

Tips about Story 2

(Interview a leader)

JRN 2201



- The cartoon above does not mean that I want you to be disrespectful of the person you will be interviewing. But the cartoon makes an important point: as a journalist, your job is to serve the reader first. What the reader needs and wants to know is your priority. You also want to provide interesting details, not generalities and fluff (although the subject's underwear is usually not part of the story).
- Write a good lede. Do not use the lede simply to say that you interviewed the person or who she is. Instead, use the lede to tell readers the most interesting thing that this person said or did. Identify the person only briefly in the lede, using the full name.
- In the second or third paragraph, identify the person more fully and give a sentence or two of biographical information that's relevant to your story.
- Put several direct quotations in the story, but most of it should be your paraphrases of what the person said and your background information and explanations.
- Your first direct quotation should be no lower than the fourth paragraph of the story — probably higher. But don't use a full-sentence direct quotation as the lede.
- If the person says something that sounds grand and glittering, ask her what it means. Get details, evidence, examples, anecdotes. Put it in plain language. Don't get dazzled by a quote and then fail to explain it fully to your reader.
- Encourage the person to tell detailed, colorful stories (anecdotes) that illustrate the points he is making. Readers remember stories.

- Attribute everything the person said to that person, whether it's a direct quotation or a paraphrase. Often the way to do this is to conclude a sentence with a comma, followed by "Jones said" or "she said."
- Your only required source for this story is the person you are interviewing, but feel free to quote additional sources. (In real life, a one-source story is not acceptable. You'd need at least three sources for a story of any length.)
- Use correct Associated Press style. Use short sentences and short paragraphs.
- In every story, including this one, identify all students with these four pieces of information: full name, hometown, class rank (junior, senior, etc.) and major. For example, you could say that John Doe is a sophomore sport and fitness management major from Hahira, Georgia.
- The first time you mention a person, give her full name. From that point on, call her by her last name. Do not repeat the first name unless you are trying to avoid confusion about two people who have the same last name.
- You should not write in Q&A format. Instead, write a story about what the person said.
- Your reader doesn't care about the sequence of your questions and answers. Don't organize your story in chronological order. Instead, organize it logically. In general, the most important and interesting information should be highest in the story.
- Keep yourself out of the story. In most cases, you don't need to tell the reader what questions you asked; just tell the person's answers. Write in third person. Do not use "I" or "we" except inside a quotation.
- Read the tips about interviewing on pp. 78-81 of "Inside Reporting," our textbook.
- Of course, follow all instructions carefully.
- If you send me an optional draft at least 24 hours before the final deadline, I'll send it back to you with tips that will help you get a high grade. Pay attention to what I mark on the draft. If it's not clear, ask me. (I encourage you to submit drafts of all assignments, although drafts are not usually required.)

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