

BEFORE YOU START WRITING

Think about what you're going to write about and how you're going to write about it before you start writing it. What's your angle? How long does the story need to be? How in-depth does your reporting need to be to tell the story you're trying to tell? Who's your readership and how much background do they need? Write a simple outline to help organize your thoughts if you think that will help.

GETTING INFORMATION

There's a lot of ways to get background information. With a few minutes of intensive Google-searching you can usually gather enough information to use as background for your article. If you're writing about an event, make sure you bring some pens and paper to take notes at the event.

INTERVIEWING

Interview methods will differ depending on what you need from your interview and what kind of article you're writing. Sometimes you will have an article mostly written and you just want to support a statement with a quote (although this is the way that corporate media does it; using quotes only to support articles which are basically pre-written - so this should be seen as a last resort).

Quotes are important and help add personality and legitimacy to an article. On the other hand, the content of some articles can be mostly quotes, with all that you end up writing is a small amount of text for context and to move from one topic to the next.

When interviewing, let the subject know what you're writing about. If they know your angle, it will help put them at ease and let them know that they can trust you. You should present yourself differently to the CEO of a large corporation than to a union organizer.

THE INVERTED PYRAMID STYLE OF WRITING

Most research papers often start by posing a problem or thesis statement, then building upon that by giving reasons and details, gradually building up to a conclusion or recommendation. The inverted pyramid style turns this "upside down" to start with the conclusion.

The inverted pyramid story contains just two parts: a lead and a body, usually divided into at least six short paragraphs. There is no fixed ending or conclusion to the story. When you run out of story to tell, you just stop. The lead contains the most important information for the reader to know; if a reader only reads the headline and lead, they will get the main idea of the story. Most people don't read the entire article anyways. (>> "What About Objectivity")

***** Community Calendar *****

In addition to the open-publishing newswire for text, audio, photo, and video, Santa Cruz Indymedia also has an open-publishing calendar that allows anyone to publish information on upcoming meetings, vigils, film screenings, educational workshops/skill shares, social gatherings, etc...

www.RadiCalendar.org/group/SC-IMC

WHAT ABOUT OBJECTIVITY?

There's one important thing to note about objectivity: it doesn't exist. Indymedia isn't an objective source of information, we're just more honest about our biases than the corporate media. Indymedia utilizes open publishing which means that anyone (including you!) can post your stories to the newswire. There are no filters beyond a minimal editorial policy. Indymedia not only allows users to post to the site, but also to add their own comments to what has already been posted. In this way a many-voiced narrative emerges, more accurate than a corporate news article.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

In all of newswriting, it is best to keep your paragraphs short. As a general rule of thumb, keep your paragraphs confined to just a few sentences. This is vastly different than you've been taught in your composition classes where you write a theme sentence and build on it.

Your sentences should have an average of 20-28 words. The number varies based on who you talk to, but you get the idea. Don't spend forever counting words, though. That is an average. You should have shorter sentences/paragraphs and every once in a while you are going to have longer ones. If you have shorter sentences, there can be more than one in a paragraph.

Vary your sentence structures. A short sentence that comes after a long one will have more emphasis.

IMC RESOURCES

Indymedia.org * Portland.Indymedia.org
Indybay.org * FTAAIMC.org * BioTechIMC.org

WHAT IS HTML, HOW DO I USE IT, AND WHY?

Indymedia articles are often short with lots of links. This is because most people don't usually read more than a few paragraphs from a news article anyways. By linking certain key ideas to other articles or websites, we can transmit the basic idea of an article, and users can follow links to get more information if they have the time or desire to do so.

HTML is the main language used to write webpages. You can use HTML to make your articles look more interesting, adding links, or making text bold or italic. Below are some examples.

`` text you want bold.`` will look like... **text you want bold.**

`<i>`text you want italic.`</i>` will look like... *text you want italic.*

to make a link, use the example below:

``text that will be the link``

you will end up with text that will be the link being clickable and it will link to the site you specified.

TIPS

Bring two pens.

Don't take this pamphlet too seriously.

It is only an attempt to explain some of the basics of how to write news, with the goal of making you feel more comfortable having what you write be read by lots of people.

The power of Indymedia and other participatory media is that it allows for a much wider range of voices than other types of media.

So don't feel limited by what you read in this pamphlet.

Write how you feel like writing, in your own voice, from your own experiences.

Indymedia Space
Now open at Barrios Unidos

1817 Soquel Ave.

Mon - Fri 3 - 5 pm

barriosunidos.net

Reclaim the Airwaves!

Free Radio Santa Cruz 101.1 FM
and streaming at ***freakradio.org***

More Resources Online!

Visit **SantaCruz.Indymedia.org** and check out the "make media guide"

HOW TO WRITE NEWS FOR INDYMEDIA



A Short Guide By

The

Santa Cruz

Independent

Media Center

santacruz.indymedia.org

scimc@indymedia.org