

The topic or focus of your original news story must draw on a variety of facts about the newspaper industry today and sources who are working in or studying trends and developments about the newspaper profession.

This is NOT a composition assignment. Journalism stories must always put emphasis on timely developments at the beginning, then explain them and offer accurate and insightful support information which your local readership would find interesting. Write this story for them, not your editor.

Understanding What Readers Want:



News readers count on newspapers to take them inside a topic, situation or developing story and explain what's going on by answering the **WHO? WHAT? WHEN? WHERE? WHY? and HOW?** questions. Newspaper readers like to slow down, read carefully what is being reported and thoughtfully consider the story content...so they need organized substance and clarity of purpose from the news writer. NEVER ever assume that every news reader who picks up newspaper knows what everyone else knows about any story. Some will know particular issues, terms or concerns, but most people rarely have time to keep up with those details every day. News writers **MUST** work to bring everyone up to speed, as much as possible, with every story they write. When you refresh the readers knowledge you enhance their chances of reading the story.

It should also be said that general public normally does not read every story in newspapers. Most scan papers looking for interesting writing. They look for eye catching headlines and lead paragraphs which grab their attention. So your first two paragraphs **MUST WORK TO HOOK THEM** or **DRAW THEM INTO** what you have written. Give them unique information so reader feel privileged to have such keen insights.

Latest info **MUST** always be at the top of your story...and your lead paragraph can work to include as many answers to key journalism questions. Unlike broadcast leads, readers of newspapers can see the news you write and take their time understanding it. So your spelling, grammar and clarity are most essential.

Later in the story offer background info for those readers who are learning about your story or focus for the first time, or for those who have forgotten this topic. Never let any reader walk away scratching their head wondering what you were talking about. Throughout the story provide easy to read and follow information.

NEWSPAPER STYLE CHANGES: **How this news writing is different from broadcast.**

1. Leads can be longer but don't go crazy with that! Readers don't like overwhelming info and could find your story and your writing cumbersome to read. Strike a creative balance. Be succinct too.
2. Get to the LATEST INFO points right away, like you did in broadcast, but don't be afraid to answer several of the 5 Ws & H questions in your lead or "nut graph." Think and answer what's news and avoid flowery prose which some people may not understand.
3. Organize your story so your follow-up story does two things...explains the lead and goes into more content or depth. Facts, figures, latest trends, attitudes, developments help explain and educate readers...**CITE YOUR SOURCES! ATTRIBUTION IS CRUCIAL.**
4. When you do cite sources, put their formal or explicit titles **AFTER** their names. (Broadcast stories shortens titles for easy speaking. Readers don't need that.)
5. Always include, around the middle of your story background info with some details. Never assume every reader knows this story or what you are talking about.
6. Do your own research without being told. You are originating this story, not re-writing some other reporter's story. Find credible sources who speak to your chosen focus or approach, and be sure to cite in your story that source of your information. No limit on the number of sources.
7. Creative writing throughout is encouraged, but curb your enthusiasm. This is **NOT** a purely creative writing assignment. Some clever expressions and familiar phrases are OK, but highly descriptive scene setting prose is NOT welcome! Some **newspaper readers** find too much creative writing annoying if they don't share your flair for the language. They are not taking an English class.
8. **YES**...talk to real people, actual human beings about your topic or focus...Don't rely exclusively on online info, facts or sources. Readers like to see you get where they are coming from on your topic, so talk with family, friends and professional people about your focus. Once in a while you can quote these opinions in the story, but mostly just incorporate their thinking in your story organization.
9. Spelling errors and bad grammar are **NEVER** allowed. Your shortcomings are not the reader's problem. Read your story out loud and edit mistakes before you submit stories always. If you want to be taken seriously (and get a good grade), no excuses! Spell check is not enough. It's on you!
10. Never overwrite sentences or exceed your specific story length. **NEVER!** Meet your deadlines always. Professionals should never be told over and over to do their job as specified. Get it done & right!

* **Note:** Your goal is not to win any award, so don't put undo pressure on yourself. This is a news writing class assignment and no one should expect to do a perfect job. Getting a good grade is **NOT the goal** to have in mind. That's too self focused and self serving. Telling a timely, substantive, balanced and interesting story your readers would enjoy is your goal and purpose. Good grades come from doing that well

Your J61 ASSIGNMENT:

Write a 600 word NEWS story limit, with half-inch margins on all sides, double-spaced. Regular type, not all caps. No Headline or Title. Start writing immediately. Put your name at the end of your story.

The topic or focus of this assignment should be made interesting for the South Bay readership or audience off campus. College students are NOT the intended readership.

Make the general audience interested in learning about **your story focus:**

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IS A CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEE, BUT IN 2009 THE NEWS BUSINESS IS CHANGING RAPIDLY TO MEET DEMANDING NEW TRENDS AND TOUGH ECONOMIC REALITIES. GIVEN JOURNALISM SALARIES HAVE NEVER MADE MOST PROFESSIONAL RICH, WHY IN THE WORLD WOULD ANYBODY STUDY JOURNALISM AND WANT TO SOMEDAY WORK IN A RELATED FIELD?

Do your own factual research to support the angle you plan to take.

Use the research links Professor Rucker has provided to help develop the angle you plan to take. Including key facts, figures or analysis pertinent to your NEWS angle is crucial. Journalists should never generalize. [Click here to go back to the class online info & links.](#)

Draw on your notes and use some explicit comments from Kiet Do, Mark Powell and Egan Schulz to support your story angle and approach. Weave them into your story appropriately.

Take the initiative and contact other journalists you know from your newspaper and magazine reading, or reporters you have listened to or watched on radio or TV. Get your questions in mind quickly, then look up their contact info and TELEPHONE THEM. ASK for a little time to talk about your story assignment and your focus. Never assume they won't talk. Don't censor your efforts...TRY!

E-mailing journalists on first contact for this assignment is NOT GOOD...NEVER DO THAT.

Professional journalists are busy and have deadlines to deal with daily. Many were once journalism students or rookie reporter so they know what you are up against. Many are happy to be helpful, but they will be listening carefully to how you approach them when making your request for comments. BE RESPECTFUL ALWAYS...ask good, even tough questions, but never get too personal. They will respect you.

Realize your story needs and your grade are not their problem or concern. They don't have to speak with you if come across arrogant or self focused. THANK THEM FOR THEIR TIME not matter how much time they offer you. BE FLEXIBLE if their availability does not match yours. Don't always prioritize your needs.

If they only have time to speak to you when you first call, BE READY TO ASK YOUR QUESTIONS RIGHT THEN. Don't waste their time chattering on and on...trying to figure out what you want or are looking for. Have some thoughtful questions prepared in advance just in case you get to speak to them only once.



Bob's Cheerleader Message: **YOU CAN DO THIS !**

Prof. Bob realizes for some of you this will be a tough first news gathering assignment. What you should know is every beginning news writing class in America challenges students like this. Also remember you are not covering a war, or the White House...so don't make this a huge thing in your mind. This is a basic assignment...Now run with it! Be creative thinkers.

For the first time in J61, you must rely on your own CRITICAL THINKING to pull together the news story elements you need to tell a good story. Poor or short-sighted thinking always leads to poor stories, and ultimately poor grades. The responsibility is now yours to make good decisions about how to approach your story...who to contact...what to use from the class guest speakers...and how to make local readers, off campus, interested.

You must decide what readers in the South Bay would care about and what they would not. Remember the vast majority of news consumers are NOT students or don't think like you.

Hint ! Hint! Most people could care less about the stresses journalists are under or how hard the job is. Most people do care about getting timely, accurate and pertinent information to help them make informed decisions in their lives. If all American journalism went out of business, massive numbers of people would have to fend for themselves to find out what's going on...and what you've learned about yourselves this semester is true about them too. Most people don't have or don't take the time to keep up with the news. They look forward it when they want it or need it. When they do, they expect results that are easy to follow and understand. Fall short and they will criticize you mercilessly. Welcome to the profession of journalism.

Here's a balancing thought... Kiet, Mark and Egan are three examples of thousands of journalism-trained professions who made their college education open up exciting career opportunities. Each of them applied themselves in school and found something challenging, but noble to do which they wound up enjoying!!! They are looking forward to their futures and are well positioned for what may come. Help your readers see this and realize, unlike them, these journalists love their jobs even though they may never be rich or famous. Most people go for the big bucks jobs and so many live very unhappy lives in dead end jobs.

Your readers also have children, like you, who are trying to find their futures. Some, like you, enjoy writing and may have some interest in going into some aspect of journalism...but most don't have a clue about the critical thinking demands, employment issues, technology challenges or the highly competitive nature of this profession. Like you, this reality, once learned, is quite sobering, but knowing the truth is always the best way to see an issue clearly and honestly. And sometimes, the truth will help some people make better choices for them. No one wants to go into a tough situation blind...and fairy tale dreams of a career profession could result in huge waste of money, time and individual hope.

Your job is to address the assignment requirement clearly, accurately and creatively. FIND A WAY to make a newspaper reader connect to this topic in how you write it. Think like the public and write like a quality journalist offering substance and answers...not generic comments and fluff.

Keep your opinions to yourself in your news writing. Seek and destroy adjectives or adverbs misplaced in your writing. Attribute strong opinions to your sources...Stay neutral.

Write the story you wish someone had written for you to read, as part of the public, before you came to SJSU and took Journalism.

News educates the public. Newspapers take time to spell out the pluses and minuses in a wide variety of stories. THERE IS ALWAYS A WAY TO INTEREST THE PUBLIC if you think deeper, go beyond the easy and focus your mind on the task, not your grade.

YOU CAN DO IT!!! GOOD LUCK!

Submit this newspaper story by E-MAIL.

Put your name - Newspaper #1 in the subject line.

The story MUST be attached as a WORD DOCUMENT to your email.

Prof. Bob's computer can only open that format, no other for this assignment...so make sure the story is attached as a word document.

The absolute deadline to send in your story is
SUNDAY, NOV. 29th by 6PM. NO EXCEPTIONS
Not a second later...or no credit.

All stories submitted by deadline will be posted on the class website overnight. The full class will begin reviewing them the next day.

This is the only e-mail address to use for this class assignment :

j61b@pacbell.net