

HAND BOOK

FOR
MEMBER PAPERS
OF THE
CANADIAN UNIVERSITY
PRESS

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PREFACE

On New Year's Day, 1938, a dozen editors from college papers throughout the country gathered round a desk in a hotel in Winnipeg and completed details for what had long been a cherished plan of Canadian university journalism. There the Canadian University Press, a nation-wide news service, came into existence. Its purpose was to unite into a co-operative organization the newspapers of the leading universities of the Dominion.

Success of the C.U.P. was apparent within the first few months of operation. Fourteen papers—dailies, semi-weeklies, and weeklies—linked together by telegraph, kept 25,000 students informed of activities on campuses hundreds and thousands of miles away. Student opinion was consolidated, sectionalism was abolished.

Among other aims set down by the pioneer editors was a project which this booklet attempts to carry out—to standardize newspaper style and to incorporate into one handbook a set of fundamental rules and suggestions. This handbook makes no pretence of being a text book—it has been designed merely to give some general advice to college reporters and copyreaders.

Many of the rules presented here are arbitrary. It is just as correct, for example, to write "Prof. Brown" as "Professor Brown", but for the sake of uniformity, the Canadian University Press has adopted the latter style and every member paper is expected to use it.

The suggestions outlined in this booklet will not teach the freshman reporter how to write. This can be learned only by constant and careful practice. It is hoped, however, that the information contained in the following pages will prevent some of the common errors found in newspapers, and at the same time pave the way for a uniform and practical style in Canadian college journalism.

THE ESSENTIALS

NEWS WRITING

"The qualities most desired and striven for in news writing are accuracy of statement—in small things as well as in great, in particulars as well as essentials—simplicity, directness, accuracy, and point. Never attempt fine writing; never use big words where small words are possible. Go right to the heart of the subject without flourish of trumpets. Stop when the story is told without conclusion or moral tag."

—C. R. Williams, *Indianapolis News*.

Accuracy—Accuracy, terseness, and clearness are the requisites of a real news story. The greatest of these is accuracy, for without it, all other good qualities are valueless.

Too much stress cannot be placed upon the importance of accuracy. Verify everything, or if verification is impossible, quote the authority from which you received your information.

Watch names. Inaccuracies in initials and names are inexcusable. Don't be afraid to ask how names are spelled. In taking information over the telephone, insist that letters be clearly indicated. Always check with the students' directory or the city directory.

Directness and Clearness—News writing to be effective must be concise, clear, easily read, and attractive. Remember, too, that you are writing facts—save editorial comment for the editorial page.

Clearness is the first essential of newspaper style as it is of all writing. This clearness is obtained by simplicity. Tell your story naturally. Shun "fine writing."

Newspaper writing is based on the principle that the reader must be given the maximum of information in the minimum of space. Give all the main facts immediately, simply, and directly. Put nothing in for effect if the story can be told just as well without it.

Paragraphs that appear long seem heavy and uninteresting. The width of a news column allows only six or seven words the line. The length of a normal paragraph is between 50 and 75 words.

Structure—A news story consists of two main parts—the lead and the body. A proper lead answers the six primary questions which every reader asks: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? The answer to the most important of these questions must be made in the opening sentence, and all of them should be answered in the lead.

Thus the lead includes: the person, the event, the place, the time, the cause, the significant circumstances.

The lead is complete in itself—it gives the substance of the news in such a form that the rest of the story may be cut off without loss of any really necessary facts. The body amplifies the information contained in the lead.

Before starting to write a story decide which is the most striking or significant fact and use it at the outset. Time is generally unimportant, so avoid the form: "Tonight at 8.15 o'clock Professor Jones will speak on 'The Far East'."

In the case of lectures, speeches, or interviews the lead may start with either a direct or indirect quotation, as: "Canada must abolish provincialism if the country is to remain great," declared Professor Blank, head of the Economics Department, in an address before members of the University Club last night.

Other convenient types of beginnings are:

1. *The subject of the sentence*, as: "Students united yesterday . . ." Names of persons should not be used here unless they are sufficiently prominent.

2. *Prepositional phrase*, as: "With less than two days in which to . . ."

3. *Participial phrase*, as: "Gathering for what they considered . . ." Watch for and avoid the "hanging" or "dangling" participle.

4. *Dependent clause*, as: "Although he admitted his failure . . ."

5. *Infinitive phrase*, as: "To prohibit use of . . ."

6. *Substantive clause*, as: "That university students should attempt . . ."

The beginning of each paragraph is the most emphatic position, for as the eye glances down the column the first sentence stands out prominently. It bears the same relation to the paragraph as the lead to the article.

This principle determines the structure of the news story. Into the lead goes the most important part of the news, and into the opening sentence of each paragraph the most significant statement of that paragraph. The least important details go into the latter part of the story, for the last few paragraphs may be cut off when fitted into forms for printing.

SPORTS WRITING

The essentials of newspaper writing, as outlined in the preceding section, apply to sports as well as to news. Certain features, however, are peculiar to the sports story.

Handling of sports news is not unlike editorial or critical writing. Technically equipped to understand

the competition he is covering, the sports reporter can comment freely on the players and their work, tactics employed by both sides, and the game in general. Thus the sports reporter is allowed greater freedom in editorial comment than the general news reporter.

A few suggestions follow:

1. Know the sport you are reporting as thoroughly as possible. Understand technical details so that you may appreciate any strategic moves.

2. Review the game with an analytical eye. Don't be one-sided. Always remember there are two sides to a contest.

3. Look for colour. An account of a sports event demands spirited narrative and description.

4. Study the crowd. Spectators form an integral part of a competition. Watch for human interest items.

5. In questionable decisions, refrain from giving your own opinion. Report only the exact story of what happened. Let readers form their own conclusions.

PREPARATION OF COPY

1. All copy should be typewritten. Use double space to permit changes by the editor or copyreader.

2. Write your surname on the upper left hand corner of the first page.

3. Leave wide margins on both sides of the page—at least one inch.

4. Begin the first page about a third of the way down to permit writing-in of headlines. Number each page.

5. Do not make corrections vertically in the margin. This wastes time for the copy cutter who divides the story into "takes" for the typesetting machines.

6. Indent all new paragraphs deeply.

7. Never divide a word from one page to another. Do not carry over the last few words of a paragraph to another page.

8. When correcting copy, cross out and rewrite. Use a soft black pencil for editing.

9. Read over your story carefully before handing it to your editor. When not hurried try to submit it exactly as you think it should appear in print.

10. Write (30) at the end of your story to show it is completed.

11. Remember that linotype operators are not mind-readers and are not paid to interpret hieroglyphics.

STYLE

CAPITALIZATION

1. Capitalize titles preceding names, as: Captain Smith; but A. Smith, captain of the football team.
2. Capitalize the full names of organizations or clubs, as: Players' Club, Debating Union Society.
3. Capitalize *university*, *college*, etc., when part of a title, as: University of British Columbia.
4. Capitalize the words *University*, *Faculty*, *Campus*, etc., when referring to a specific university.
5. Capitalize names of university buildings, as: Redpath Library, Arts Building.
6. Capitalize *class* when it is used to designate one of a group of classes, as: Senior Class, Class of 1939.
7. Capitalize college degrees, whether written in full or abbreviated, as: Bachelor of Arts, Doctor of Laws; or B.A., LL.D.
8. Capitalize the East, the West, etc., but do not capitalize *east*, *west*, etc., when used to show direction, as: east of Winnipeg.
9. Capitalize and quote the title of plays, books, speeches, debates, etc., as: "Green Pastures," "The Citadel," "Transportation, Today and Yesterday."
10. Capitalize but do not quote the title of newspapers, as: The New York Times.
11. Do not capitalize *street*, *avenue*, *boulevard*, etc., as: Sherbrooke street west.
12. Do not capitalize *freshman*, *junior upperclassman*, etc.
13. Do not capitalize *a.m.*, *p.m.*

ABBREVIATIONS

1. Do not abbreviate *professor*, *president*, etc.
2. Never omit *the* before the title *Reverend*. Write: the Reverend Mr. Smith, but never the Reverend Smith.
3. Abbreviate *number* when followed by numerals, as: No. 6.
4. Spell out the names of months and days. Write: October 21, not October 21st.
5. Spell out *per cent*, as: "An increase of 20 per cent was noted."
6. Do not abbreviate *street*, *avenue*, *boulevard*, etc.
7. The title *Mr.* should not be used with initials or Christian name. Write: P. F. Forrest; but Mr. Forrest. Never use *Mr.* when referring to a student.

FIGURES

1. Put all numbers above ten in figures. Thus: "The movement was supported by eight persons."—"The movement was supported by 160 persons." Exceptions are made in athletic scores and summaries, as: 5-yard line, polevault of 10 feet 3 inches.
2. Spell out round numbers, as: three or four hundred, nearly a thousand.
3. Use figures for sums of money unless the sum is indefinite, as: \$3, about a hundred dollars. As in the general rule concerning numbers above ten, write: seven cents, 82 cents.
4. Use figures and the colon in giving time, as: 2:30 a.m., 8 o'clock. Never use ciphers—write 9 p.m., not 9:00 p.m.
5. Spell out all numbers beginning a sentence. Thus: "Thirty-five students were present"

PUNCTUATION

1. Do not use a period after *per cent*.
2. When a quotation is broken into paragraphs, put quotation marks at the beginning of each paragraph and at the end of the last paragraph.
3. A comma is not necessary after *every* bit of quoted matter. For example, no comma should be used here: "The title of the play is 'Of Mice and Men'."
4. In lists of names of officers, use this style: John Smith, Toronto; George Jones, Vancouver; T. F. Brown, Halifax; etc. Or: President, John Smith; vice-president, George Jones; secretary, T. F. Brown.

SPELLING

The Concise Oxford Dictionary is the official dictionary of the Canadian University Press. When two spellings are listed, use the form given first.

Note, in particular, the following style:

1. Use *our* not *or* in such words as *colour*, *harbour*, *honour*, etc.
2. Use *ize* not *ise* in such words as *criticize*, *emphasize*, etc.
3. Use *en* not *in* in such words as *enclose*, *endorse*, etc.
4. Hyphenate such words as *co-operate*, *co-ordinate*, etc.
5. Write *today*, *tonight*, and *tomorrow* without the hyphen.
6. Spell *program* with the final *m* not *mme*.
7. Spell *toward*, *backward*, *forward*, etc., without the final *s*.

MISCELLANEOUS RULES AND SUGGESTIONS

1. If possible, avoid starting a story with the articles *the* or *a*.
2. Use superlatives rarely. *Very* is seldom needed.
3. Don't say *remainder* for *rest*.
4. Distinguish between *liable* and *likely*. A person is liable to arrest if he is a criminal. A good student is likely to succeed.
5. Things *occur* by chance and *take place* by arrangement. An explosion occurs. A meeting takes place.
6. Don't say *different than*. *Different from* is correct.
7. Don't say *a number of*. Use *several*.
8. Don't use *over* in the sense of *more than*. Write: "More than five hundred students attended the meeting."
9. A thing is either *unique* or it isn't. *Very unique* or *most unique* is incorrect.
10. Don't use *lady* or *gentleman*. *Man* and *woman* are good English words.
11. Don't mix languages or use foreign words when English will do as well. Say: Ten dollars a week, not ten dollars per week.
12. Use *between* when referring to two only, *among* when referring to more than two. Thus: "The profit was divided between Brown and Smith."
13. Use *fewer than* for numbers, *less than* for quantity. Thus: "Fewer than a hundred persons were present."—"There was less than a gallon of milk."
14. Don't say *people* for *persons*. *People* is a collective noun, as: "The people of this country." Say: "Twenty persons were injured."

15. Use *farther* when referring to distance, not *further*.

16. Don't use *inaugurate* for *begin*. A story is begun. A principal is inaugurated.

17. Don't overwork *a.m.* and *p.m.* *O'clock* is a perfectly good word.

18. In general, put the hour before the day, as: "At 10 o'clock this morning."

19. Distinguish between *majority* and *plurality*. A candidate has a majority if his total exceeds the combined totals of all his opponents. He has a plurality if his total exceeds only that of his nearest opponent.

COPY READING

EDITING COPY

All copy must be carefully edited by the editor in whose department the news belongs or by a copyreader. The copyreader has a responsible position. He must check on grammatical errors and accuracy of spelling and fact, make certain that the story follows the style of his paper, eliminate libelous matter, delete all editorial comment, mark copy for the printer, and improve the story in every possible respect.

Like the good reporter, the copyreader must be a keen judge of news value. He must pick out the important aspects of a story and play them up, cut out needless details, and see that the lead is strong and effective.

The real work of the copyreader is to reconstruct and rearrange rather than rewrite. For this the ideal combination is speed and accuracy.

The copyreader uses a few simple marks to give instructions to the printer. Some of these follow:

1. Three short lines under a word or letter show that it is to be set in **CAPITALS**; two short lines, **SMALL CAPITALS**.
2. A word underlined once will be set in *italics*.
3. A circle around an abbreviated word indicates that it is to be spelled out in full.
4. A circle around a word or number spelled out shows that it is to be abbreviated.
5. Paragraph beginnings are marked by the reversed L sign.
6. The end mark (30) is written at the close of every story.

7. All directions intended for the printer should be encircled.

WRITING HEADLINES

Just as the lead summarizes a story, so the head gives the gist of a story. A well written headline is more than a mere label. It tells a story in itself; it states facts clearly and concisely in fresh, live language which expresses action; it is impartial, making no comment on the news.

The typographical limitations of newspapers are important factors in the writing of headlines. A head must be written to fit a definite space. Always remember the printer's plea, "Type is not rubber, it can't be stretched."

Following are some general suggestions for writing headlines:

1. Base the head on the lead. The story may be cut down to fit the forms after it is in type.

2. Avoid repetition. Unless absolutely necessary, do not use a principal word more than once in a head.

3. Put the verb in the present tense to give vividness to the head, even though the action may be in the past. Use the same tense throughout.

4. Use the active voice—avoid the passive. "Toronto Wins Meet," is better than "Meet Won by Toronto."

5. Use short, simple words. Avoid such overworked words as *probe* and *rap*.

6. Don't generalize—make the head definite. Say: "600 Students Attend," rather than "Many Students Attend."

7. A head should tell as much as possible in a limited space. Avoid the articles *a*, *an*, or *the*.

8. A head is composed of one or more divisions called "decks." Make each deck complete in itself. In general, use a verb in each deck. If this is impossible, be sure a verb is implied.

9. Put the main feature in the top deck.

10. If the story deals with a prominent person, give the name in the head. Use names of students sparingly in top decks.

11. Common abbreviations may be used in heads. *Professor* may be abbreviated to *prof.*

12. Avoid ending parts of the top deck with unemphatic words like *of*, *for*, *to*, etc. In the following example, *for* is given undeserving prominence and at the same time is separated from the words with which it forms a phrase:

STUDENTS GATHER FOR ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Typographical limitations and necessity of speed sometimes prevent application of this rule. However, whenever possible try to make the mechanical division coincide with the grammatical division.

13. Punctuation in heads follows the general rules. In the first deck, independent sentences not connected by conjunctions are separated by semicolons. In other decks, use dashes.

14. Count the unit letters and spaces in every deck. Don't try to crowd in more units than permissible.

15. Besides writing headlines, the copyreader breaks up stories with subheads inserted at intervals of about two hundred words. A subhead should be a brief announcement of the section it precedes.

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