

# Journalism Basics

Reporting Current Events Through a Timeless Worldview

Megan L. House & Karin Viet

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Institute for Excellence in Writing, L.L.C.

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# Introduction

Dear Future Journalists,

Being a journalist in our world today is a challenging yet rewarding task. Journalists have the responsibility to inform people and break important news stories. The world for writers is a competitive one, but for someone with a passion for crafting words, no story is too difficult to undertake.

Through this course we hope you will be inspired to be the best writer you can possibly be as you develop skills you never knew you had. We hope you discover a passion for writing and understand the responsibility that comes with being a journalist.

Before you dive into this course, there are a few things you will need. A journalist does not go anywhere without a notebook and pencil. You never know when you will have a story idea or when you will have a chance to interview someone. Start the habit now of carrying a notebook around with you. Another useful tool for a journalist is a digital recorder. Not all journalists record interviews, but it is helpful, especially for a “pup” reporter who is new to taking notes during an interview.

You will also need *The Associated Press Stylebook*, which can be purchased online from [www.apstylebook.com](http://www.apstylebook.com). Stylebooks can also be found discounted on websites such as Amazon, or check one out at your local library.

Best wishes as you begin your writing journey.

Sincerely,

*Megan L. House & Karin Viet*

## Chapter One

# An Introduction to Journalism

*A journalist's career may be challenging, exciting and even dangerous. As a journalist, you may travel overseas as a correspondent, capturing the events of war, or you may live in a small town covering local happenings, such as a school parade or the start of hunting season. Whichever you choose, one aspect remains the same: A journalist is a servant to the people. According to Webster's Dictionary, journalism is "Writing characterized by a direct presentation of facts or description of events without an attempt at interpretation." A journalist has the responsibility to relay events accurately, yet still in an entertaining way. Journalists are filled with passion and curiosity, and they have a way with words. Often times, a journalist works for a newspaper or magazine and sometimes even writes novels. Wherever you call home and whatever task you have at hand, you must seek to discover stories and uncover truth for the good of the people.*

### Lesson One: Famous men in the history of journalism

If you are going to become a writer, it is important to learn about famous men and women who have influenced the world of journalism. So before picking up your pen, let's meet a few famous men such as William Randolph Hearst, Joseph Pulitzer and Johannes Gutenberg, who shaped the world of journalism.

**William Randolph Hearst**, who lived from 1863 to 1951, was born in San Francisco. He was an only child born into a wealthy family. When Hearst was 10 years old, he traveled around Europe with his mother. Although this tour inspired him greatly, he began showing his interest in publishing when he attended Harvard University. While at Harvard, his father, George Hearst, bought out a newspaper called the San Francisco Examiner. Hearst begged his father to let him run the paper, and George finally relented in 1887. But this was only the beginning of young William's publishing career. Soon after he acquired his father's paper, he purchased the New York Journal. At one time, Hearst owned more than 24 newspapers. Not only is Hearst remembered as a newspaper tycoon, but he is also remembered for his political and Hollywood career.

Today, Hearst Corporation is a huge communications company with over 15,000 employees. They own 15 daily newspapers, 14 magazines in the United States and more internationally, 29

television stations and several other forms of media. If you want to learn more about William Randolph Hearst and Hearst Corporation, visit [www.hearstcastle.org](http://www.hearstcastle.org) and [www.hearst.com](http://www.hearst.com).

**Joseph Pulitzer** is another man who influenced the world of journalism in the 18 – 1900s. He was born in Mako, Hungary in 1847. Like Hearst, Pulitzer was born into a wealthy family, but his father was a grain merchant. At the age of 25, Pulitzer started his publishing career as a journalist. Through a series of shrewd business deals, he became a publisher and obtained the St. Louis Post-Dispatch in 1878. Between 1896 and 1898, Pulitzer and Hearst competed vigorously for greater circulation. Hearst's son, William Randolph Hearst Jr., wrote about this competition in the book, *The Hearsts: Father and Son*, which is about his father's life. He wrote, "Pop [Hearst] and Pulitzer exploded the fiercest newspaper war in American history."

You have probably heard of the well-known Pulitzer Prize. The first Pulitzer Prize was awarded in 1917, one year after Pulitzer passed away. Pulitzer is also remembered for his investment and influence on the Columbia School of Journalism. To learn more about Joseph Pulitzer and the Pulitzer Prize, visit [www.pulitzer.org](http://www.pulitzer.org).

The final person you should know about as a journalist is **Johannes Gutenberg**. Although Gutenberg was not a well-known journalist like Pulitzer and Hearst, we credit the movable type printing press to him. His invention was a huge advancement to journalism and publishing. Although the exact dates are still unknown today, it is said that Gutenberg was born in Germany around 1400 and died February 3, 1468. He spent a significant amount of his adult life inventing the printing press that would change the written word forever. 1455 is the date that most people think Gutenberg's printing press was invented. The movable type printing press allowed mass production of documents and books. The first book ever printed with movable type was Gutenberg's Bible. There were about 180 copies originally made of the Bible. Forty-eight of them are known to exist today, yet some have many pages missing. One of the copies is secured in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

The important thing to understand is that the printing press allowed mass production of books and publications for the first time. The Gutenberg Bible is an excellent example. People were able to have their own copy of the Bible and other literature.

Now that we have taken a brief look at famous people in the world of journalism, let's move on. In the upcoming chapters, you are going to learn how to come up with story ideas, how to collect and sort out your thoughts, how to craft news and feature stories and much more.

## Chapter Eleven

# Creating Your Newspaper

*A newspaper consists of many parts. In this chapter, you are going to learn how to put the parts together to create your own newspaper. You will also learn a little about newspaper layout and have an opportunity to compile your stories into your own newspaper.*

### Lesson One: Parts of a newspaper

Look at the diagram below to see some of the important parts of a newspaper illustrated. The **teasers** are usually located at the top of the front page. They should be placed to “tease” the reader and promote the stories inside the issue. Every newspaper has a name. For example, The New York Times and U.S.A. Today are both well-known papers. Their names are placed prominently on the front page of the paper. This is called a **flag**. We will talk about headlines more in-depth later in this chapter; however, for now just know that the headline is the title of a story. We have already talked briefly about what a **deck** is, but in review, a deck comes after the headline and summarizes the story. **Bylines** are almost always listed under the deck before the story begins. The writer’s name is usually followed by credentials, such as “Staff reporter” or “Editor-in-Chief.” Lastly, **jump lines** tell the reader where in the newspaper a story continues. It is important to learn these parts of a newspaper because you will be incorporating them in your own paper. Although there are many more parts to a newspaper, these give you a solid starting point.



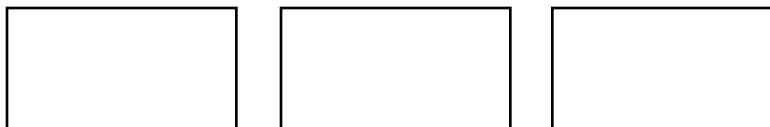
Teasers

Flag

Headline

Deck

Byline



## The Mountain Times

### \$3,000 attempted robbery at Lancy's Lace Store

*An attempted robbery scares many shoppers and employees.*

**By Sarah Smith**  
Staff Reporter

Panic spread through Lancy's Lace Store yesterday around 6:00 p.m. during a robbery attempt. The

two men wore ski masks and were described by a witness as tall and bulky. Police are not releasing any names at this point; however, both men are in custody.

"When I saw them walking toward the register, I grabbed my daughter and ran for the exit," said Cindy Brooks, a customer. Employee

Sarah Smith was running the cash register and panicked, not knowing what to do when the men approached her.

"I was so afraid that if I picked up the phone they might pull a gun on me," Smith said. The men ordered Smith to open the cash register, and they emptied \$3,000 into their

brown leather suitcase. As they hurried to the door, customer Jeremy Clintwood, 17, intentionally pushed over a rack of clothes, which fell on one of the men, allowing Clintwood to tackle the other.

"I didn't even have time to think," Clintwood said. "I just knew what I needed to do."



### President meets children

*The president spent his weekend visiting children, reading stories and playing games.*

**By Erik Jones**  
Staff Reporter

Residents of West Side Children's Home received a special visit last weekend from the president. The children had their pic-

tures taken with the president and played games.

"These children are our future," the president said. "We should do everything we can to see that they are taken care of."

The president stayed for dinner and even helped out in the kitchen.

Continues on B3

Jump Line

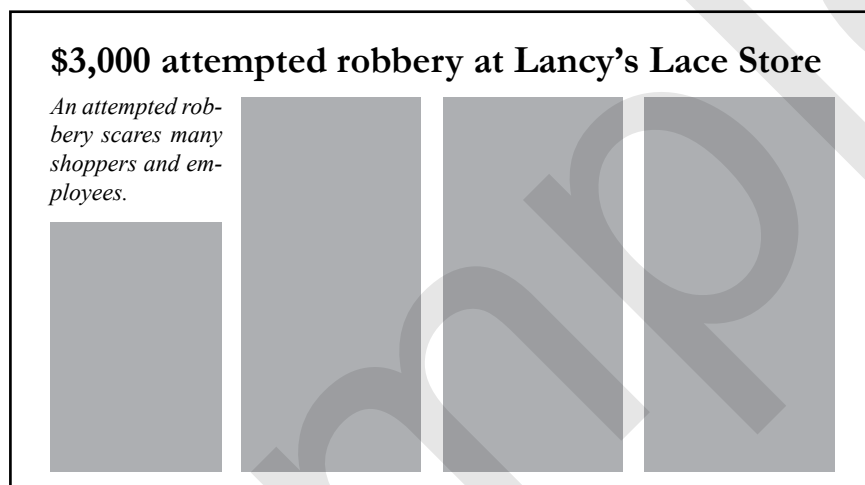
## Lesson Two: Your layout and design—Headlines

The layout is important because it draws the reader in and gives a sense of organization. Just like there are many parts to a newspaper, there are also many elements to consider within the design. For example, what font sizes will you use for the headlines and text? What photos should you use?

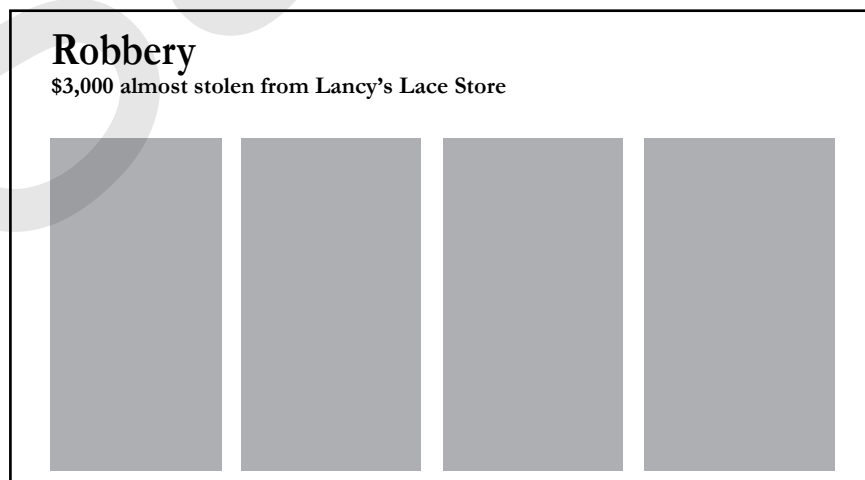
Before you start putting together your newspaper, let's talk briefly about headlines and headline placement. A strong headline catches the reader's attention, does not drag on and is written in

present tense. For example, “The president went to visit orphans yesterday to read stories and play games with them,” has several problems. This headline is too long, and it is written in past tense. It would be better to write, “President spends day with orphans.” This headline is in present tense and is much shorter. Although you do want a headline that draws the reader in, it is important that your headline is completely accurate. Do not try to trick your readers into reading your story. They should know the essence of each story from scanning the headlines.

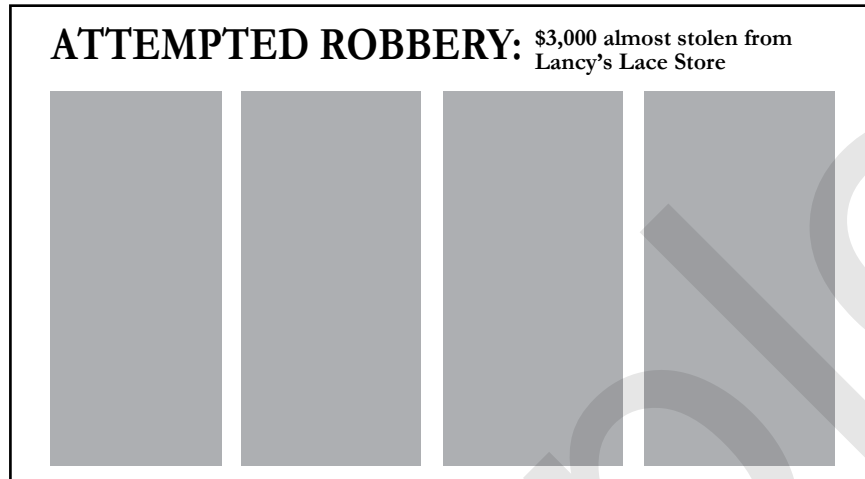
There are several styles of newspaper headlines. One of the most common ways to display a headline is called a **banner headline**. This type of headline stretches across the columns.



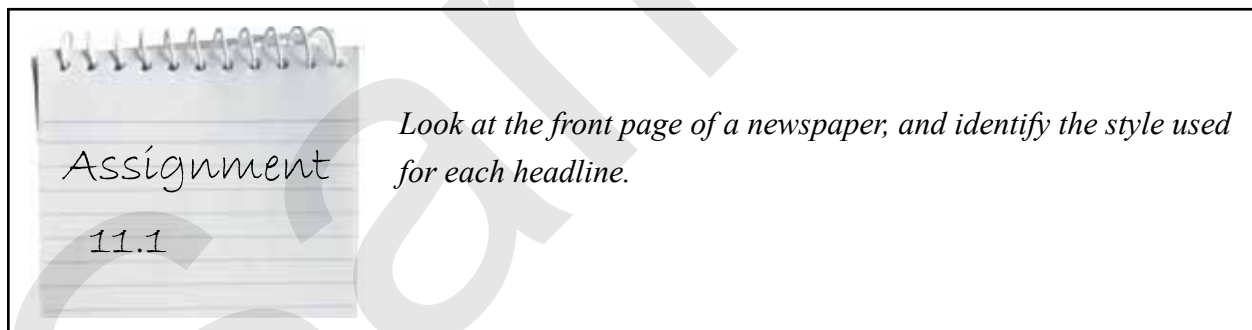
Another type of headline is called a **hammer**. This headline is designed to pop out at the reader. Hammers are usually a word or short phrase, such as “Catastrophe.” This style is generally used in feature writing and in special stories. The deck is placed directly below the headline, stretching across.



The last headline format we are going to learn is called a **tripod** because it has three parts. First, there is a phrase or a single word with the deck sitting next to it in two lines. This type of headline is also used more in features than in hard news.



Although there are several more styles to design headlines, for the purpose of this course, we are only going to learn these three.



### Lesson Three: Your layout and design—Text

Think about the last time you read a newspaper. What thoughts went through your mind? Did you think about the text placement? Most people do not think twice about text placement, although it is an essential piece. We are first going to talk about leading. **Leading** is the space between the lines of text.

This sample is  
10 point leading.

Leading is the space  
between the lines. Notice  
how much space is between  
the lines.

**Tracking** is the space between each character. With too much or too little tracking, the text will be difficult to read.

This is the way standard tracking looks. There is not too much space between each letter, but enough to make it legible.

T h e r e i s t o o m u c h  
t r a c k i n g i n t h i s  
p a r a g r a p h . E a c h  
c h a r a c t e r i s t o o  
f a r a p a r t .

In this paragraph, the characters are crammed together.  
There should be more space between the letters.

There are many differences between reading a newspaper and a novel. One of these differences is the text alignment. In a novel, the text is **left aligned**. This means that the text is lined up on the left side of the page. This paragraph you are reading is left aligned. Newspapers, however, justify the body of text. **Justified** type has margins on both sides that are straight. This gives the text a clean, crisp look and makes it easy to follow.

This text is justified with the last line aligned left. When the last line is aligned left it helps to avoid huge gaps in the paragraph. Notice that both the right and left margins are completely even until the last line. This makes the paragraph look crisp and clean.

Fonts also play an important role in newspaper layout. You want to use a font that is easy to read. For example *Curly M* would not be a good choice. Although this is a “fun” font, it would be overwhelming to read an entire article in this font. Avoid any type of script font. A lot of newspapers use a sans serif font, especially for news headlines.

The font in this book (Times New Roman) is a serif font. Serifs are the little tags on each letter.

**Arial** is a sans serif font. Sans Serif means “no serif.”

Headlines need a bold font to draw attention. Which one pops out at you: “New tax bill passed” or “**New tax bill passed**”? Obviously, the second one is much stronger.

With most fonts, you have the option to bold and italicize. This is a good way to set text apart. For example, you might use the same font but italicize the deck, bold the byline and keep the body text regular.

We are not going to worry about font size in this course, because the newspaper you will design will not be a regular newspaper size. However, headlines always use a larger font than the body text. This helps draw the reader in and set the headline apart from the actual story.

## **Lesson Four: Your layout and design—Columns**

All newspapers have columns, but not all newspapers use the same amount of columns. Different newspapers have different styles. Some newspapers will use a variety of columns, especially on the front page. Some like to use one long column, maybe placed all the way down the side of a newspaper. This style often makes the story look longer. The more columns you use to place your story, the shorter in length the columns will be. The diagram below illustrates how you can have one long column or several shorter columns.



Take another look at the sample front page below. Notice how the story is laid out in four columns.



## The Mountain Times

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*An attempted robbery scares many shoppers and employees.*

**By Sarah Smith**  
Staff Reporter

Panic spread through Lancy's Lace Store yesterday around 6:00 p.m. during a robbery attempt. The

two men wore ski masks and were described by a witness as tall and bulky. Police are not releasing any names at this point; however, both men are in custody.

"When I saw them walking toward the register, I grabbed my daughter and ran for the exit," said Cindy Brooks, a customer. Employee

Sarah Smith was running the cash register and panicked, not knowing what to do when the men approached her.

"I was so afraid that if I picked up the phone they might pull a gun on me," Smith said. The men ordered Smith to open the cash register, and they emptied \$3,000 into their

brown leather suitcase. As they hurried to the door, customer Jeremy Clintwood, 17, intentionally pushed over a rack of clothes, which fell on one of the men, allowing Clintwood to tackle the other.

"I didn't even have time to think," Clintwood said. "I just knew what I needed to do."

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## Lesson Five: Your layout and design—Pictures

Pictures are an important part of a newspaper because people are drawn in by the photographs that go along with a story. There are three basic shapes for photos. Pictures can be **horizontal**, **vertical** or **square**.



**Horizontal photo**



**Vertical photo**



**Square photo**

A picture should always be accompanied by a **cutline**. A cutline may also be called a caption and includes information about the picture. For example, the photos above have a cutline underneath them, which tells what shape each photo is.

It is important to put thought into which photo you choose. Use the best photo to compliment the story and draw the reader in. For example, look at the square photo and vertical photo above. If your story was about a man and his loyal dog, which photo would you choose? You should use the vertical one because it brings out more emotion. Although the puppy in the square photo is cute, the one with the dog and his owner describes the story better and is stronger. The stronger picture is called the **dominant photo**.

## Lesson Six: Putting it all together

Now that you know some of the basics of newspaper design, let's start working on your own newspaper. For the purpose of this course, you may use Microsoft Publisher, Word or draw your layout by hand. Professional designers would use a program, such as Adobe InDesign, made specifically for design work.

A newspaper or tabloid would be much bigger than a standard 8.5 by 11 page, but for your newspaper, you may keep it small. If you have access to a larger paper size, you may use that instead.

### Spelling Toolbox

Sometimes words sound the same but have a different meaning and spelling.

**Accept** - to take; to receive

**Except** - to exclude

**Bibliography** - list of writings pertaining to a given subject or author

**Biography** - written history of a person's life

**Cease** - to stop

**Seize** - to grasp

**Desert** - barren land

**Dessert** - the last course of a meal

**Flew** - did fly

**Flue** - a chimney

**Flu** - short for influenza

**Heal** - to cure

**Heel** - part of a foot or a shoe

**Isle** - an island

**Aisle** - passage between rows

**Knew** - understand

**New** - fresh

**Scent** - odor

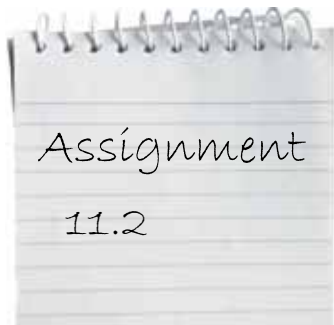
**Sent** - did send

**Cent** - penny

**Sense** - meaning; to feel

*Adapted from The Gregg Reference Manual*





*Out of all the stories you have written for this course, choose which ones you want on the front page. Remember, typically the front page is reserved for breaking news and hard news stories.*

Story 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Story 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Which stories will you put on your opinion page?

Story 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Story 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Which features are you going to use?

Story 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Story 2 \_\_\_\_\_

If you want to include additional pages such as a weather page, comics, classifieds, an entertainment page, etc., you are welcome to do so.

## Assignment

11.3

Following the guidelines in this chapter and all you have learned from this course, start laying out your newspaper. If you are designing it online, it helps to make a sketch (called a dummy) of your layout before you put it on the computer. Use the sample layout below as a guide. For additional layout ideas, look at your local newspaper. Pay special attention to the differences between the front page and the pages inside, such as the feature section.

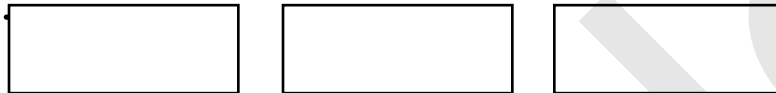
Teasers

Flag

Headline

Deck

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continues on A3

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tures taken with the president and played games.

"These children are our future," the president said. "We should do everything we can to see that they are taken care of."

The president stayed for dinner and even helped out in the kitchen.

Continues on B3 •

• • Jump Line

After you have laid out your stories in a pleasing arrangement, print your newspaper to distribute to your family, fellow students and friends. Congratulations! You are a published journalist. Your journey of reporting current events through a timeless worldview is off to a successful start. Travel on with notebook and pen in hand!

**Chapter Eleven Review Questions:**  
(Answers are in the back of this book.)

1. What is a teaser?

2. What is a flag?

3. What is a jumpline?

4. What is leading?

5. What is tracking?

6. Describe what a dominant photo is.