

BEFORE YOU START

Remember your audience

Try to keep in mind who your article will be seen by. For example, colleagues across the business, all levels, all departments or specific functions.

So don't get too technical. Keep it jargon-free, clear and simple, and try not to assume that everyone understands your acronyms and specialist terminology.

YOUR ESSENTIAL STORY-WRITING GUIDE

All you need to know about creating an article

You might not be a trained writer, but if you follow some essential rules and remember a few pieces of expert advice, you'll be able to produce a clear and engaging article.

Choose your channel

You've written a fabulous article, so now you want the right people to read it. If your story is relevant to everyone across the business (and you have great intranet), that may well be the quickest and easiest way to get published.

Or maybe you have an in-house newspaper or magazine. If you're targeting a specific audience, an email or a message on MS Teams might be more appropriate, or your story might be better suited to your monthly departmental newsletter.

Don't forget social media channels too – though you should check your company's social media policy before you post!

WRITING YOUR STORY

1. Gather your information

When you start writing a story, the first thing you need to do is to pull together all the information you'll need. To help keep you on track, ask yourself the following questions:

Who was involved?

What happened?

Where did it happen?

Why did it happen?

When did it happen?

How how did it happen?

It's a technique called the '5 Ws' that journalists use to focus on the essentials for a story

Write out the answer to each as succinctly as possible – the results will give you a well-focused starting point for what to include. You can then start thinking about what's missing and anticipating questions readers might have about each point.

Once you've got all the information together, you'll likely have too much for your news story. The trick here is to keep things concise, interesting and engaging. List all your points into three groups:

1. Those that need to be included in the article
2. Those that are interesting but not vital
3. Those that are related but not important to the purpose of the article.

Be as specific as possible when writing down all the facts about the story. You can always trim down unnecessary information later, but it's easier to cut down than it is to beef up an article.

It's okay at this point to have holes in your information – if you don't have a pertinent fact, write down the question and highlight it so you won't forget to find out the information you need.

Doing all this might seem laborious, but we find that it helps save you time overall. You're more likely to stay focused and produce an article that doesn't need lots of re-writing later on.

2. Shape your story

The typical style is fairly straightforward.

Headline

The main headline works best when they are short and to the point – aim for a maximum of eight words.

Subheading / standfirst

Then you'll need a 'talking point'. This can be a bit more flexible – up to 30 words – and should summarise the article.

Introductory paragraph

Then you should write your intro paragraph. Keep it short (20-30 words) and simple. Avoid including too much detail – leave out things like job titles, dates, venues etc... just focus on the main thrust of the story.

EXAMPLE

SUPPORT OUR PEAKY CLIMBERS

EXAMPLE

Intrepid facilities team set to scale the heights of the Three Peaks Challenge to raise much-needed funds for cancer charity.

EXAMPLE

Our facilities team is all set to do what it does best – take on a big challenge and make a positive difference.

3. Structuring your story

The structure of your story should follow the '5 Ws' described previously – but not necessarily in the order we've suggested. Professional writers use what's known as the 'inverted pyramid', and it's a great way to make sure your all-important messages aren't buried at the end of your story.

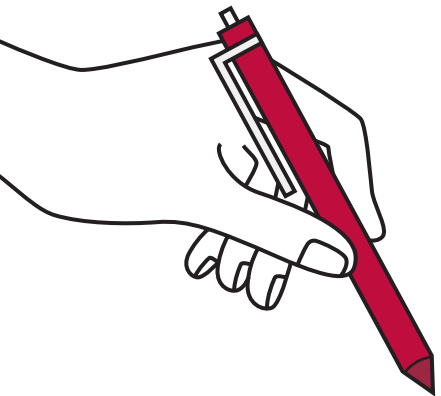
- The most noteworthy information comes first – the classic who, what, when, where, why, and how of a story.
- The second stage contains additional or secondary information that's helpful to know, but isn't as critical as knowing the 5 Ws.
- The third and final stage is where general background information comes in to help colour a story.

“ ”

4. Add a quote

People form the heart of your business, and there's nothing like hearing directly from colleagues when it comes to talking about a team's success, how an initiative is going, or why they decided to volunteer for a good cause. Quotes personalise stories and help make them engaging.

Who? What? Why? When? Where? How?



CHECKLIST

And finally...

Here's a summary of all the essentials for a great news story. If you can tick all the boxes, you'll be right on track.

Headline

Make sure it's descriptive and grabs attention.

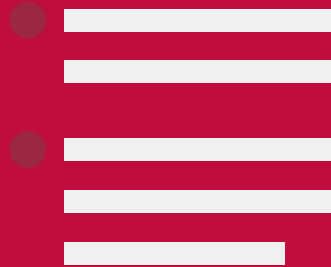


A



Summary

The first paragraph should give the reader a good overview of the entire story.



Hyperlinks

If using a hyperlink, make it descriptive, not just 'click here' or the URL.

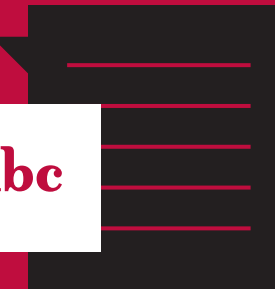


Tone of voice

Be concise, informative and make it more personal to make your message as powerful as possible.



Abc



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WORDS

Word count

Being concise is key, people don't like to scroll down the page. Use links to more detailed information if required.

Quotes

Include quotes to make it more personal.



"Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, con sectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore mna aliqua."

Structure

Don't make sentences too long and break up text with paragraphs. Use headers and bullet points to make the article more visually appealing.



Relevance

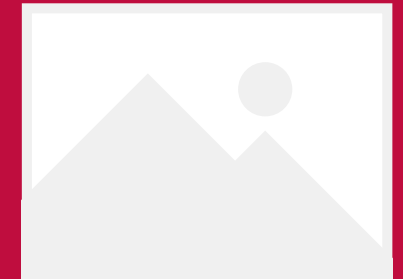
Have you answered the... who, what, why, when, where and how?



Who? What?
Why? When?
Where? How?

Images

Use relevant, people-focused images and videos to strengthen your story.



If you get stuck, your friendly communications agency is on-hand to offer guidance and advice.