - Our football team is the best team in the nation.
  - The new school policy violates student's free speech rights.
  - The dress code isn't strict enough!
- **Facts.** Your argument means nothing without facts. You can't just make things up. It needs to be clear and your arguments should interpret the facts in a way that makes sense. But without facts, you are going nowhere.
- **Tell the other side's view.** This gives you credibility. It says that you know what you are talking about, have listened, but have found fault with their perspective. However, conceding to at least one point of the opposition's view shows that you can be objective, fair, and balanced.
- **Give realistic solutions.** This is important. Your credibility and influence may hinge on this. It is not enough to say someone or something is wrong. You need to offer a better alternative. If you just say why someone is wrong, but you never give a realistic solution to the problem, then your arguments will seem petty. What is your solution and why is it better than the opposition's? Is it realistic? I mean stating that the solution is replacing the School Board with

Junior High Schoolers is probably not realistic, and unless you intend it to be a satire, will probably turn readers off.

- **Don't get too wordy.** You want to aim for 500 words or less. Make every word matter and you will be more convincing.

Some writers recommend saving your best arguments for last because what a person reads last will stick in their minds longer. But if you do that, then your other arguments need to be engaging or you may lose readers.

Conclude with a reiteration of your argument and why you hold to the particular solution you presented.