

# Yearbook

Shortcode	Description
Facts: Editorializing	The term "editorializing" refers to the insertion of opinion into a piece of writing. Of course, we encourage the writer's opinion in many different forms of writing. However, yearbook copy most often pairs researched 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."
Facts: Observation	One of the key reasons that readers seek out copy in yearbooks is to be placed in the midst of a situation, even though they weren't actually there at the time. Or, perhaps to relive a moment that they witnessed in person. 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: Unique year	If a yearbook overall strives to tell the story of a specific and unique year, then the words inside the book must also be specific and unique to the year. Consider how the facts, observations and quotes in this copy could be more unique to the year. What is unique about this year in regards to this topic? Focusing on those types of facts will help your readers remain frozen in that moment.
Facts: Weak	If readers are to trust a story -- or indeed a publication -- they need specific, trustworthy facts from authoritative sources. Consider how this story could provide that 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 yearbook 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, informing and active. A lead can invite by presenting issues or conflicts that the story will work to resolve. The lead also might inform readers of the vital facts of the story right at the outset, ensuring that they understand the issue even if they quit reading immediately. Finally, a lead should strive to be energetic with its verb choices and sentence construction to attract reader attention.
Quotes: Style	Aside from gathering strong quotations from interviews, writing for yearbook 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? 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	Journalistic writing depends on strong, declarative sentences that make the facts clear. Verbs must be active and vivid to make the sentences compelling. (Of course, in yearbook we have a bit more creative license with sentence structure when writing theme copy.) 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 copy showcases a variety of sentence structures, 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 of yearbook writers. We often hear that yearbook readers don't actually read: they look at the photos. So, 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." How can your writing be more compact?
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 less often so for yearbook copy. For yearbook writers, 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	Journalistic 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.
Style: Past tense	Unless your staff has chosen a theme that dictates otherwise, yearbook copy generally uses only past tense. Why? Because when the reader is enjoying reading your copy, the year will be over and the yearbook will be a past-tense kind of historical journalism. Of course, you leave quotes as is. But work to stay consistent with past-tense verbs.
Style: Strong	The writing here shows a strong awareness of writing conventions generally followed by news 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.
Style: Weak	Journalistic 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.

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Theme: Strong	(THEME) Solid work here of writing theme (or concept) copy. Of course, this variety of copy aims to set a mood for the book or connect to a theme for the book, and sometimes both. For this reason, the writing may have a less journalistic tone. However, it should -- perhaps even more than other writing in the book -- emphasize the "moment" of this year. Kudos on great theme copy that freezes this year through words.
Theme: Weak	(THEME) The writing of theme (or concept) copy here needs improvement. While theme copy often connects to the yearbook's theme, takes risks with word choice, and toys with sentence structure, the words should still aim to tell a story or describe a moment that is particularly "this year."
Topic: Strong	A topic like this is excellent for a yearbook audience. The writing frames the story around human moments that will remain emotional and compelling regardless of when the book is read. Yet the writing also works to provide an overview of the topic that can stand in for the entire sweep of the year. Well done here.
Topic: Weak	Consider how to improve the topic of this story. 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.