

# Fairness, objectivity and long-form journalism

# Objectivity?

- Yes, present both sides of a story, particularly in government-related stories that involve conflict and disagreement. But they don't have to be perfectly balanced.
- Downplay or ignore ignorance, craziness, blatant expressions of a specific ideology. (You'll get enough of that in the comments!)
- Focus on reasonable people with reasonable arguments.
- Indicate where the information is coming from, including a press conference. ("He said at a press conference," or "She told reporters.")
- Indicate how you got the quotes: A phone interview, in an email response, in an interview at her office (home, at the beach).

# What is a feature story?

**Human-interest** articles that focus on particular people, places or events (describing a scene).

[Special Olympics World Games: Los Angeles 2015](#)

# Elements of a feature

- Don't need the 5Ws and H in the first paragraph. Instead, **a description or an anecdote sets up the story.**
  - Feature leads may run several paragraphs.
- Features employ a more **leisurely pace** than news stories, taking time to tell a story.
- Features are usually **longer than spot news.**
- News stories tend to focus on events; **features focus on people.**
- **Investigative journalism** often tackles a newsy topic with a feature approach.

# Different Approaches

## News Writing

- Lead tells newsworthy info

## Feature Writing

- Lead captures attention

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- Clearly source all info
- **Sources tell the story, with minimal detail from writer**

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- Use quotes to build human interest, develop empathy
- Source info unobtrusively
- **Writer tells the story, with sources adding perspective**

# Common types of features

- **Profiles** (people in the news)
- **Spot features** (sidebars to main news)
- **News features** (humanize news topics)
- **Immersive** (also called 'live-in' stories)
- **Trend stories** (may run as op-ed pieces)
- **Reviews and columns** (specialty features)



## 'Scream' Review: Series Retreads Old Horror-Film Tricks For New Generation

Review

Comments (0) | Amadeus Serafini, Anthony Rogers Carlson Young, Bella Thorne, Conner Weil, Film and TV, Ghostface, John Karna, MTV, scream

Kathy Zerbib | June 30, 2015 | 1:02 p.m. PDT  
Senior Entertainment Editor

INTERNATIONAL

## Mexican 400 Pueblos Movement: A Different Side Of Nude Protest

Comments (0) | 400 pueblos movement, body, body protest, government, government corruption, International, Mexico, Mexico City, naked, Nude, Occupy Wall Street, protest, topless, Veracruz

Celeste Alvarez | June 5, 2015 | 2:14 p.m. PDT  
News Editor

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News  
feature

# GENDER & IDENTITY

This story is part of a continuing series investigating 2015 issues in gender and sexuality.




Wearing a round farmer's straw hat and loose black pants, Alfonsina Sandoval Urbina spoke out against allegedly corrupt government officials in Mexico with the only weapon she has left: her topless body.

**READ MORE:** [The Body, Painted And Performed: Feminist Artists Who #FreeTheNipple](#)

A small town farmer in the rural outskirts of Veracruz, Urbina has been actively protesting semi-nude against political human rights violations since 2002, along with a group of nearly 700 men and women. "We are nude for justice, if anything else, and [when we first began] we were completely naked," Urbina said.

Neon Tommy caught up with the protesters, who call themselves the 400 Pueblos Movement, during the group's biannual visit to Mexico City as they occupied sidewalks and crosswalks in downtown early this January.







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STYLE

## How Cara Delevingne Is Conquering Hollywood

Comments (0) | acting debut, alice in wonderland, Anna Karenina, bookcon, Bruce Weber, Burberry, Cara Delevingne, cara delevingne eyebrows, delevingers, Diana Lee, DKNY, Fashion, hollywood, hollywood movies, indie, indie film, Instagram, John Green, Kate Moss, kids in love, model, model debut, Nat Wolff, pan movie, paper towns, storm model, Style, Suicide Squad, the face of an angel, tulip Magazine, Yves Saint Laurent

Diana Lee | June 26, 2015 | 5:02 p.m. PDT  
Staff Reporter

Share / Save  Tweet  6  8+1  0

Profile

Cara Delevingne is considered *the* model of this time, with 14.3 million people following her closely on [Instagram](#) alone as she reps Burberry, Yves Saint Laurent and DKNY, just to name a few. She's known for her signature eyebrows in the fashion industry, but she's proved to be a triple threat as a model, actress and singer (and a teen idol, as a result of her openness on social media). The 22-year-old soared to popularity as an A-list supermodel in just five years, having [walked](#) 39 different shows during one summer/spring season, and is taking on the motion picture industry with several projects already under her belt.

### Straight to Vogue

She appeared on "Vogue Italia" at age 10 in a feature for hat designer Philip Treacy. Fashion photographer Bruce Weber spotted her and requested to shoot her. "I think she is



Cara Delevingne was named "Model of the Year" at the 2012 and 2014 British Fashion Awards



## The Star-Ledger

### Chapter 1: A sudden jolt, then a frigid fight for life

#### The Wreck of the Lady Mary

By: **Amy Ellis Nutt**

November 21, 2010, Part 1

[index](#) | [next](#)

Riotous waves pummel José Arias. In the frantic scramble to abandon ship, he zipped his survival suit only to his throat and now the freezing Atlantic is seeping in, stealing his body's heat.

The cold hammers him, a fist inside his head.

Seesawing across the ocean, he cannot tell east from west, up from down. At the top of a wave the night sky spins open, then slides away. Buckets of stars spill into the sea.

"Sálvame, por favor. Sálvame."

Save me. Please save me, he prays to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

In the chilly, early morning hours of March 24, 2009, 57-year-old José Arias fights for his life, floating in the water 66 miles from Cape May. The nearest lights are from another fishing vessel, which does not see him, anchored less than a half-mile away. A little farther out, a mammoth container ship steams toward Philadelphia.



José Arias, the only survivor of the Lady Mary, was asleep below decks when the scalloper began sinking. Before leaving land, he did something that would play a role in his survival. (Ariana Melnik/Star-Ledger)

Although Arias does not know it yet, all six of his friends and fellow fishermen are dead, and the red-hulled scalloper, the Lady Mary, is resting, right-side up, on the sandy bottom of the Atlantic. The mystery of what sank her, which continues to haunt the maritime world, has just begun.

For months, what happened to the 71-foot Lady Mary baffled the Coast Guard, marine experts, fishermen, divers and heartbroken loved ones — all of whom wanted to know how a sound and stable boat with an experienced crew could disappear from the ocean's surface in a matter of minutes and leave so few clues behind.

This story is about a tragedy no one lived to tell — except Arias, the only crewman plucked from the ocean alive, but who was asleep below decks when the sea suddenly began to swallow the boat. But from the tormented memories of its sole survivor, hundreds of pages of Coast Guard documents, the analyses of more than a dozen marine experts and the Lady Mary's own ghostly remains, a picture has slowly emerged.

No single event doomed the six fishermen, rather a cascade of circumstances set in motion years earlier by a slip in penmanship on a vessel safety form, compounded by a clerical error. Darkness, deteriorating weather, a tired crew and an open hatch contributed to the vessel's vulnerability. Then, a floating behemoth 10 times the size of the little scalloper came plowing through the fishing ground at nearly full throttle.

The men of the Lady Mary were like thousands of others who earn their

# Writing feature leads

- **Set a scene or paint a picture in words**



The  
Pulitzer  
Prizes

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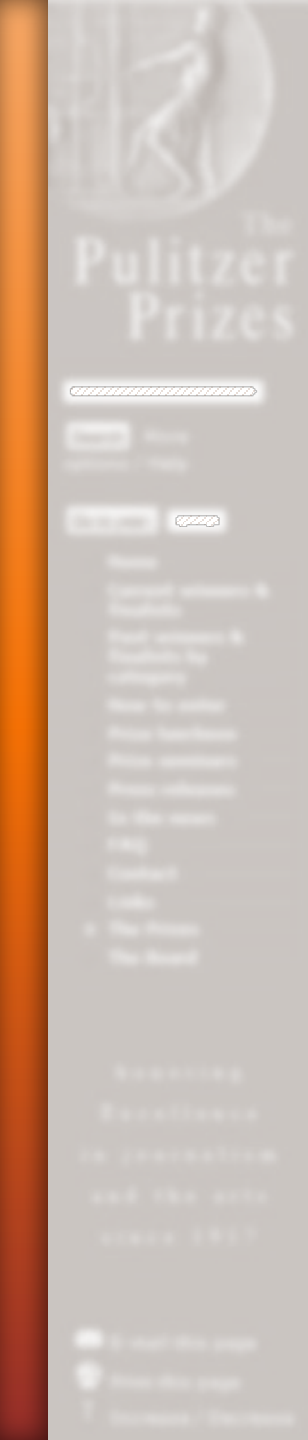
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Lead

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Nut Graph

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# Writing feature leads

- **Use an anecdote**
  - Two to four paragraphs is common for these leads, but some run even longer.

Justin Greer's 2,800 friends have never seen him cry.

His father has seen him cry only once — the day last October when doctors told the 16-year-old football player that what he thought was a bad case of the flu was actually leukemia.

“He cried a bit then,” Mr. Greer said.

# Writing feature leads

- **Direct quote** (but, again, only if it's a great one)

“Don't be mad. I took some pills,” Karen Keaton cried as she stooped over the toilet.

A few hours later, the 14-year-old freshman died after a series of coronary arrests.

# Writing feature leads

- **Employ a startling statement**

Part 1: Legal Drugs, Deadly Outcomes | Part 2: Reckless Prescribing | Part 3: Rogue Pharmacists | Part 4: An Unused Tool

DYING FOR RELIEF | A TIMES INVESTIGATION

## Legal drugs, deadly outcomes

BY SCOTT GLOVER, LISA GIRION. VIDEO AND PHOTOS BY LIZ O. BAYLEN

November 11, 2012

...more people than heroin and cocaine.

Terry Smith collapsed face-down in a pool of his own vomit.  
Lynn Blunt snored loudly as her lungs slowly filled with fluid.  
Summer Ann Burdette was midway through a pear when she stopped breathing.  
Larry Carmichael knocked over a lamp as he fell to the floor.  
Jennifer Thurber was curled up in bed, pale and still, when her father found her.  
Karl Finnila sat down on a curb to rest and never got up.

These six people died of drug overdoses within a span of 18 months. But according to coroners' records, that was not all they had in common. Bottles of prescription medications found at the scene of each death bore the name of the same doctor: Van H. Vu.

# Writing feature leads

- **Surprise readers with a twist**

After tension-filled hours of last-minute primping, the time had come for the contestants to walk into the arena and strut their stuff in front of the three judges and an appreciative crowd.

Some walked briskly with an air of confidence. Others, distracted by the lights and cameras, shuffled along slowly. A few, overcome by the pressure, foamed at the mouth and moaned.

# Leads to avoid

- **Don't state the obvious**

Every day, millions of people wake up, go to work or go to school. But some days, they don't.

- **Avoid 'imagine' leads** (and question leads too)

Imagine what it would be like to be shot in head with a 57-magnum. Dallas-resident Carly Patty doesn't have to. Her little brother shot her in the face accidentally last summer.

- **Avoid fluff** (Don't try to make your story seem more important than it is.)

- **No definition leads** (cliché)

**lede**

n. by 1965, alternative spelling of [lead](#) (n.2) in the newspaper journalism sense (see [lead](#) (v.)) ...

# Things to do

- Get details and more details
- People first, facts second
- Reward readers with quotes — great quotes
  - Only use direct quotes if something is uniquely stated
  - Don't quote routine facts or second-hand info
  - Be wary of self-serving quotes without any real news value

“Keck Medicine of USC is proud to be included in *U.S. News & World Report's* rankings of the country's best hospitals and clinical programs for the seventh year in a row,” said Tom Jackiewicz, senior vice president and CEO of Keck Medicine of USC.

# Traps to avoid

- **Needless jargon**

- Governments seem to love acronyms and proper nouns

- **Clichés and superlatives**

- all-out effort
- as a matter of fact
- bated breath
- conservative estimate
- deafening crash
- each and every
- foreseeable future
- general public
- head over heels
- leaves much to be desired
- mystery surrounds
- news leaked out
- point with pride
- reliable source
- AND MANY MORE

- **Writing for the source, not readers**

# Build to an ending

- Features stories should go somewhere.
- Save something for dessert. Reward the reader for getting to the end.
  - A great quote
  - A heart-tugging anecdote
  - An unexpected twist
  - A particularly clever phrase



# Case study

Reimagine the DeAndre Jordan story as a feature

- **How could you approach it as a feature?**
- **Describe an anecdote lead for this story.**
- **Who might be a good source for a quote lead?**
- **As a feature story, how would you end it?**

# Case study



Ramona Shelburne and Tim MacMahon

The view was clear from [DeAndre Jordan's](#) house in the Pacific Palisades on the morning of July 3. This time of year, the marine layer that keeps the bluffs above the Pacific Ocean cool burns off early in the day. [Dallas Mavericks](#) owner Mark Cuban and forward [Chandler Parsons](#) arrived at Jordan's house just after breakfast, ready to make one last pitch to the man they hoped would anchor their team for at least the next four years.

Parsons had been wooing and partying with Jordan for weeks in an elaborate, "Entourage"-style recruiting trip through the hottest clubs and most exclusive haunts in Los Angeles and Houston. On the first night of free agency, Parsons, Cuban and Mavericks star [Dirk Nowitzki](#) took Jordan out for a gluttonous sushi feast in a private room at Nobu in Malibu, a few miles up the road from Jordan's house.

After that, Parsons and Cuban had been in constant contact with the 26-year-old center. Other teams had gone to meet with Jordan at the offices of his agent.



- [DeAndre Jordan's round trip](#)
- [How Spurs' run changed the NBA](#)
- [Haberstroh: NBA's war on the 3](#)
- [Shelburne: Clippers, one year later](#)
- [MacMahon: Carlisle and Rondo](#)

# The Standoff

[Blake Griffin](#)  
Senior Editor

I'm looking at Paul Pierce, sizing him up, looking for a tell. He's looking at J.J. Redick. J.J.'s looking at me. We're all sitting in a circle, holding up our phones in DeAndre Jordan's elegant living room. We're all in disbelief as Twitter is going mad with leaks and rumors.

"Who's the rat?!"

I look at J.J.

Hmmm. This guy didn't come down to Houston on the plane with the rest of the team. He drove down from Austin. Two hours alone in a car? That's a long time to sit and plot. Smells funny to me.

"Are you the rat, J.J.?"

J.J. says he's not the rat. In fact, he thinks there's something suspicious about me. I flew down a day before the rest of the team from L.A. So why was I posting pictures from Hawaii on Twitter? He's wondering, *Do I have something to hide?*

"You went for that little drive earlier. Are you the rat, Blake? Are you the rat?"

I say I'm not the rat.

Paul's looking at ... well, okay, actually, Paul has kind of lost interest and turned back to an episode of *Naked and Afraid*. But now, J.J. and CP3 are looking at me, eyes locked on my plate of delicious chicken tenderloins and thick-sliced sesame seed Texas Toast. Mathias, one of our assistants, swivels around in a barber's chair in the corner of the room and eyes me up suspiciously.

"Then how do they know, man? How does Twitter know about the chicken fingers?!"

He had a point. I was stunned.

For most of Wednesday, July 8, a lot of the information coming from social media on DeAndre Jordan's contract talks was pretty far off-base. When we woke up that morning, a few of the Clippers players and staff took a charter bus to a hotel, to meet with DeAndre. It was the business stuff — the pitch, or re-pitch in this case. I jokingly tweeted a photo of Hawaii, and some emojis of a plane, helicopter and a car in response to Chandler Parsons' airplane tweet. But the truth is that I was already in Houston. DeAndre had been having doubts about his decision to go to Dallas since Monday.

# Getting It Right

Deandre Jordan  
Contributor

Let's just say that free agency wasn't what I expected it to be. I thought it was going to be fun. I thought it was going to be like when I got recruited during college. But as it turns out, deciding what your future is going to be like is mostly a headache. For a second, the attention felt good, but after you think about everything and get out all the glitz and glamour from the process, you kind of start to think about what's really best for you as a player and as a person — on and off the floor.

As everyone knows, I struggled with it. It was nine or ten days of intense pressure. Every night I would have a different scenario in my head, of the city and team where I thought I would fit best. I had several meetings with teams and even more conversations with my family and friends. I kept thinking about what it really meant to be "home" and I would go back and forth.

It seems crazy, but I'm actually the "oldest" Clipper — I've been here for seven years. When I was a rookie we went 19-63. We were really bad. It's a terrible feeling to lose 63 games in a season. Then we got Blake and things started to turn around. We became a destination where people really want to come and play and contend for a championship. When we traded for Chris, it was on.

I love Chris, man. Chris is a big brother to me. When you play sports, you're competitive — especially when you play them at as high a level as we have these last few years. And of course, yeah, we all bump heads during the course of the game. But we know that whatever criticisms or arguments we have on the floor, they're about one thing: winning.

Ultimately, I made the right decision for me, and now I have to own that. What's important to me now is to explain how it all happened.

# Summary

- Capture attention; hold it with great writing
- Tell a story (beginning, middle and end)
- Do the research (yes, interview people too)
- Don't neglect the Nut Graph
- Pace the narrative, varying the lengths of sentences and paragraphs
- Get great quotes and use them wisely

## Questions?

# In-class writing

- Write a lead for a print news story
- Write a lead for a broadcast story
- Write a feature lead, if time allows

## Zoo

Information from Cyrus Tucek, the director of the zoo: The Newman Municipal Zoo has purchased two animals, a 6,000 pound female African elephant and a burro. After becoming accustomed to their surroundings, the animals will be put on exhibit. The elephant is named Baby and was obtained from the Brookfield Zoo in Chicago. The burro, which will be added to the Children's Zoo, is from the H. Gage Ranch in northern New Mexico and will be named by children who use the zoo. Suggested names will be put on a bulletin board and the children will vote. Names put up by zoo workers are Pancho, Rodney, Eeyore, Captain B, Secretariat, Taco, Chico, Cyrus, Mr. Cronkite and Cyrano.

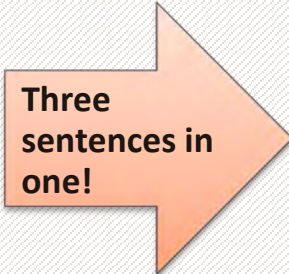
Tucek also said the zoo is considering the use of birth control methods to keep its tiger population down. The female tigers have been producing litters of three to five cubs every 10 months, he said, and the zoo has no room for them. Nor will other zoos accept the young tigers. "They're full up, too, and are using a time-release contraceptive implanted under the skin for females and vasectomies for males.

"Lions, tigers and leopards are disappearing in the wild and proliferating in zoos and wildlife parks so fast there's no room for them," Tucek said.

# Appendix

# Be Creative but Concise

- Use impactful adjectives (no “good,” “big” or “very”)
- Write a draft, then go back and edit, edit, edit
- Long sentences should serve a purpose
  - Just because the story is longer, it doesn’t mean all your sentences should be longer too.




Three  
sentences in  
one!

D.A. Pennebaker’s *Dont Look Back* [sic], arguably the first true “rockumentary,” followed Bob Dylan on his 1965 U.K. concert tour and featured a raw, unfiltered look at the legend in his cool, charismatic prime, as well as his occasionally fraught interactions with then-girlfriend Joan Baez, former Animals keyboardist Alan Price, fellow folk singer Donovan (his friendly competition with Dylan is a powerful reminder of the difference between talent and genius) and a small army of hangers-on.



# When to go long:

- To describe something long
- As a list or catalog of products, names, images – saving the most important for the end
- As a narrative change of pace in variation with sentences of short and medium length
  - Remember, long sentences need more editing than short ones.
  - Subject and verb should come early in the main clause.



Splitting this sentence would diminish its impact

*By Landon McDonald · Daily Trojan*

...

Released at the height of Beatlemania, the movie was responsible for popularizing the character traits of the group's individual members — Paul is the cute one! Ringo is the funny one! — and continues to influence the way certain bands are packaged to this day.

# Other long stories

As news media evolve, certain types of stories are increasingly emerging as most suitable for print. Many journalism majors would like to write for a magazine, for example, and thus need to become adept at long form journalism.

# More about long stories

***State of the news media*** — For several years, the Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism has produced a detailed and insightful annual report on the state of the news media. The report has separate sections on newspapers, magazines and other media forms and industries. These reports are well worth some time and study. <http://stateofthemedial.org>

SOURCE: WRITING FOR THE MASS MEDIA

<http://www.writingforthemassmedia.com/>

# More about long stories

***Transitions*** — One of the keys to good writing is being able to tie information today in a readable, interesting and coherent fashion. Stories do not tell themselves. They need reporters to select the information and put it into an acceptable form.

# More about long stories

- The longer the story, the more chance for error. News writers must not neglect the basics, such as checking spelling. Not doing so can turn out to be expensive.

***Expensive misspelling*** — That's what folks in Livermore, Calif., found out in 2004 when they spent \$40,000 for a mosaic for their new library. The artwork contained 175 words, many of them names of writers, scientists and artists. Some 11 of those words were misspelled. They included Shakespeare (Shakespere), Einstein (Eistein) and Gauguin (Gaugan). The Miami artist who executed the work at first claimed artistic license but later said she would fix the problem words. The city of Livermore had to pay her \$6,000 plus expenses to do that.

# More about long stories

***Idea. Collect. Focus. Draft. Clarify*** — This five-word outline is a simple model that universalizes the process, whether the writing is for the annual report of a stock brokerage company or a compelling piece of journalism. A writer begins with the idea (for journalists, an assignment); collects the information necessary to support the idea (reports); at some point decides what the writing is to be about; writes the piece; and then edits it.

Source: THE POYNTER INSTITUTE

<http://www.poynter.org/uncategorized/79987/the-take-and-the-give-a-tribute-to-don-murray/>

# Obituaries (profiles)

***Writing obits*** — For years the journalism culture demanded that young reporters cut their teeth on obituary stories: “writing obits.” The thinking was that obituaries were easy to write and possibly not very interesting or important. But writing obits is important work. It always has been.



# Obituaries (profiles)

- Bert Barnes spent 20 years at the *Washington Post* writing obituaries before retiring in March 2004. He wrote an article for the Post about his experiences on the obit desk. In it he says:

I loved that work. It taught me that even in the monotony of the daily grind, life could be funny and beautiful, surprising and strange. Death is no big deal if you don't love life. I only wish I could have met more of the people I wrote about.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A41579-2005Jan1.html>



# Reviews and columns

## Know your subject

- Aspiring film critic? Take courses on film history, read books and watch lots of movies.

## Give background

- If you're reviewing a movie, that means not just outlining the plot but also discussing the director and his previous films, the actors and perhaps even the screenwriter.

## Don't spoil the ending

- There's nothing readers hate more than a film critic who gives away the ending to the latest blockbuster.

## Read the pros

- Follow Pauline Kael on film, Ruth Reichl or Jonathan Gold on food and Michiko Kakutani on books; sportswriters should read Bill Plaschke, Steve Rushin and Bill Simmons, among others.

# More tips for reviews

## Have strong opinions

- People who aren't confident in their opinions often write wishy-washy reviews and bland columns.

## But avoid 'I' and 'in my opinion'

- Readers see your picture and byline, so they understand it's your take on the topic.

What **I** discovered in **my** quest to uncover the secret to the perfect first date or the perfect anytime date were the many variables necessary to call it just that: perfect. The biggest surprise was that many students don't go on dates until they've gotten to know each other—the exact opposite of our parents' generation. **In my opinion**, to truly get to know someone, you must enjoy his or her company one-on-one, away from the hustle and bustle of college life.


# More tips for reviews

## Know your audience

- Yes, you can educate readers in the course of a review, but a writer won't succeed by boring or confusing readers while trying too hard to seem authoritative.

## Have some fun

- Clever writing fosters reader loyalty.



**Funny but still  
informative**

Calling The Original Ramen Burger's storefront "spartan" would be a massive overstatement: The shack amounts to a literal hole in the wall, where diners form a queue to order and pick up at the same window.