



# THIRUTHANGAL NADAR COLLEGE

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**NAME OF THE DEPARTMENT: ENGLISH**

**SUBJECT : JOURNALISM**

**TOPIC : FEATURE WRITING**

**STAFF NAME : R. JOTHIMANI**

# JOURNALISM

## Feature Writing

## **Introduction**

A good feature writer is neither wordy nor flowery. He is precise and straight to the point and is guided by the ABC of Journalism that is Accuracy, Balance and Clarity. Before one starts crafting a feature article, he must master the nutty gritty of writing so that even the ordinary man in the street and intellectuals can easily understand. Remember that writing is an art that need to be blended with knowledge and wisdom.

## **What is a lead?**

The lead, or opening paragraph, is the most important part of a news story. A good lead does just that. It gives readers the most important information in a clear, concise and interesting manner. It also establishes the voice and direction of an article.

### **Question lead**

The lead starts by interrogating and do not require the answer instantly. It borrows heavily from rhetoric and prepares the reader for an answer as (s)he peruses further. For example Is there life after death. The reader will either get the answer in the middle or towards the end of the story. Question leads enable the reader to be involved and at times correspond well with the term inclusive

## **Narrative lead**

This is part of Literary Allusion where the writer can start in suspense to relax the reader. Narrative is like storytelling and as a genre it is more literary and entertains the reader throughout, while telling the whole story in stages.

## **Descriptive Lead**

Descriptive lead gives the detailed information about the whole scenario. It can provide detailed information about the scene or a place in a pellucid as a manner as it demands.

## **Hard news**

‘Hard’ news is typically used to refer to topics that are usually timely, important and consequential, such as politics, international affairs and business news.

## **Soft news**

Conversely, soft news topics include entertainment, celebrity, and lifestyle news.

## Difference between hard news and soft news

<b>Hard news</b>	<b>Soft news</b>
International news	Entertainment and celebrity news
Political news	Lifestyle news
Business and economic news	Art and culture news
Health and education news	Sports news

## Human Interest stories

Human interest journalism takes a closer, more personal look at the news. While conventional journalism presents the big picture, sticking to hard facts and statistics, human interest journalism focuses on details or aspects that resonate emotionally with the public. It is sometimes described as "getting the story behind the story" or "putting a human face on the news."

## TYPES OF FEATURES

**Personality profiles:** A personality profile is written to bring an audience closer to a person in or out of the news. Interviews and observations, as well as creative writing, are used to paint a vivid picture of the person. The CBC's recent profile of Pierre Elliot Trudeau is a classic example of the genre and makes use of archival film footage, interviews, testimonials, and fair degree of editorializing by the voice-over commentary.

**Human interest stories:** A human interest story is written to show a subject's oddity or its practical, emotional, or entertainment value.

**Trend stories:** A trend story examines people, things or organizations that are having an impact on society. Trend stories are popular because people are excited to read or hear about the latest fads.

**In-depth stories:** Through extensive research and interviews, in-depth stories provide a detailed account well beyond a basic news story or feature.

**Backgrounders:** A backgrounder--also called an analysis piece--adds meaning to current issues in the news by explaining them further. These articles bring an audience up-to-date, explaining how this country, this organization, this person happens to be where it is now.

## **WRITING AND ORGANIZING FEATURE STORIES**

Feature writers seldom use the inverted-pyramid form. Instead, they may write a chronology that builds to a climax at the end, a narrative, a first-person article about one of their own experiences or a combination of these. Their stories are held together by a thread, and they often end where the lead started, with a single person or event. Here are the steps typically followed in organizing a feature story:

**Choose the theme.** The theme is similar to the thesis of a scholarly paper and provides unity and coherence to the piece. It should not be too broad or too narrow. Several factors come into play when choosing a theme: Has the story been done before? Is the story of interest to the audience? Does the story have holding power (emotional appeal)? What makes the story worthy of being reported? The theme answers the question, "So what?"

## Write a lead that invites an audience into the story.

A summary may not be the best lead for a feature. A lead block of one or two paragraphs often begins a feature. Rather than put the news elements of the story in the lead, the feature writer uses the first two or three paragraphs to set a mood, to arouse readers, to invite them inside. Then the **news peg** or the significance of the story is provided in the third or fourth paragraph, the **nut graph**. Because it explains the reason the story is being written, the nut graph--also called the "so what" graph--is a vital paragraph in every feature. The nut graph should be high in the story. Do not make readers wait until the 10th or 11th paragraph before telling them what the story is about.

The body provides vital information while it educates, entertains, and emotionally ties an audience to the subject. The ending will wrap up the story and come back to the lead, often with a quotation or a surprising climax. Important components of the body of a feature story are background information, the thread of the story, transition, dialogue, and voice.

**Provide vital background information.** If appropriate, a paragraph or two of background should be placed high in the story to bring the audience up to date.

**Write clear, concise sentences.** Sprinkle direct quotations, observations and additional background throughout the story. Paragraphs can be written chronologically or in order of importance.

**Use a thread.** Connect the beginning, body and conclusion of the story. Because a feature generally runs longer than a news story, it is effective to weave a thread throughout the story, which connects the lead to the body and to the conclusion. This thread can be a single person, an event or a thing, and it usually highlights the theme.

**Use transition.** Connect paragraphs with transitional words, paraphrases, and direct quotations. Transition is particularly important in a long feature examining several people or events because it is the tool writers use to move subtly from one person or topic to the next. Transition keeps readers from being jarred by the writing.

**Use dialogue when possible.** Feature writers, like fiction writers, often use dialogue to keep a story moving. Of course, feature writers cannot make up dialogue; they listen for it during the reporting process. Good dialogue is like good observation in a story; it gives readers strong mental images and keeps them attached to the writing and to the story's key players.

**Establish a voice.** Another key element that holds a feature together is voice, the "signature" or personal style of each writer. Voice is the personality of the writer and can be used to inject color, tone, and subtle emotional commentary into the story. Voice should be used subtly (unless you're able to make a fetish of it like Hunter S. Thompson!). The blatant intrusion of a distinctive voice into news writing has been called **gonzo journalism**--an irresponsible, if entertaining, trend in contemporary writing according to traditionalists.

**Conclude with a quotation or another part of the thread.** A feature can trail off like a news story or it can be concluded with a climax. Often, a feature ends where the lead started, with a single person or event.

## Salient features of feature writing

- To explore the qualities of storytelling and how they differ from news.
- To build a vocabulary of storytelling.
- To apply that vocabulary to critiquing the work of top-flight journalists.
- To introduce a writing process that carries a story from concept to publication.
- To introduce tools for finding and framing interesting features.
- To sharpen skills at focusing stories along a single, clearly articulated theme.
- To evaluate the importance of backgrounding in establishing the context, focus and sources of soundly reported stories.
- To analyze the connection between strong information and strong writing.
- To evaluate the varied types of such information in feature writing.
- To introduce and practice skills of interviewing for story as well as fact.

## **Political Columns**

Political columns have a long-standing history of providing partisan viewpoints and arguments, as well as analysis of political news. Political columnists often use wit and satire to criticize politicians or certain policies.

## **Personal Column**

Personal column is the part of a newspaper or magazine that contains short advertisements and private messages.

## **Features of a Personal column**

A personal or personal ad is an item or notice traditionally in the newspaper, similar to a classified advertisement but personal in nature. Newspapers and magazines that take personal advertisements often provide a reply forwarding service; in this case, the text of the advert will include a unique box number and anyone wishing to reply to the advert sends or delivers their reply to the publisher's address in an envelope bearing the address.

**THANK YOU**