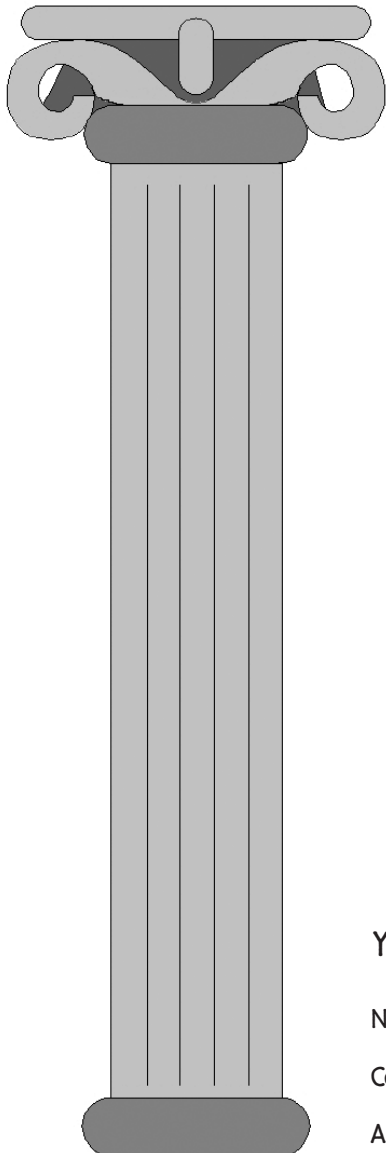

Reporter's Handbook



Year 20__ __

Name _____ Club _____

County _____ Address _____

Age _____ Years in 4-H _____ Date project completed _____

Objectives

- To explain the basics of news writing to 4-H reporters.
- To help club reporters learn how to prepare stories for their local newspapers.
- Reading Level: Seventh grade



Contents

Congratulations!	ii
The Case of the Upside-Down Pyramid	1
The Big Six Questions	1
Know Your Newspaper and Its Style.....	1
Know Your Audiences	2
The ABCs of News Writing.....	2
What Is News?.....	2
Some Journalism Rules	2
Kinds of Stories	3
The Shape of a Newspaper Story.....	4
The Lead	4
Advance Story Leads	5
Follow-Up Story Leads.....	5
The Body	5
Photographs	6
Correct News Story Format	6
Quiz	7

Congratulations!

You have been chosen to do a very important job. You are the club reporter. You have a big job ahead of you.

Much of what people think about 4-H in your community depends on you and how well you do your job.

You wonder just what your job is? Well, it has three parts:

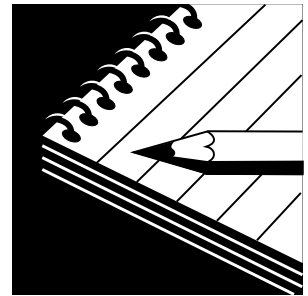
1. Keeping people interested in what your club does.
2. Explaining how your club helps your community.
3. Inspiring other youths with how 4-H can help “Make the Best Better.”

But first, you have to learn what good news is – and then learn how to write good news stories.

So – let’s get going.

Good luck,

Your 4-H Editor



The Case of the Upside-Down Pyramid

Randy is a 4-H'er just like you. He's just been appointed club reporter, a very important assignment.

He's pleased with the honor, but he's also a little bit worried about his duties.

"How to begin? Can I do it? What do I know about finding and writing news, preparing copy and contacting the press?"

Randy knows newspaper publicity is important in his community.

But how could he get his club's ideas and programs into the newspaper and to the people regularly? What's more, how could he make it interesting so they would READ it?

The Big Six Questions

So Randy worried that night about WHAT to write, WHERE to write it, WHEN to write it, WHO to write about, WHY to write, and HOW to write.

"It's hopeless, I can't . . . he mumbled into his pillow."

Was he dreaming that he wasn't alone?

"Are you groaning or are you calling my name?" boomed a voice.

"Who . . . Who's there?" Randy stammered.

"Why, it's me, 'Conciseness Sam.' Didn't you call?"

"Call? Why no! I guess I was just worrying about my job as a 4-H club reporter. I want to do it, but I know I can't."

"Can't! That word doesn't belong in a 4-H member's vocabulary."

The visitor paused. "It just so happens I'm on my way to solve the case of the upside-down pyramid. Believe it or not, the builder is missing."

"Why don't you come along," Sam urged, "and see what you can learn about covering and reporting a story."

Quicker than a wink, Randy scrambled into his clothes and flew out the window with Conciseness Sam the Sleuth in his news-tracking Cluecopter.

Know Your Newspaper and Its Style

The first stop was at the newspaper to see when editor Frantic Fred wanted the story of the solved mystery for his paper.



“You’ve got to solve the mystery and find me the upside-down pyramid builder before Monday’s deadline,” Frantic Fred pleaded.

“Hmmm,” Randy mused. “What’s the connection between the mystery and the editor, and who IS the upside-down pyramid builder?” Before he knew it, Randy was beginning to think like a reporter and asking the Big Six Questions – who, what, when, where, why and how – and looking for the answers just like Conciseness Sam the Sleuth. “We’ve got to work fast,” said Sam. They raced out over homes, hills and valleys.

Know Your Audiences

“Look!” said Sam. “Here are the audiences your 4-H writing must reach. Some are 4-H’ers and leaders. Others are young people you might persuade to join 4-H. Still others know nothing at all about 4-H.”

The ABCs of News Writing

“It will be up to you to give them an Accurate, Brief, and Clear picture of 4-H with your news writing,” Sam commented.

What Is News?

“Stories about NEW, UNUSUAL and IMPORTANT happenings, fairs, exhibits, tours, picnics, camps, community projects, programs and many other things can be news. All these ideas, events, situations, and developments can be good news if you can make them INTERESTING to newspaper readers,” he emphasized.

Remember, names of persons and communities make news, but secretary’s minutes do NOT.

Remember, also, that you always have to consider the age, education, interests and awareness of your audience when you write.

Some Journalism Rules

1. Avoid big words. Don’t say “purchase” when “buy” is so much shorter.
2. Keep your sentences brief. Limit paragraphs to three typewritten lines if possible.
3. Go easy on punctuation and always check it.
4. News reporting means giving only the facts. There’s no place for your opinion in a news story. If you use opinion, be sure to give credit to someone. Always check with the person you are quoting. “A good time was had by all” is pure opinion and doesn’t belong in a news story. Here are some expressions that will help you credit a statement:

- | | | | |
|----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| ● He said | ● He asserted | ● She noted that | ● He advised |
| ● She observed | ● He pointed out | ● She agreed | ● She commented |
| ● According to | ● He says | ● He stated | ● She emphasized |
| ● She declared | ● She believes | ● He suggested | |



-
5. Never write rumors.
 6. Use full names.
 7. Use colorful and punchy verbs.
 8. Plan the stories you want to cover. Keep a calendar of coming events.
 9. Avoid such overworked phrases as “enjoyable evening” and “delicious refreshments.”

Kinds of Stories

“But what kinds of stories should I write?” Randy asked.

“First, take a clue from the calendar. Articles about holidays and seasons are always timely and popular. How-to-do-it articles (telling how to make a lamp or prepare picnic foods, for examples) are appreciated by the reader. Success stories always appeal. And of course, there are the ADVANCE STORY and the FOLLOW-UP STORY.

“The advance story is written before an event takes place, telling why it’s going to happen, who is to be there and what’s to be done. The follow-up is written after an event and tells what happened, who was there and what action was taken,” Sam explained.

Suddenly, the Cluecopter swooped down and landed on a field covered with hundreds of upside-down pyramids. Off in the distance, Danny, the builder, was working away at another one.

Sam grabbed him.

“Sir,” Sam yelled politely to the builder. “You’ve got to stop this at once and come back with us. We need you.”

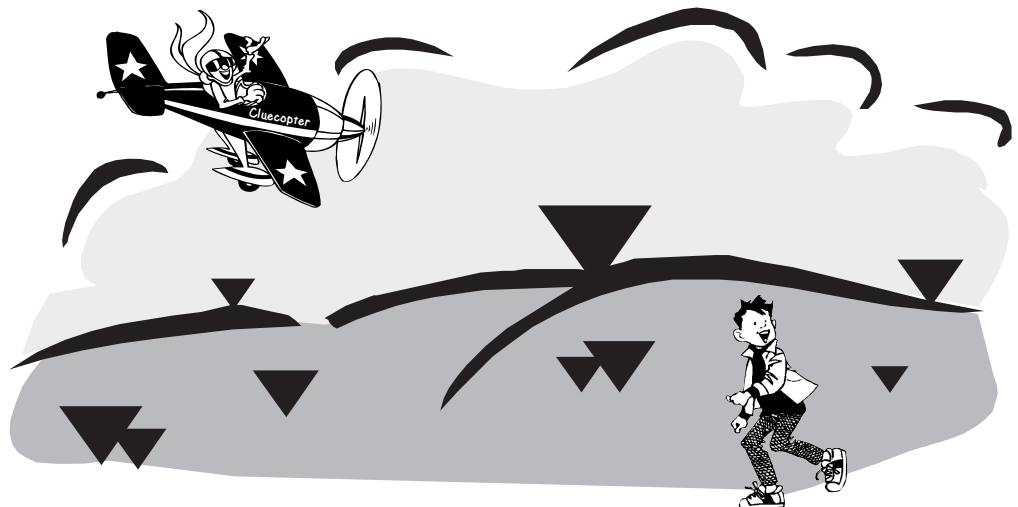
“I won’t go back,” insisted Danny. “You’re all murderers. I couldn’t stand to pick up a newspaper and see all those buried leads that killed reader interest. So I left to devote my life to building upside-down pyramids – the correct way to write a newspaper story.”

“Buried leads? Killed reader interest? Upsidedown pyramids? What’s this all about?” Randy asked.

“You mean you don’t know?”

“No!”

“Well, it’s like this!”



The Shape of a Newspaper Story

The upside-down pyramid style is the basic newspaper story form. It means that the most important facts come first, followed by minor facts and details. The purpose of this style is to give a summary of the news quickly and to help the editor. If a story is too long, the editor can edit it by taking off the bottom of the story without disturbing the important facts.

The Lead

The first sentence in a news story is the lead. It gives the most important and most interesting facts and reveals the angle and subject of the story. The lead is the most important sentence because it attracts attention, sells the story to the reader, and summarizes and emphasizes the main point of the story. The lead may answer one or more of journalism's Big Six Questions: Who, What, When, Where, Why and How.

Examples of leads answering the Big Six Questions:

WHO lead – Jim Jones of Tyler County broke all records at the State 4-H Day when he won 10 blue ribbons for his livestock.

WHAT lead – Regular tractor care is a “must.” That was the message pointed out in a farm safety demonstration at the Dec. 3 meeting of the Mountaineer 4-H Club.

WHERE lead – At the State 4-H Day, 400 4-H members will participate in contests and activities.

WHEN lead – August 30 is the deadline for applicants in the International 4-H Youth Exchange program.

WHY lead – To promote citizenship, the X-L-All 4-H Club is sponsoring an essay contest called “What It Means to Be an American.”

HOW lead – By sewing a Dior-designed dress, Carol Hall, 17-year-old 4-H member, won the National Make It With Wool contest and a trip to New York.

The lead can also be a:

Question: Did you ever bake cookies in the refrigerator?

Quote: “A stitch in time saves nine.”

Summary Statement: West Virginia 4-H'ers have collected more honors this year than ever before. So said . . .

Striking statement: More than 300 people will die on the highways this weekend.”

You Approach: You, too, can learn to wire a lamp in one easy lesson.



Because the following phrases don't say anything important or interesting, good reporters don't begin their news stories with them:

At nine o'clock . . .

The last meeting of the year . . .

The purpose of the meeting . . .

The Beacon 4-H Club . . .

At a meeting . . .

According to John Jones . . .

At a recent meeting . . .

Advance story leads

Poor: In conjunction with the Institute of American Poultry Industries' Fact Finding Conference for Business, Feb. 8-11, the Ninth Junior Poultry and Egg Conference will be held in Kansas City, Mo., etc.

Kills reader interest.

Better: Seeking the latest egg and poultry production information Feb. 8-11 will be 4-H'er Thomas King of Lewis County. Thomas will be West Virginia's representative at the Ninth Junior Poultry and Egg Fact Finding Conference in Kansas City, Mo., etc.

Follow-up story leads

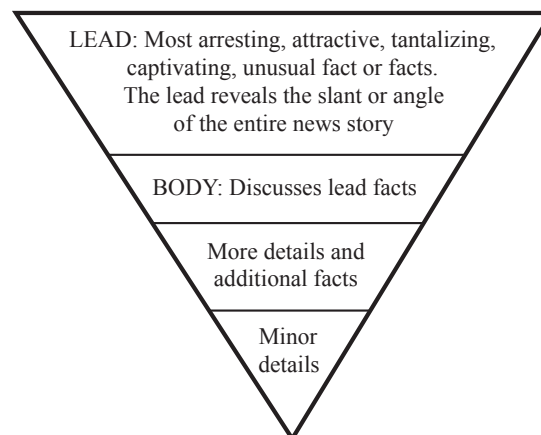
Poor: The boys of the Happy Hills 4-H Club met at the Fish and Game Club on Friday, Jan. 15. The meeting was called to order at 8:15 by President Tom Hall. In the absence of the secretary, Dick Grant, Vice-president Harry Miller wrote the minutes of the meeting. There were eight members and three visitors present. The club welcomed one new member, Kenneth Brown, etc. These are secretary's minutes, not news.

Better: "Welcome to Happy Hills" signs will be erected on Highway 309, Route 2 and Harding Road, as a result of the Jan. 15 Happy Hills 4-H Club meeting, etc.

The Body

The body, or the remainder of the story, supports the lead and goes on to explain it. Write your story starting with the more important facts, then put the least important facts and details at the end.

The Right Newspaper Story Form



Photographs

Sometimes you'll want to submit a photograph to your newspaper. Each picture should tell a story. Catch people in action, not just looking straight at the camera. Stand close to your subject. Don't feel you must shoot people from head to toe. Focus on what's important.

Don't write on either side of the picture but tape or paste identification or a caption on the back or write it on a separate piece of paper. Do not fold. Do not expect the photograph to be returned.

"Speaking of returning," reminded Sam, "we'd better be getting back to town. We've got a deadline to meet, and Frantic Fred is desperate for Danny's talents as an upside-down pyramid builder."

Back in the Cluecopter, they discussed the accepted form for news articles.

Correct News Story Format

Use 8 1/2-by-11-inch typing paper
(not onionskin).

Leave about 1 1/2-inch margins on left
and right sides.

Put important information about you in the
upper left-hand corner. In the right-hand
corner, give the release date. Whenever
possible, the story should go to the editor
three or four days before the release date.

If possible, type and double space the copy
for easy reading and corrections. (Editors
much prefer easy-to-read typed stories and
frown on handwritten ones.) Begin your
story halfway down the first page. Indent paragraphs five spaces. If the story is more than one page, type
"more" at the bottom of the first page; begin the next page with an identifying head (example: Smithtown
4-H Club Elections) in the upper left-hand corner. One line below that, write "Add One" and on the next page
write "Add Two" and so on. At the end of story write "End" or "30" – a newspaper symbol for "finish."

After Sam, Randy and Danny finished discussing the accepted news story form, the Cluecopter landed
in front of Frantic Fred.

"Is that really you, Danny? Thank goodness you've returned. Bless you, Sam and Randy, for bringing back the
upside-down pyramid builder. No more killed reader interest. No more lead burials. Get in there and get going,"
Fred said.

"Thanks for giving me this opportunity, Fred," Randy replied happily.

"And thank you, Conciseness Sam, for showing me how to find the news," said Randy. "Thank you, Danny,
the upside-down pyramid builder, for showing me how to write news. Thank you, Fred, the editor, for helping
me get the news published."

Name _____	Release Date _____	Identifying Head _____
Address _____		Add One _____
Phone _____		_____
	Identifying Head _____	_____
Lead _____		_____
_____		_____
_____		_____
Body _____		_____
_____		_____
_____		_____
	More _____	30 _____



“Nonsense, Randy. It was all in a day’s ‘making your best better,’” the three chanted in unison.
“Now you’re ready to be a topnotch 4-H reporter.”

And so are YOU!

Happy news writing!

Quiz

And now – here’s a surprise quiz on your news writing course! It’s a cinch, though; the answers are on the back cover.

1. Name two kinds of stories you can write about meetings.
2. What’s the first step in writing a news story?
3. What are the ABCs of news writing?
4. What’s the first thing you tell about in a news story?
5. Tell a good way to begin an advance story.
6. What do you play up when writing a follow-up story?
7. Give the rule for building a news story.
8. List some style rules in writing news.
9. Do you give an opinion in a news story?
10. Accuracy is important. Tell some points you should check carefully.
11. How can you help the editor?

Answers

1. Advance stories to announce meetings; and follow-up stories, which tell what happened.
2. Get all the information – the Big Six: Who, What, When, Where, How and Why.
3. Be accurate, brief and clear.
4. The most important and interesting fact you learned.
5. Start with the purpose of the meeting.
6. The most important happening at the meeting.
7. Build with important details near the top and leave the least important points for last.
8. Use simple language. Avoid big words. Be clear.
9. Only when it's credited to someone.
10. People's names and initials. Mention who strangers are. Give places, dates and times. Use the dictionary.
11. By typing or writing clearly on only one side of each sheet. By writing short sentences and short paragraphs. By using the upside-down pyramid style.

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