

# Reporting 101 Review

JEM 222: Online Journalism  
University of Tennessee

# Week 2: Reporting 101

• August 28

- Newswriting basics
- Where does opinion belong?
- The five W's (+ H)
- The inverted pyramid
- Online story formats

# Newswriting Basics

- Reporters shouldn't take sides
- Religion/politics are off limits
- No cheerleading
- Avoid vague, biased generalizations
- Balance sources
- Never say "I" or "my"
- Avoid mistakes double-check stats, facts, spelling

# Where does opinion belong?

- Opinion columns
- Blogs
- Movie reviews
- Why “just the facts” is important
- What it means to be a journalist

# The Five W's + H

1. Who

2. Where

3. What

4. When

5. Why

+ How

"Be a sight-seer."

-Washington Post reporter  
Howard Simons

- For most basic news stories, you want to get as much as you saw – and the news that matters most to readers – in the first paragraph.
- To be more specific, you need to hit the **5Ws and H in one or two sentences** (less than 25 words).

# Who?

- #1 mistake to avoid = spelling someone's name wrong
- Always ask the person you're interviewing to spell their first and last name.
- Get a cell phone number and email address from your source or interview subject.
- Get as much information as you can: age, occupation and an oddity (they always wear a bow tie).
- Don't put a key figure's name in the lede unless their are a famous person.

# Where?

- Get the spelling of the location right. Double check it.
- Put the location in context. Maybe to the nearest big city.
- Before you drive off, write down everything you can remember. The smells, sounds, sights, taste. You could use later.
- Get the cross streets.

# What?

- Be aware of what you are reporting as fact and what may have "allegedly" happened.
- Identify your source whenever there's doubt as to fact or suspicion.

# When?

- Note the time of day, but it's not usually necessary in the lede sentence.
- Don't use yesterday or tomorrow. Use the day of the week (i.e. Monday, Tuesday).
- Broadcast writers tend to always write their scripts in the present tense (i.e. "he says".)  
Print is usually past tense (i.e. "he said".)  
Features are usually in present tense.

# Why?

- Keep your opinion out of a news story.
- Source any explanation for an event if it's an individual's point of view or not confirmed by several other sources. And even then, if when in doubt - identify your source of information.

# How?

- Identify objects used (ie. gun), cause of death or personal feat.
- Again, be aware of the difference between facts and allegations. Identify them appropriately.

# Reporter's Tips

- Accuracy builds trust.
- Listen carefully.
- Put a quote from a source or witness up high  
– in the second or third graph if you can.
- Double check the spelling of every name and every number and Web site.

# In-class Assignment

- Find partner
- Write lede
- 25 words or less
- Include as many of the W's + H as possible

# Assignment

- Read Harrower

Chapter 3: Newswriting basics pg. 40-49 Review

Linking makes the web go round.