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# Basic Writing and Editing

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*United Steelworkers Press Association*

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# WRITING AND EDITING

## *Rules*

- There are no rules to writing.
- Only suggestions.

*Which makes a story better and easier to read*

## *Writing Techniques*

- Keep it short.
- Keep is simple.
- Keep to the point.
- Write like you speak.
- Be specific, factual and quote people.

## *What To Write*

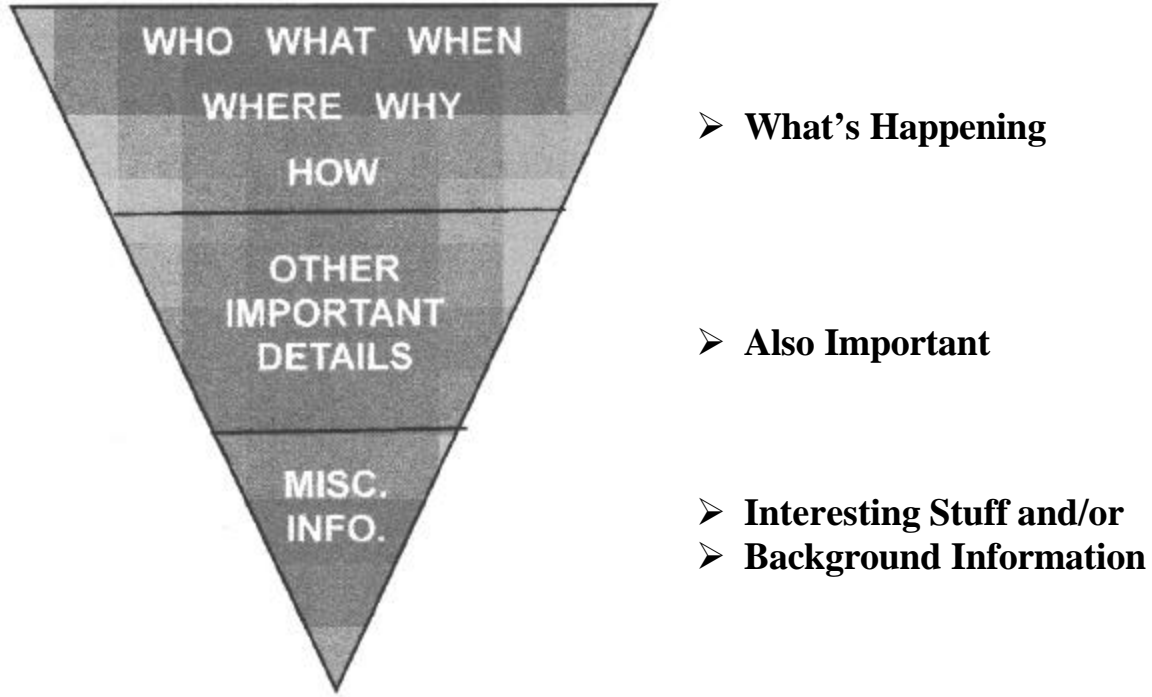
- Pick an interesting subject.
- Make the topic relate to the membership.
- Pick topics that have appeal to specific sections or individual groups.
- Choose a topic that could have an affect on your audience or their families.

# *CONTENTS SUGGESTIONS*

## *For Local Union Publications*

Workplace News  
Grievance Reports  
Safety and Health News  
President's Report (Officers' Reports)  
Legislative Changes (State, Federal, Provincial)  
Retirement News Social Functions  
Personal Achievements of Members  
Local Union Functions  
Local Union Meetings  
Humor (cartoons, jokes)  
Family News Page  
Sports and Recreational Activities  
Grievance Wins (Box Scores?)  
Workers' Compensation Wins  
Crusading Journalism  
Financial Reports  
Publishing Letters of Thanks  
Photographs  
Graphs  
Obituaries  
Feature Stories  
Staff Representatives' Reports  
Political Leaders' Reports  
Interviews  
Rank and File Features  
Question and Answer Column  
Editorials

# ARRANGING A STORY



**Who:** \_\_\_\_\_

**What:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Where:** \_\_\_\_\_

**When:** \_\_\_\_\_

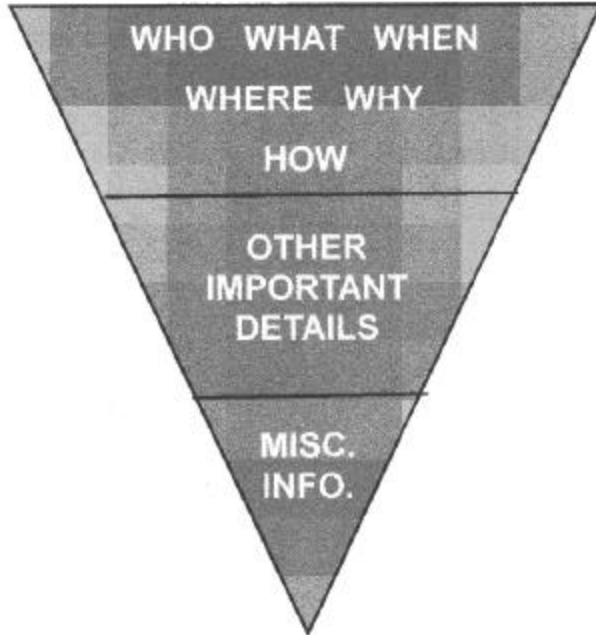
**Why:** \_\_\_\_\_

**How:** \_\_\_\_\_

# ARRANGING A STORY

## *Arranging A Story*

When arranging a story, to help ourselves, we can use an inverted triangle.



What is the event, project or personal news you want to focus on? What is the highlight of the event? What is the particular significance about the event or project or personal news? What relevance does it have to your membership? What effect will it have on your membership?

Where and when did (or will) the event occur? The times, dates and location should be mentioned.

Why did it happen and what should members do about it?

Who is involved? Wherever possible, mention names of the people involved. If you write about a specific person, write about the event they participated in. If you are writing about an event, talk about who directed and prepared it. Mention guest speakers, use quotes and tell what they said. Tell who will be affected.

How did (or will) this happen? Explain how this came to be and what happened as a result of it.

When writing your story, always start with the most important facts first. Then use your supporting facts in order of importance. This will make the Editor's job easier if they have to cut your copy down. This will ensure that the most important facts are printed.

# COLUMNS VS EDITORIALS

## *One major difference:*

- A column is the opinion of the individual writer.
- An editorial is the opinion of the organization sponsoring the publication - the Local Union.
- A column carries the "weight" (opinion) of one person.
- An editorial carries the collective "weight" (opinion) of many. It is their voice.

## *Therefore the writing styles must differ.*

- Use the pronouns "I" and "me" in a column.
- Use the pronouns "we," "us," "our" in an editorial.
- A column is "bylined" (by Person's Name).
- An editorial is unsigned.
- Let members know an editorial is an editorial.

# WRITING A GOOD LEAD

*A Lead is your opening sentence. It can or should:*

- Be interesting.
- Entice your reader to read on.
- Be reasonably short, no more than 30-40 words.
- Have an element of mystery.

*"Since January, four Millwrights have been hospitalized with lung ailments."*

- Ask a question.

*"Why did the Local send three delegates to the USWA convention?"*

- Be dramatic.

*"Contract negotiations have reached an impasse."*

- Open with a quote.

*"I promise you that we won't budge an inch," (Local Union) President (name) emphasized.*

# HEADLINES

*A Headline is much like a mini-lead.  
Its purpose is to catch the reader's attention.  
(Verbs are underlined)*

- Always use a verb.



Grievance Report

**YES: Local wins arbitration case**



- Entice your reader to read on.



Company has new absentee policy

**YES: Local protests company's new absentee policy**



- Choose from three headline styles:

1. Upper case

**SEMINAR FOCUSES ON IMPROVING JOB SAFETY**

2. Upper and lower case

**Seminar Focuses On Improving Job Safety**

3. Lower case

**Seminar focuses on improving job safety**

***NOTE: Lower case is easiest to read.***

- Avoid "tombstoning."
- Utilize an "eyebrow" or "kicker."
- Headline should compliment the lead.

# FEATURE STORIES

A feature story is a combination news story, report, editorial and column. Its purpose is to explore a single "one-shot" subject matter in depth.

## *A Feature Story Can Or Should:*

- Have a suitable headline.
- Carry a "Byline".  
*By Lois Lane*
- Cover or investigate one topic.

## *Topic Examples:*

1. *"Let's look at the legislative process."*
2. *"Why isn't the grievance procedure working?"*
3. *"Labor Day is a workers' holiday!"*
4. *"What a new unit means to our workplace."*

- Explore the subject in depth.
- Use first or third person pronouns.  
*"I" "Me" We" "Us" are all okay.*
- Make recommendations and draw a conclusion

# NEWS STORIES

A news story is about an event such as a contract happening, which is effecting the lives of local union members.

## ***NEWS STORY TIPS:***

- Use a suitable headline.
- Open with an interesting lead.
- Tell the "Five Ws"  
*Who, what, when, where and why.*
- Do not use personal pronouns.  
*Do not use "I" "We" "Ours" "us."*
- Use nouns instead:  
*USE "The Local" instead of "Our"*  
*"Local 1234 President Jane Doe"*
- A news story can vary in length.
- Length should suit your purpose.  
*From three to ten paragraphs.*
- Save an interesting fact for your last paragraph.

# REPORTS OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES

A report is a signed column by an officer or committee member about that person's area of responsibility.

## ***REPORT TIPS:***

- More than just opinion

*A stewardship accounting!*

- Open with an interesting lead.

- Yes, do use personal pronouns.

- The writer can explore one topic or several,

**BUT:**

- Writer should stay within own area of accountability.

*Safety chair reports on safety.*

***Legislative chair reports on legislation***

*Financial Officers reports on finances.*

*President on anything! (The 600-pound gorilla)*

- Length should suit your purpose.

*From three to ten paragraphs.*

- The writer can make recommendations.

*Also, can inform, educate, entertain, crusade.*

# *Write a Short Story*

*Here are the facts:*

**They were so good looking  
Were forced to accept  
Hawaii  
Training  
Mid September  
Ran out of refreshments  
20 degrees  
Lucky I had my  
Like a skating rink  
The leak wasn't that bad  
But my luggage  
Missed the  
You shouldn't try this  
Leisure activities included  
Conference  
Swarmed the beach  
The banks were  
Want to be a member  
Natives were restless  
8 huskies  
Couldn't believe we won  
5 Steelworkers from  
Were forced to accept  
Ran out of money  
The instructor said  
We voted on  
Minneapolis  
The island police**