

Feature Writing

Shortcode	Description
AP: Strong	The writing here shows a strong awareness of writing conventions generally followed by feature writers. Of course, writers should follow AP style in almost all cases, except in cases when the publication's stylebook dictates otherwise. This kind of writing creates consistency for the reader, putting the emphasis on the content and not variations in punctuation, abbreviations or other usage. Well done with copy editing for style here.
AP: Weak	Feature writers generally write with more consistency than this. The rules that govern this consistency are called "style" generally and the most universally used style is "Associated Press style." Consider how the writing could more closely follow this style, or, if not AP style, then a consistent style dictated by the publication's style guide. Regardless of the guide used, consistency is the goal, so that the reader can focus on content rather than variations and irregularities in the writing.
Facts: Editorializing	The term "editorializing" refers to the insertion of opinion into a piece of writing -- even feature writing. Of course, we encourage the writer's opinion in many different forms of writing. However, feature writing most often pairs facts with the opinions of others, not the writer's opinion. Editorializing can be fixed by (1) attributing an opinions to the people who said it; (2) being careful with adjectives that reveal the writer's opinion, such as "good" or "successful"; (3) avoid overstating reality with phrases like "everyone loves her"; and (4) avoiding using first and second person pronouns like "I" and "you." How much editorializing belongs in this story?
Facts: Observation	One of the key reasons that readers seek out feature stories is to be placed in the midst of a situation, even though they weren't actually there at the time. Consider how this story could better describe details: its sights and sounds, its characters and its environment. Sure, when doing this, feature writers are often tempted to give both observation AND opinion. Notice that the two are different: you can observe your surroundings without editorializing. How would more observational writing change this story?
Facts: Strong	While quotes make up much of feature story research, reporters strive to find the dates, numbers and other facts that explain the topic. This story showcases not just basic factual research that the reader expects, but also unexpected facts from trustworthy sources. This kind of work takes time but is rewarded by readers who hunger for the authoritative take on a story. Nice work with factual research indeed.
Facts: Weak	If readers are to trust a story -- or indeed a publication -- they need specific, trustworthy facts from authoritative sources or your observation. Consider how this story could provide either type of research. What sources would have given expert analysis? What numbers or statistics would have helped explain? What documents, databases or reports provide vital information about this? Answering these questions would help the story here.
Lead: Excellent	Readers of this story will NEED to keep reading because the lead is excellent at inviting the reader's curiosity. This can be difficult to do in any kind of writing. However, it is done well here. The word choices and the news judgment displayed here will attract readers and make it more likely that they will finish the story. Congrats.
Lead: Weak	If a story is to succeed, the lead of the story must be a mixture of inviting and active. A lead can invite by presenting issues or conflicts that the story will work to resolve. Plus, the lead should strive to be energetic with its verb choices and sentence construction to attract reader attention right away. Consider how you could improve this lead.
Quotes: Strong	This writing vividly displays the people interviewed for the story. Quotations bring to life the personality of the source, in addition to allowing those sources to voice their opinions. Gathering such quotations demands time and attention to listening while interviewing. The result? Your readers feel like they have met your sources and had interesting conversations with them. What a gift you have given them.
Quotes: Style	Aside from gathering strong quotations from interviews, feature writing demands a strong display of those quotations within the story. We can describe this clear and consistent display of interview material as "quotation style." Strong quotation style demands (1) proper use of punctuation, whether commas, quotation marks or periods; (2) consistent attribution, with "said" as the most common attribution verb; (3) logical paragraph breaks to help the reader transition into and away from the quotation. Read professional reporting to see how quotations are commonly attributed there.
Quotes: Weak	The quotations within a story have a two-fold opportunity. First, quotations provide your sources an opportunity to comment on their opinion of the story's topic. What do they think? What anecdotes do they have that connect to your story? And second, by providing quotations, the story can describe your source's personality to the reader. Of course, this demands thoughtful interviews (that often occur in person and after preliminary research). Also, beware that quotations don't relay factual information that could be communicated with indirect quotations.
Sentences: Strong	Feature writing depends on strong, declarative sentences that make the facts clear. Verbs must be active and vivid to make the sentences compelling. This kind of writing takes restraint. Some sentences must be short. However, others must be longer and more complicated to fully explain facts and context. This story showcases those kinds of sentence structures and sentence structure variety, much to the benefit of the reader.
Sentences: Unclear	At the most basic level, sentences should communicate a singular idea or piece of information to the reader. The failure of a sentence to do so can be the result of poor word choice, misplaced punctuation or simply not having a clear goal for the sentence's purpose. Regardless, the problem can be most quickly and effectively spotted by reading the entirety of the story out loud. Places where your reading stumbles will likely be places where the reader will stumble as well.
Sentences: Wordy	Writing concisely has always been a goal for writers. Consider how this piece of writing could have used fewer words to communicate the same facts and message. Where are excess words usually found within a sentence? A good place to look is within the verb phrase. For instance, "The team has been considered as ranked #1" could be "The team is ranked #1." Making your writing more compact will make it possible to include more facts, anecdotes, descriptions and quotes for your reader to enjoy.
Structure: Length	Consider the length of this piece and whether it is too long. Or, perhaps this simple question: if your goal is to be a wonderful storyteller, how long should this story be to be perfectly effective at entertaining your audience? While many features are quite long for special projects, other feature stories are very short. What is best for this feature story?

Structure: Strong	The story structure here anticipates what the reader wants to know and -- more importantly -- when they want to know it. This takes planning and forethought. Often this structure is the inverted pyramid structure for news stories, but not always. So, feeding information to the reader often becomes more complicated than simply ranking facts in order of importance and displaying them in that sequence. Nice work with this complicated task of structuring the story.
Structure: Transitions	News writing doesn't often demand long or complicated transition statements. Writers are often encouraged to simply move from topic to topic. However, when these switches are particularly abrupt, the reader feels off balance. Try to locate moments in the story here that could use even a slight transition to ease the switch in topic.
Topic: Good emotion	The separation between solid feature reporting and excellent feature reporting generally hinges on the writer's ability to make the audience feel emotion -- whether negative, positive or conflicted. If the reader wants to feel, how can the writer deliver that emotion? This story answers that question by delivering emotion in its storytelling. Great work of emotional feature reporting.
Topic: Strong	A topic like this is excellent for your audience and for the form of feature writing in general. Great feature stories often hinge on (1) human interest: finding an emotional story; (2) novelty: finding an unusual story; and/or (3) humor: telling a comedic story. Nice work in realizing that a subject like this invites good feature writing.
Topic: Weak	Most stories can be improved by being framed in a more narrow and local way. For instance, a story about sports injuries is very vague. You could write many books about that topic; how can you expect to cover it in a single news story? However, if you wrote about how the golf team at your school was suffering a pattern of elbow injuries, that would be newsworthy. Make "narrow and local" a mantra for finding and framing news stories. Additionally, feature stories often focus on three "elements" of news: (1) human interest: finding an emotional story; (2) novelty: finding an unusual story; and/or (3) humor: telling a comedic story. Consider how to improve the topic of this story.