

# 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*

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## Train Your Team in Storytelling Basics

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KRIST NYP  
Manhattan High School  
MHS Student Media

MHS Mentor newspaper  
[www.MHSMentor.com](http://www.MHSMentor.com)  
Blue M Yearbook  
Big Blue Weekly newscast  
MHS Student Media broadcasting

# Journalistic storytelling can take on many forms

- Hard news
- Soft news
- Features
- Profiles
- Briefs and Brights
- Announcements and calendars
- Event previews
- Sports and event coverage
- Reviews
- Opinion columns
- Editorials

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**But the process of telling  
stories is the same for all**

# Start your publication's year with a “boot camp” review of the basics

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Editorial leaders can create mini-lessons to train your staff and begin creating content

- News values
- Types of stories
- Note-taking
- Interviewing and gathering information
- Lead writing
- Basic story structure

# 1. News Values

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**All news stories should include at least one of these news values:**

- **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)

# Make it “sticky”

Give your staff an activity to help them remember the big idea

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## 1. News Values

- Review a past edition or an exchange publication and discuss which values are at work in each story
- During upcoming story pitches, have writers specify which news values they will rely on

Your ideas:

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# 2. Types of Stories

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**All news stories should include at least one of these news values:**

- Hard news
- Soft news / feature
- Brief or Bright
- Profile
- Event or game preview
- Event or game report
- Editorial
- Opinion column
- Review
- Specialty and Entertainment content

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## 2. Story Types

- Give each staff member a kind of story to find in an exchange publication and present to staff
- Analyze different types of stories together to look for stylistic choices and tactics used
- Assign writers a different type of story for each deadline to help them develop skills in writing different story types

Your ideas:

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# 3. Gathering Information

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## How do we know what we know?

- Research
  - Past coverage
  - Website
  - Social Media
  - Posters and announcements
  - Promotional publications
- Observation
  - Who, what, when, where, why and how
  - Sight, sound, smells, feeling, taste
  - Before, during and after / beginning, middle and end
- Interviewing
  - Leaders and followers
  - Beginners and experienced
  - Participants, observers and supporters
  - Winners and losers
  - Diverse demographics
- Credibility
  - Who says?
  - What's their background?
  - What do they get out of it?
  - Who agrees / disagrees with them? Why?

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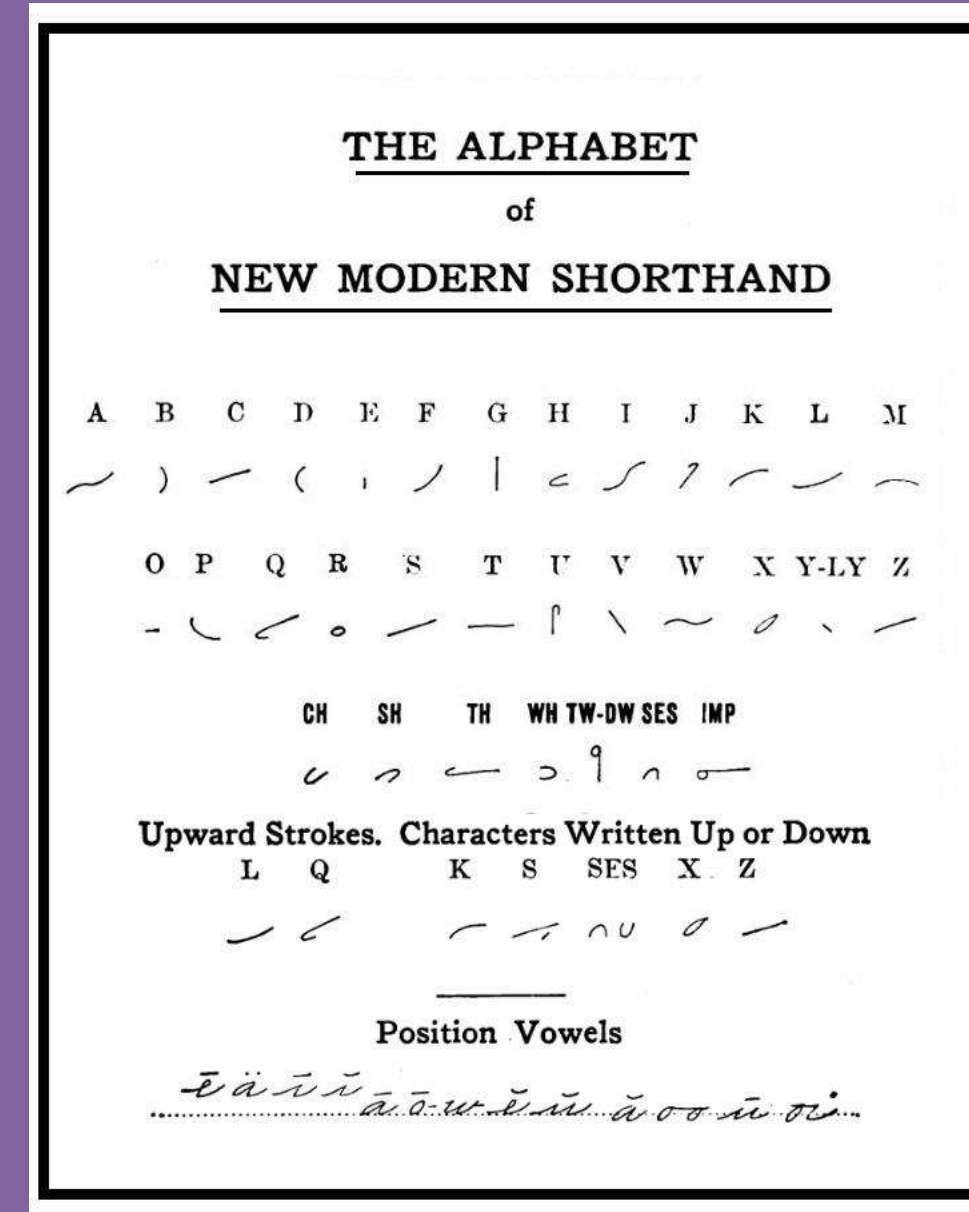
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# 4. Note-taking Skills

# EVERY event and interview requires handwritten notes

**\* Recording audio is an extra benefit**

- Writing shorthand – Basics of Teeline, Pitman and Gregg Methods
- <https://www.wikihow.com/Write-Shorthand>
- Create your own shorthand
- Listen for quotes to write out; only write keywords for background information
- Transcription of recordings:
  - Otter
  - Voice Memo
  - Google Docs Dictation
  - Microsoft Word Dictation



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## 4. Note-taking

- Practice note-taking during meetings and discuss what works
- Give each reporter a recording of a presentation to transcribe
- Create an archive system for notes as part of every story (to be expedient and for your protection if there’s a conflict about a story)

Your ideas:

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# 5. Interviewing

## 3 categories of questions

- Basics and backgrounders
  - Your name and how to spell it
  - Confirm involvement and role
  - What (exact name)
  - When
  - Where
- Details and specifics – closed-ended questions are OK here; not for quotes
  - Who did what
  - Clarification
- Impact – open-ended questions that get you quotes
  - Why and how
  - Explain, Describe, Tell me about, What was best/worst, How will you use it later, What did you learn
- Conclusion (another basic)
  - What else should I know?
  - How do I reach you for more?
  - Who else should I talk to?
  - THANK YOU!

### Why do we have to do it this way?

- It helps you get prepared so you don't forget to ask something important.
- It helps ease the person being interviewed into the tough questions.
- It will help you look more professional.
- It will help you from having to go back too much for more information you didn't think to get the first time.
- It will keep you from getting stressed during the interview about what to ask.
- It will impress people you are interviewing.
- It will help you think the topic through before you jump in.

### What are some other interviewing tips?

- Write things down as they talk, otherwise it looks as though you aren't interested.
- Write things down word for word, don't misquote them.
- Be a good listener.
- Act interested, even if you aren't.
- If they offer you some thing to drink, such as water, take it.
- Ask them for clarification on things you don't understand.
- Ask them how to spell names of people you can't look up.
- Don't forget to thank them, they are doing you a favor.
- Take paper and an extra pen or pencil.

## Interview Questions:

Guidelines

### 21 QUESTIONS

**Guidelines:** Interview questions are probably the most crucial element to getting a good story. Without good quotes and good information you will have a tough time writing a good story. The following is a guideline of how your questions should appear..

**QUESTION #1:** This should always be something to the effect of, "What is your name." This is a very simple concept but believe me, I have seen people forget to ask this one. ALSO, make sure you ask the person how they spell their name. DON'T ASSUME YOU KNOW.

**QUESTIONS #2-5:** These spots are designated for background questions. They are used to build a relationship with your interviewee and it is your attempt to get them to relax a bit and get more comfortable. These are generally easy questions. Nobody wants to sit down and be asked their name and then, "What is the cure for suffering in the world?" Start off slowly and break then in gradually. Questions examples in the 2-5 slots: "Where do you live?" "How old are you?"

**QUESTIONS #2-5:** Same concept as the original, except this time, they are all yes/no questions. This one takes a little extra work because you have to have some prior knowledge headed in, that means you need to do a bit of researching before the interview. While that will take a bit more time, you will seem much more prepared and you will impress the interviewee with your prior knowledge. ie. "So, the football team was 10-2 last year?" "So, you taught in the Zumwalt district before coming here." "You have been on STUCO for four years, correct?"

**OR**

**QUESTION 6:** This is a transitional question. If you are doing a story on worm hunting you would probably ask your primary source, "Do you hunt worms?" If they say "No," that is probably a good sign that they should NOT be a primary source for you.

**QUESTIONS #7-12:** These are where your factual questions go. These questions answer four of the five W's. (Who, what, when, where) Sample worm questions would be: "When did your begin to hunt worms? Where do you hunt worms at? Who do you hunt them with? When did you first go worm hunting with that person?"

**QUESTIONS #13-19:** This is where you get your juice. These questions answer the How and Why. Sample questions would be: What advice do you have for aspiring worm hunters? Tell me your best worm hunting story? How does one exactly hunt worms? (Why...how...Describe...and Explain are all good sentence starters for these questions)

**QUESTION #20:** This one is a MUST have. "Is there anything you would like to add or is there anyone else that you suggest I contact for an interview?"

**QUESTION #21:** A DOUBLE MUST: "Thank you very much for taking the time for this interview.

When the interview has concluded. Please have them look over your notes and sign the bottom of the interview, acknowledging that it is ok.

AARON MANFULL - Francis Howell North High School (St. Charles, MO) - modified from original by DONNA MANFULL

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## 5. Interviewing

- Demonstrate an interview by one of your leaders interviewing someone from your school, and have them take notes
- In a group discussion, give them a hypothetical situation of a story topic and have them spitball questions for each category
- Assign a practice story like a staff profile for your publication website and have them interview each other
- For beginning interviews, send beginning reporters with a leader to observe ( “I do”), team interview ( “We do”) and observe / support ( “You do”)

Your ideas:

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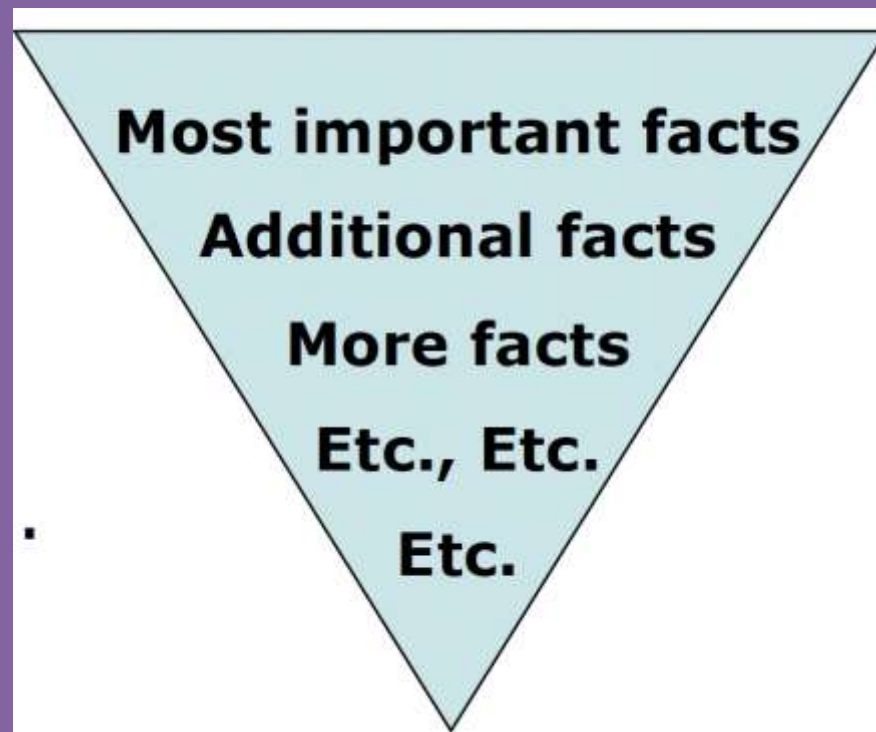
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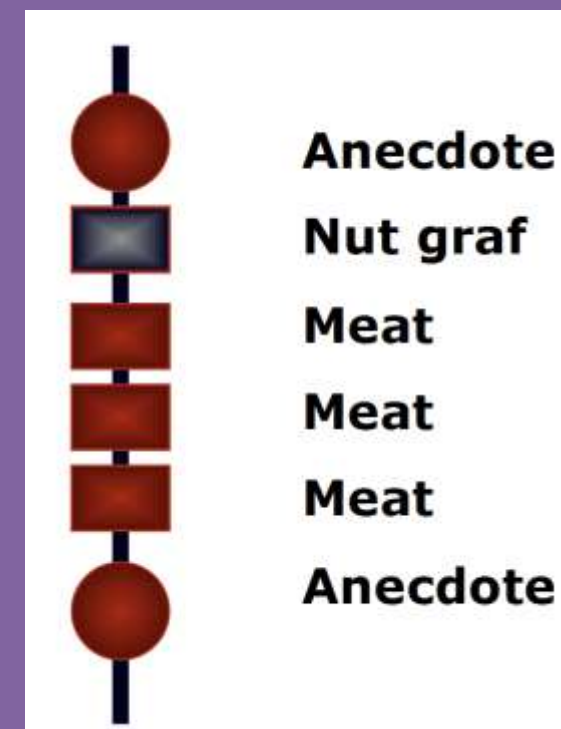
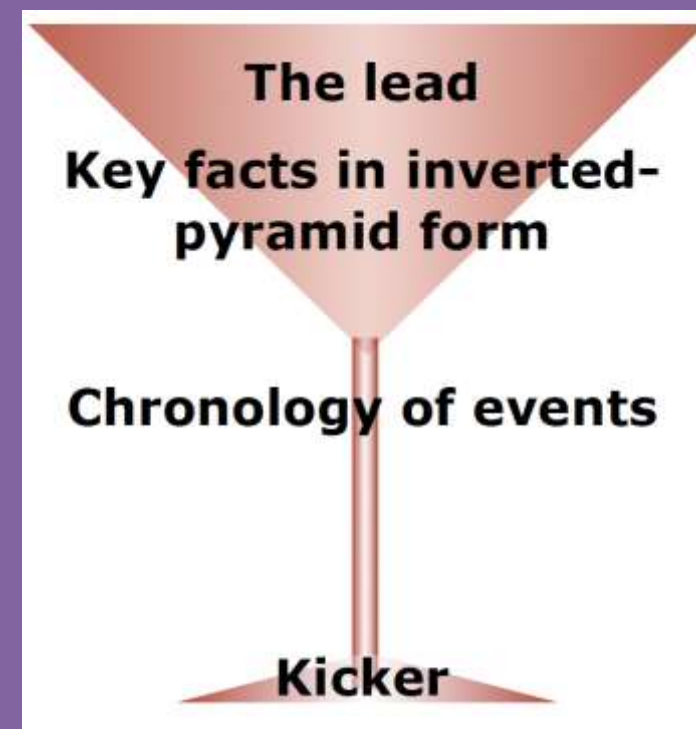
# 6. Story Structure

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

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Brainstorm ways to  
continue training and  
practicing these skills  
with mini-lessons  
throughout the year