

Yearbook “How-To” Guide

I. Getting Started

When you receive your spread, the first step is to determine “the angle,” which is the central idea or theme for the topic. It’s the way you will approach the topic.

For example,...

If it’s a sport, do you want to talk about how the team overcame obstacles, how they dominated their league, or how they struggled?

If it’s a club, do you want to focus on the unique duties, how hard it is to balance clubs with homework, or how it helps the community?

If it’s about academics/classes, do you want to focus on the work, the fun, or what it might do for a student’s future?

II. Interviewing

Once you have the angle, you need to go out and talk to the people involved. This can be a bit intimidating, but remember that students and teachers *want* to talk about your topic. They *want* to be in the yearbook, so you have the power in the situation.

Asking the right questions will help you have great information to use for both your copy and your captions. You also need to ask the right people, so don’t just focus on students, but also ask the teachers, club advisors, coaches, and administrators the right questions. If you do it right, you will have more information than you need for your writing.

Choose from these questions before you go out to interview:

(Be sure to have them written or typed out on a sheet of paper before you leave the room)

Who:

Who are the key people? (Examples: Most valuable players, team captains, club officers, committee members, inspirational members)

Who does what?

What:

What exactly do you do?

What special events do you have planned?

What activity/game is the biggest for your group?

What unique things do you do to prepare?

What obstacles did you have to overcome to achieve your goals?

What went right and what went wrong?

What do you do just before/after the event or activity?

What makes your group different from others?

When:

When will you be doing what it is you do?

How often will you be doing this?

When is your big activity scheduled?

When is the best time to contact you again?

Where:

Where do you do what you do?

Where will the big event/activity be?

How:

How did you do what you did? (This a summary of the event from start to finish.)

III. Writing Good Copy

OK. So writing isn't your favorite pastime. You probably think photographs make the yearbook special, not the copy or stories. You may be right, but it doesn't have to be that way. Copy can be fun and exciting, or it can be boring and monotonous. Either way it's an important part of fulfilling the history/record book and memory book functions of a yearbook.

General Tips:**Ask yourself "Why does the reader care?"**

The most important thing you can do is put yourself in your reader's shoes. The answer to this question should form the lead for the first paragraph. Keep the information unique to this year, not something that could go in any year.

Avoid "The purpose of ..." leads

There is nothing that says "I'm boring" faster than a story beginning with "The purpose of the Key Club is to..." Readers want to know what the club did this year and how it was different from last year.

Use quotes to provide a personal perspective

Quotes are excellent devices for giving credibility to a story, adding opinion, and color. Get quotes that add good information and personality to the story. Avoid quotes that are general and don't add to the story.

Follow subject, verb, object order

We are most accustomed to reading in "Jane made the touchdown" order and it is, therefore, easier to follow. Remember Subject-Verb-Object is the most easily understood.

Use two-sentence quotes when possible

Nearly every quote is better if it is two sentences long. Short quotes leave questions in the mind of the reader. Often the second sentence completes the thought.

Be specific

General nouns like boy, girl, star, rock are more meaningful when they are specific: grade 9 student, cross-country runner, north star, 50lb rock.

The more specific adjectives and adverbs you use, the more clearly the reader will understand the message. Rather than referring to a girl by her hair color, give specific qualities that relate to the subject such as "Number 18 blasted ahead on her long legs."

Divide copy into segments

Divide the copy into small segments rather than tackling the feature as a whole. For example, you don't have to write the lead first just because it comes first. For some, the lead is the easiest part, while for others it is the most difficult. And, just as the angle may change, new leads can surface once the story is underway.

Writing a small section at a time offers proof of accomplishment. With each completed section, you can see the results, encouraging you to continue.

Do's & Don't's:

- ❖ Write all copy in past tense and use active verbs (worked, ran, threw, screamed,...)
- ❖ Write in third person: Never use the words “we”, “you”, and “I”.
- ❖ Be specific when writing.
Don't say, “Four students have a great time at the homecoming game.” Name them and be more specific about what they are doing!
- ❖ Always use spell check on your work.
- ❖ Avoid using the phrase “this year” unless needed for comparison.
- ❖ Avoid beginning copy (if possible) with “a, an, or the.”
- ❖ Use impact words that make the writer stand up and take notice.
- ❖ All names in body copy must be bolded.
- ❖ Teachers are named, including first name.
Example: **Mr. (Dave) Werra**. Teachers are only named in this fashion the first time they are mentioned in the story. Any subsequent references are made with Mr./Mrs. and the last name. Example: **Mr. Werra**
- ❖ When you refer to students in the copy list their grade and then name.
Example: senior **Amanda Wood**. The grade level is always lower case unless it is at the beginning of a sentence and the grade level is **NEVER** bolded!

Getting Started with...The Attention Grabber

This could be the most important sentence in your body copy. If it's boring, no one will want to read the rest of your story. Therefore, grab your readers' attention with one of these clever openings:

Rhetorical Question: Why would anyone want to get up at 5:30 in the morning on a Saturday? To train for their first cross country meet, of course.

Brief Story: The cold, wet wind whips through the bars of their facemasks as they await the kickoff that will start the most important game of their lives. It's the playoffs!

Definition: Folsom High School Key Club defines “crazy fun” as a day spent collecting cans for the Twin lakes Food Bank. 600 pounds of food, to be exact, was collected outside Savemart on Saturday, September 25th.

Quote: “I have to say that it was the best and strangest sixteen minutes of my life!” exclaimed sophomore Hillary Thrillary. She, of course, was referring to...

Analogy: The senior class is to the school what the leash is to the neck of the bulldog. It's what leads the other.

Dialogue: “I'm so stressed!”
“Me, too. I just don't know what to do about it.”
“Hmmm. Maybe we should check out the Yoga Club.”
“That'll do the trick.”

Body Copy Template:

Follow this format when writing your copy for your spread:

Par. 1: Attention Grabber

Transition

Angle/Main Point about the club, group, team,...

Quote

Par.2 : Transition

Quote (1 or 2)

Fact

Par. 3: Transition

Quote (1 or 2)

Fact

Par. 4: Wrap-up (refer back to your attention grabber or main point)

IV. Writing Captions

Compared to writing body copy, captions are quite easy.

There are three basic parts to the caption:

1. **What's Happening:** Using active verbs, describe what's happening "beyond the obvious" by stating who is in the photo (left to right), where they are, when they are there, and what they are doing. Avoid using phrases such as "poses for the camera" "smiles with friends".
2. **The "Quote":** Provide a nice, juicy quote from one of the people in the photo. Two sentences are better than one here.
3. **The Fact:** Give a fact about the event or incident in the photo, or a fact about the club, sport, or activity of the spread.

V. Team Photos:

Follow this format for player names: (Names are Left to Right in the photo.)

Row One: F. Last, F. Last, F. last, F. Last. **Row Two:** F. Last, F. Last, F. last, F. Last, F. Last, F. Last, F. last, F. Last. **Row Three:** F. Last, F. Last, F. last, F. Last. **Row Four:** F. Last, F. Last, F. last, F. Last, F. Last. **Back Row:** F. Last, F. Last, F. last, F. Last, F. Last.

VI. Formatting

It's extremely important that you follow the formatting rules for *every* word on your spread. That includes font, style (regular, *italics*, underlined or **bolded**), point size, and alignment. To help you, refer to the sample spread handout and pay close attention to how everything is done.

VII. Tagging Photos

When all of the photos are placed and everything is written, it's time to tag your photos so the book can have an accurate index. Students do use the index to find their friends *and themselves*, so it is an important step in the process.

Hopefully, doing that means that you are officially done with the spread!