

SIX SECRETS OF WRITING A SUCCESSFUL NEWS ARTICLE

By Lori Mortensen

You've been asked to write a news article. But now what?

The news articles for the stake website are a powerful missionary tool that give us an opportunity to be witnesses of Jesus Christ. These articles serve as an invitation for all to come and see what we do with and for the community, with the hope that they will want to join us next time. It's a fun way to participate in the gathering of Israel.

But how do you write a news article? Unless you've written one before, you may not have noticed how they're structured. The good news is—you've come to the right place! Once you've gathered the essential information about the event that usually includes who, what, when, where, and why, (also known as the five W's), use these six secrets to write a successful news article:

- 1) **Create a catchy title** – Many successful titles include a question, a number, or a secret. (Check out this article's title!) Titles should be catchy, but also straight forward. For example, at the El Dorado Stake website, some titles are "Women Unite for Saturday of Service," and "Report on Drive-thru Nativity 2022." Titles we've published with the Mt. Democrat include, "Missionaries Making a Difference," "A Grave Undertaking," "Volunteers Feed the Hungry," and more. Keep alliteration in mind to make the title pleasing to read. Notice the double "M" sound for "Missionaries Making a Difference" and the double "S" sound in "Women Unite for *Saturday of Service.*"
- 2) **Create an appealing opening paragraph or "hook"** – Once the title has pulled the reader into the article, write an effective opening paragraph that's going to connect with who is going to read the article. For example, if an article was for kids, it would connect with kids. Then, keep it short and to the point. The opening paragraph does two things. It connects with the reader and makes a promise about what the article is going to be about.
- 3) **Jump into Your Subject** – Now that you've established what the article is about, it's time to deliver. You tell the reader what they need, and would want to know, about whatever you're writing about. Imagining that *you* are the reader can help you understand what the reader would want to know.
- 4) **Article Extras** – Successful articles often include **quotes** from participants that include the name of the person you're quoting and where they're from. Quotes are included something like this: "It was the best event ever," said Sister Jones of the Placerville Ward. "We talked about it all the way home." Including quotes is a great way to bring the article of life. Read the news articles at the stake website with quotes in mind. Successful articles often include the **history or background** of an event as well, such as when and why it was established.
- 5) **Create a Satisfying Close** – Now it's time to wrap things up by creating a satisfying close. Writers do this by connecting the ending back to the beginning which creates a satisfying, full-circle feeling. For example, in the article, "Women Unite for Saturday of Service," it began: "It was a big day for community service. On Saturday, September 17, 2022 . . ." Then, it ended like this: "It was a big day—for volunteers and the people who would benefit through these important service organizations." Study article endings and how they

reconnect back to the opening. You may also want to include extras such as, “For more information, visit their website at”

- 6) **Read, Revise and Polish** – Read a lot of articles with these steps in mind. Study the titles, opening paragraphs, the body of the article, and the transitions between paragraphs so the article reads smoothly. Note the article extras such as quotes and any history or background information. Then, write your first draft and be prepared to revise. Nearly every article will need revision. You’ll not only catch mistakes, you’ll discover more natural, conversational ways of saying what you want to say. Lastly, if you can, let someone else read it. Someone reading it “cold” will often have questions about something that was confusing or details you left out. Check spelling. Take your time so your article is the best that it can be. The graphics below represent the structure of news articles with more important information at the top or beginning of the article, narrowing down to the lesser important details at the end.

And that’s it! You’ve been asked to write a news article. But no worries. After all, now you know the six secrets of writing successful news articles.

