

FHPW

FLINT HILLS PUBLICATIONS WORKSHOP

2026



LEADERSHIP • DESIGN • ADVISING • WRITING • PHOTOGRAPHY



ALUMNI
ASSOCIATION

KANSAS STATE
UNIVERSITY

A.Q. Miller School of
Media & Communication

Rockin'K's

USE YOUR VOICE

Sharing Opinions in Editorials,
Columns and Reviews

KRIST NYP
Manhattan High School
MHS Student Media

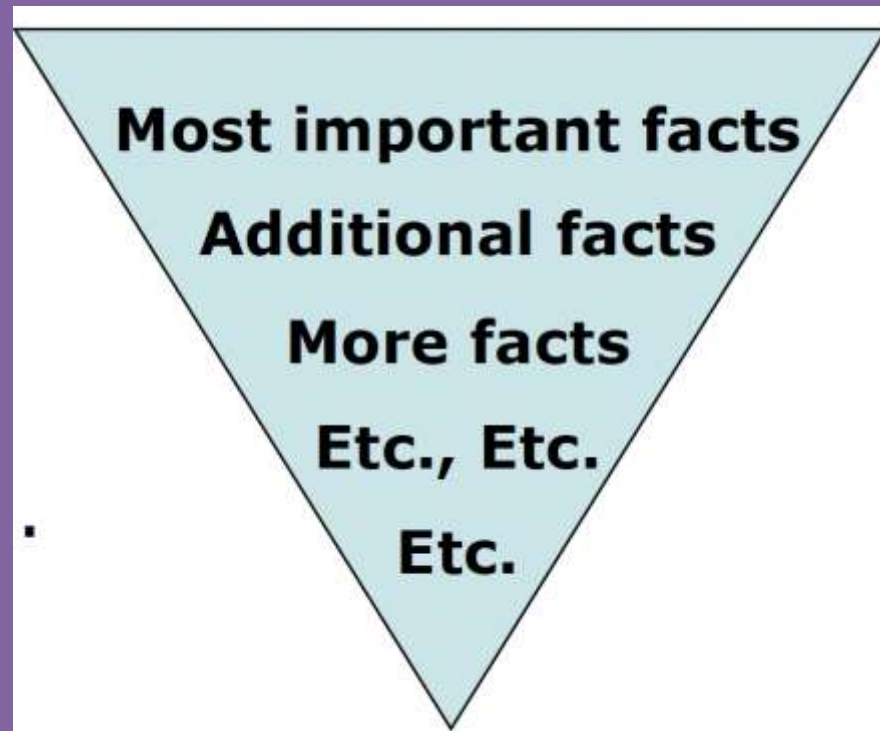
MHS Mentor newspaper
www.MHSMentor.com
Blue M Yearbook
Big Blue Weekly newscast
MHS Student Media broadcasting

Unbiased news coverage is important, but clear opinion writing has value for your readers:

- **Timeliness** – the story is told as soon as possible
 - **Proximity** – the story is important to members of the core audience (students, faculty and staff, parents, community members)
 - **Impact** – the topic changes something in the readers' lives
 - **Conflict** – the topic is an issue about which people hold different opinions
 - **Uniqueness** – the story covers something unexpected or out of the ordinary (even if it happens every year)
 - **Emotion** – the story makes people feel something
 - **Celebrity** – the story covers someone well-known to the audience (whether that's within your school or globally)
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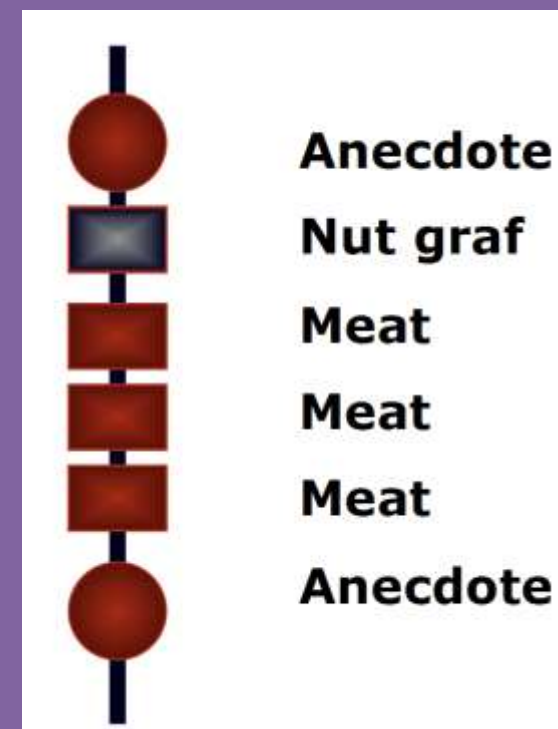
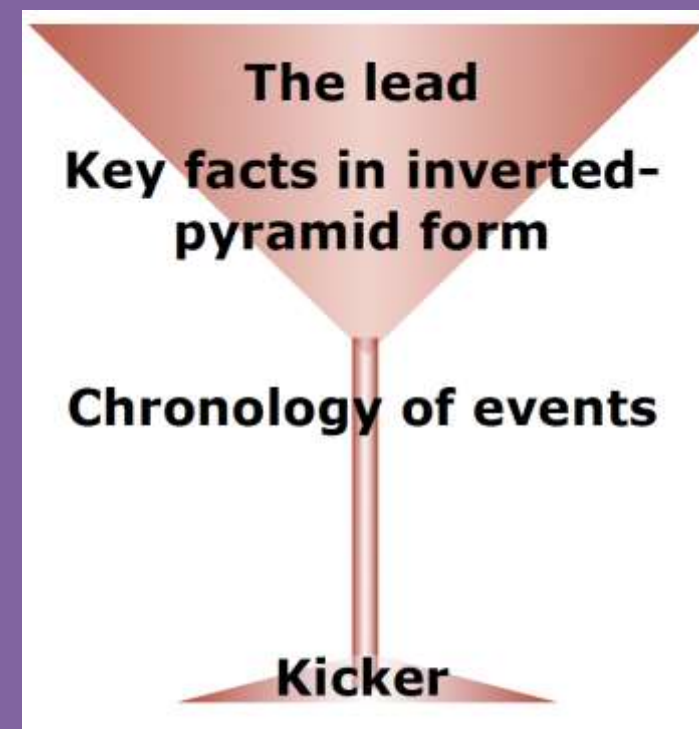
News/Feature Story Structure

In general stories follow a similar format



Basic structures:

- Inverted Pyramid
- Martini Glass
- Kabob



Types of leads:

- Standard news lead
- Narrative / anecdotal lead
- Scene setter lead
- Blind lead
- Roundup lead
- Direct address lead
- Startling statement lead
- Wordplay
- Avoid Topical leads, Quote leads and Question leads

Three general types of opinion writing:

- Opinion columns – one person's position on an issue that impacts your audience, supported by evidence
 - Editorials – the publication's collective position on an issue that impacts your audience, supported by evidence
 - Reviews – one layperson's recommendation about a product or service, based on their experience
-

Standard 5-paragraph essay format

- Paragraph 1 introduces the issue and presents your opinion as a thesis sentence
- Paragraph 2 presents a sub-point that supports your thesis (uses logic and verified evidence to prove it's correct)
- Paragraphs 3 and 4 also support the thesis with additional sub-points and evidence
- Paragraph 5 concludes the essay by summarizing the points, restating the thesis in a more concrete way and leaving the reader with a call to action (what they or those in power should do next to resolve the issue)



Example 1 (APA Format): Should Internships Always Be Paid Positions?

Introduction (Thesis):

Internships are intended to prepare students for professional careers, but unpaid internships remain widespread despite their inequities. Because unpaid positions disproportionately favor students who can afford to work without compensation, internships should always be paid positions to ensure fairness, access, and equity.

Body Paragraph 1 – Equity & Access:

Unpaid internships systematically exclude students from low-income backgrounds who cannot afford to forgo wages. NACE's position statement reports that paid interns on average receive 1.61 job offers, whereas unpaid interns receive only 0.94 offers (NACE, 2022). This disparity shows how unpaid internships give an unfair advantage to financially stable students (NACE, 2022).

Body Paragraph 2 – Value of Labor & Career Outcomes:

Interns perform tasks that contribute real value to research, administration, project work and deserve fair compensation. Employers using paid internships often convert them to full-time roles. NACE data notes that paid interns earn median starting salaries of \$62,500, compared to \$42,500 for unpaid interns (NACE, 2022; NACE, 2025).

Counterargument & Rebuttal:

Critics argue that unpaid internships offer valuable experience and networking that justify nonpayment. However, experience should not replace fair compensation. Paying interns doesn't diminish learning; instead, it promotes dignity and inclusiveness.

Conclusion (Call to Action):

Internships should not be exclusive privileges for financially privileged students. Educational institutions, employers, and policymakers must work together to standardize paid internships. Equitable access to these opportunities ensures that talent, not financial background determines a student's professional path.

References (APA):

NACE. (2022). *Unpaid internships and the need for federal action (Position Statement)*. NACE.
<https://www.nacweb.org/about-us/advocacy/position-statements/position-statement-us-internships/>
NACE. (2025). *Guide to compensation for interns & co-ops. (Average hourly wage data)*
<https://nacweb.org/job-market/compensation/average-hourly-wage-for-interns-exceeds-23-dollars>

Opinion Column Outline form

To help organize your thoughts, complete the following outline using complete sentences.

Topic: _____

Paragraph 1. Now, write about your topic as a thesis sentence – what’s the point you want to make?

Paragraph 5. Say your main point a different way in one sentence that you can use as your summary.

Now add a “call to action” – what do you want people to do or think or be now that they’ve read your viewpoint?

Paragraph 2. What’s one fact or example that is a reason why you think your main thesis is correct?

Paragraph 3. What’s another fact or example that is a reason why you think your main thesis is correct?

Paragraph 4. What’s one more fact or example that is a reason why you think your main thesis is correct?

Now type up this list of sentences as separate paragraphs, and rearrange them in numerical order Paragraph 1 through 5.

As an outline, it looks like this:

- I. Topic/angle (like a thesis statement) stated as a sentence.
 - A. first supporting point
 - 1. sub point
 - 2. sub point, etc.
 - B. second supporting point
 - 1. sub point
 - 2. sub point
 - 3. subpoint, etc.
 - C. third supporting point
 - 1. sub point, etc.
- II. Conclusion – restate your position as a complete sentence.

Then expand each sentence into a full paragraph. You can add more paragraphs with quotes, statistics or anecdotal stories

that support your main points or make additional supportive points, but you should use at least these three.

Then proofread your column. Read it out loud. Have someone else read it – someone who agrees with your point of view, and someone you know will disagree. Check grammar. Check logic. Have you proven your point? Are you sure you made a point? Ask those people who proofread it what point they thought you made; if they don’t know, you need to rewrite.

Outline your thoughts in this format

Look for examples of successful opinions

Office staff rush around as dozens of delivery orders arrive at the school, the overwhelmed staff work to let DoorDash and UberEATS drivers in and out of the school to deliver students their lunches. This chaotic scene was the state of the front office last week as more and more students have started ordering lunch from third party delivery services.

Principal Jessica Laske has proposed a ban on food delivery services at the school to ensure school safety. This comes after a delivery driver entered the school last week and classes were put into lockdown until the person could be removed by law enforcement.

This new ban will help to maintain a safe school environment and eliminate

unnecessary distractions created by food delivery.

Allowing unknown visitors to enter the school in order to deliver food creates an unnecessary risk. The security of the school is a main concern for both students and staff. The safety of students is a much higher priority than students' ability to order food because they don't want to eat school lunch. Administration is right to take steps to ensure students safety as it should be a top priority of the school.

Food delivery services also overwhelm the office staff, taking focus away from their jobs. The recent security concern was due to office staff being distracted by an excess of food delivery. It is not the office staff's job to manage students' food orders, they should

be focused on school security.

The distraction of office staff creates more safety concerns as they are not able to properly monitor who is leaving and entering the school. Instituting the ban on food delivery will allow the office staff to maintain a safe and secure school.

Another major concern of allowing food delivery is the distraction it poses to students learning. Allowing students to leave class in order to pick up food means they are missing important instruction time.

English teacher Silpa Sarpa has noticed her students leaving in the middle of her instruction and returning with food. This means students are missing up to 15 minutes of important class time. Time that should be spent learning.

However, many students argue that food delivery supplies them with the capability to order healthier options. In reality, this only applies to a very small portion of the student body. Most students order fast food because they would prefer to not eat school lunch.

While students' concerns about school lunch are valid and the school should work to increase food options, they should not risk school security to do it. The school must continue to be a safe place for learning. Allowing food delivery puts students' safety at risk and distracts them from necessary learning.

**1st Place – Class 5A 6A
Editorial Writing**

**Maddie Martin
Mill Valley High School**



EDITORIAL

The Yondr pouch has become LAUSD’s million-dollar failure

In a school district where classrooms overflow, facilities crumble and some teachers work second jobs to make ends meet, LAUSD somehow found \$7 million for magnetic neoprene pouches. Not for school supplies, updated technology or salary raises. For phone pouches. Yondr pouches, to be exact — the district’s newest attempt at enforcing digital abstinence in the classroom.

And it didn’t take long for students to reduce this initiative to what it always was: a performative, duct-tape solution to a much deeper structural issue.

Here at Van Nuys High School, it only took a few days for students to find ways around the Yondr pouches, a development that echoed throughout most of the district.

From smuggling in decoy phones to ordering magnets off Amazon, teenagers have thoroughly dismantled the fantasy that you can out-engineer an addiction with Velcro and good intentions.

Let’s give credit where it’s due. LAUSD made a bold move to improve focus in classrooms.

Aiming to restrict phone usage wasn’t completely misguided, as data suggests it can improve academic performance.

A 2023 report from UNESCO identified phones as a significant disruption in classrooms, hinting at the benefits of a phone ban. Further, a study published by ScienceDirect, a peer-reviewed database, found that banning phones would equate to an extra hour of instructional time per week.

But the problem is that results only follow if the policy is enforceable. This one isn’t.

Administrators barely made it a month before giving up the fight. Teachers stopped checking pouches. Staff patrolling the campus stopped caring. As it became increasingly clear that students couldn’t be trusted or effectively monitored, enforcement fizzled away.

Today, students openly scroll through TikTok in hallways and text in class. Every student still has a Yondr pouch, sure. But most have never been touched, and many simply get left at home.

Let that sink in: a multimillion-dollar solution to phone distraction fell apart in weeks. The most good that came out of the Yondr pouches was an excellent case study in why district-level decisions made in a vacuum almost always backfire.

What LAUSD failed to anticipate is that locking a teenager’s lifeline in a fancy oven



THE MIRROR | ALISA LARA

mitt would provoke defiance, not discipline.

According to a 2024 Pew Research Center study, 95 percent of teens have smartphones, and nearly half say they are online “almost constantly.”

Clearly, this isn’t just a distraction issue; it’s a full-blown dependency. To slap a magnet on that dependency and call it a solution requires an astonishing lack of foresight.

A phone pouch, no matter how well-designed, would never have overridden the fact that students don’t want to be disconnected.

Within weeks of the policy’s implementation, online tutorials surfaced showing how to break into the pouches with magnets. Some students took to smashing them against desks. Once enforcement at school noticeably died down, many disregarded them entirely.

Let’s not pretend this outcome wasn’t inevitable. Any policy that hinges on student integrity, mass compliance and daily administrative policing is doomed from the start.

Resources are already stretched too thin in LAUSD for schools to monitor bathroom graffiti, let alone hundreds and thousands of middle and high school students.

Now we’re left with a pile of green and gray pouches that students laugh at, teachers ignore and administrators have quietly started distancing themselves from.

OUR TAKES

FASHION FALLOUT Fast fashion is everywhere, from TikTok hauls to \$5 shirts that fall apart after one wash. It’s cheap, trendy and incredibly tempting. But the low prices mask the exploitative labor practices and massive environmental labor. Brands like Shein and Temu have built empires on disposable clothing, prioritizing profit over ethics. As consumers, we have more power than we think. Buying less, thrifting and supporting sustainable brands makes a real difference in challenging an industry rooted in harm.

TEST FATIGUE Standardized tests like the iReady and SBAC hold little meaning for the very students who take them. They don’t reflect real learning or growth, mostly serving to secure state funding. Meanwhile, valuable instructional time is eaten up by standardized testing — time teachers could spend actually supporting students. Ultimately, this system forces students and teachers to jump through hoops with little benefit. It’s time to rethink a model that wastes time and energy just to meet funding quotas.



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Too personal
Online obsession with outing celebrities does more harm than fans seem to realize.



the MIRROR

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MISSION STATEMENT The Mirror is an award-winning, student-run publication designed to deliver timely, accurate news as well as unique and eye-opening opinions, reviews and photography to the Van Nuys High School community. It exists as a platform for students to utilize their First Amendment right to express themselves freely and without fear.

DISTRIBUTION Copies are free to students, faculty and staff and are available in Room 112, Second Floor, Main Building. Digital issues are available at vnhsmirror.com or issuu.com.

CORRECTIONS We strive to be accurate and factual. Please report errors via email to ronald.goins@lausd.net.

READER PARTICIPATION Unsigned editorials represent the majority opinion of the Editorial Board. Letters to the board may be delivered to Room 112 or mailed to The Mirror, Van Nuys High School, 4535-Corona Ave., Van Nuys, CA 91411. Letters must be signed and may be edited for space and style.

ADVERTISING Publication of an advertisement does not imply endorsement of the product or service by either the newspaper or the school. Advertising questions may be directed to Ron Goins at ronald.goins@lausd.net.

MEMBERSHIPS National Scholastic Press Association (NSPA), Columbia Scholastic Press Association (CSPA), Southern California Journalism Educators Association (SCJEA), Los Angeles Journalism Education Association (LAJEA) and Los Angeles Press Club.

Support quality writing with strong visuals

- Illustrations
- Infographics
- Editorial cartoons
- Photos
- Editorials – typically unsigned
- Columns – typically include the photo and/or contact info for the individual writer

Use language to make your words resonate

This sentence has five words. Here are five more words.
Five-word sentences are fine. But several together become
monotonous. Listen to what is happening. The writing is
getting boring. The sound of it drones. It's like a stuck record.
The ear demands some variety.

Now listen. I vary the sentence length, and I create music.
Music. The writing sings. It has a pleasant rhythm, a lilt, a
harmony. I use short sentences. And I use sentences of
medium length. And sometimes when I am certain the reader
is rested, I will engage him with a sentence of considerable
length, a sentence that burns with energy and builds with all
the impetus of a crescendo, the roll of the drums, the crash of
the cymbals—sounds that say listen to this, it is important.

So write with a combination of short, medium, and long
sentences. Create a sound that pleases the reader's ear. Don't
just write words. Write music.

-Gary Provost

Additional resources for review writing

- International Movie Database:
<https://www.imdb.com/>
 - All Music:
<https://www.allmusic.com/>
-

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