



Exploring 4-H at Home



Community Engagement
and Communications

Pillar: Community Engagement and Communications

Project: Writing Skills: A to Z

Activity: Writing a News Story



What is News?

If a member of your club wins a scholarship or a trip, that's news. If a member of your club wins a public speaking competition, that's news. If your club is planning a fundraising event, that also is news. Anything your club or district does can be news! These types of news have a place in your local newspaper, on your local television and radio stations, during your school announcements and on your community bulletin boards. You can also send in articles to the 4-H Bits & Pieces newsletter at communications@4-h.sk.ca.

News or Feature Articles

There are two types of articles in newspapers and magazines. These are News and Feature.

- News
 - cover basics of current events
 - have the five Ws (Who, What, When, Where, How)
 - short and sweet – around 500 words
- Feature
 - Longer and more in-depth
 - Cover one subject from multiple angles
 - More entertaining

Structure of a news article is lead, body and snap

- Lead (Beginning): - get the editor's attention. Present the basic details of the event and answer as many of the five Ws as you can in this first paragraph.
- Body (Middle): answer the remaining five Ws, the "How" and any other details.
 - Can include:
 - Opening quotation
 - Closing quotation
- Snap (End): no more than one paragraph. Final statements.

Tips for writing:

- Make your writing active. The active voice is strong, direct and clear, using fewer words than a passive voice.
 - Active voice: Bits & Pieces published our news article.
 - Passive voice: Our report was published in the Bits & Pieces.
- Be brief - Newspapers are limited to a word count, so be brief while maintaining accuracy
- Be clear - Avoid uncommon words and slang
- Be positive and specific
- When using quotations:
 - "Make sure your comma is inside the quotation marks," she said.
 - Make sure to quote someone word for word. Do not make up quotes or paraphrase. If paraphrasing, do not put it in quotation marks.
 - Ie: News articles are interesting to write, she said.

Media Invitations

When you are hosting an event, you may want to have reporters at it. When you are inviting the press to an event, you will use a Media Invitation. This covers the five Ws (Who, What, When, Where and Why) and invited the media to come to the event.

The Media Invitation can be sent to your local radio and TV stations, as well as local newspapers. Keep in mind of the location of your event and media outlets you are sending the invitation to – if they are more than an hour away, chances are they will not be able to attend the event. Some tips for writing a Media Invitation are:

- Make it timely! For example, if sending it to a weekly newspaper, make sure to send the invitation a week before the event takes place
- Make it visual. If you are inviting the press to your event, they will want photos or video, so make sure it is dynamic
- Schedule a best time for them to come

If they do not show up to your event, do not be offended – sometimes they have a lot going on and a limited number of reporters working!

Press Releases

After an event is held, you can send out a Press Release. This is a small write-up of the event, which the reporter could potentially put directly into the newspaper. Some tips for writing a press release are:

- Remember to put in the five Ws
- The release should be written the same as a news story – with a lead, body and snap
 - The body should be no longer than two to four paragraphs in a press release
- Use the same tips as for writing a News or Feature article
- Use a standard font - Preferably Calibri, as this is the 4-H Canada font
- Use wide margins and proper spacing
- End the release with a -30- in the middle of the column, followed by contact information

Research an Article

Read an article from the Scholastic Kids Press Corps (<https://kpcnotebook.scholastic.com/>) or your local newspaper and fill in the following questions:

What is the lead sentence?

What is the introduction?

What is the opening quotation?

What is the main body?

What is the closing quotation?

What is the conclusion?

Remember, not ALL of these elements may be represented in the story, or even in one place.

Write Your Own Article

Now, using your research and notes, write an outline for your own article. You can write a news article about something interesting in your club or a past event you went to, or a feature article about your 4-H leader or an interesting fellow 4-H member. If you would like, submit your article to be published in the Bits & Pieces to communications@4-h.sk.ca – make sure to include a photo with your article!

Remember, your first version of a story is a first draft, not a finished article. Here a few good tips for turning in a quality story to your editor:

- Read the story at least one time for comprehension. You want to make sure your writing tells a story with a beginning, middle, and end. Also, check to make sure you have at least two good quotes in it if at all possible.
- Go back over your draft to check for spelling and punctuation errors.
- Now, read it out loud. This will help you catch any awkward phrases, or sentences that don't sound right.
- Once your piece is polished, turn it in to your editor. Be sure you have a slug or headline (which tells the subject of the story), a date, and your byline.