Phantom Press Editorial Guidelines and Reporter's Manual

Executive Board 2024/25

Director:
Charlie Chen

Website Manager:
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Editor-in-Chief:
Leo Ke

Social Media Manager/Designer:
Julian Cohen Wood

Executive Editors:

Note: There is no hierarchy for any of the roles.

Table of Contents

SECTION ONE

EDITORIAL POILICES

All Information published is for the school year of 2024/25 and is subject to change in the following years

Section One - Editorial Guide

Policy One - Article Types

As of the 2024/25 school year, three types of articles are allowed to be published. Every article will be categorized as either a Feature, Local News, or School News piece according to its relevance to each topic. However, the Editor-in-Chief has the final judgment on the publication of each article.

1. **News Reports**
   - There are currently only two sections for News reports: Local (Vancouver) and School (Lord Byng). These articles should cover events that has happened locally and should follow the Editorial Guidelines.

2. **Features**
   - Features may be written by anyone, however, they must strictly comply with the Editorial Guidelines. Features must be thoroughly reviewed before publication. Features are **VOLUNTARY** and the writer must bear the consequences that may follow.

Additionally, members of the community are encouraged to submit articles, and these articles will be reviewed by an Editor before publication.

Policy - Advertisements

The Phantom Press does not allow for any kind of advertisement. This includes any advertisements for funding.

Policy - Reserved Rights

Every Editor has the right to cancel or reject any articles that contain:

1. Plagiarized work,
2. NSFW material,
3. Defamatory content,
4. False information,
5. Other topics that do not align with our policies.

Policy- Privacy Guarantee

All writers are guaranteed privacy upon request; otherwise, articles will include the names of the authors. All requests must go through the Editor-in-Chief or Director.

Policy - Accuracy

All news articles must include the sources from which their information is gathered, any false information can and will be corrected.

Policy - Email Responsiveness

All Executives are expected to respond to any emails as soon as possible.

Policy - Journalistic Guiding Principles

The Phantom Press obliges with:

1. **Canadian Association of Journalists' V.2023**
   a. **Principles of Ethical Journalism**
   b. **Ethics Guidelines**

2. **Society of Professional Journalists'**

These principles serve as a guide to ensure that the Phantom Press becomes a successful and proper newspaper. However, they do not limit the Executive Board's decisions, as many decisions are based on specific circumstances. Only elements that align with the nature of Secondary School clubs have been included.

General Editing Process

1. **Objectivity**
   - Read the article over, is it just reporting the news?
   - Keep in mind who the audience is.
2. **Check for Legal and Ethical Issues**
   - Make sure it is not plagiarized content.
   - Make sure that the article does not disclose any private information.
   - Make sure that the article does not have any content that can harm someone's reputation.
3. **Fact-check information**
   - Check with available resources and other news sites.
   - Look for any information that is false or made up.
4. **Grammatical mistakes**
   - Check for any grammatical mistakes or errors.
   - Check for any mistakes that do not align with the AP stylebook.
5. **Final Check**
   - Read the article out loud to catch any awkward phrasing or errors.
   - Look for any way to use more precise, vivid language.

Policy - Editorial and Approval Process

All articles must follow this structure before publication:

Stage 1 - Edits are done by the writers themselves.
Stage 2 - Articles are reviewed and edited by assigned Editors.
Stage 3 - Articles are sent to the Editor-in-Chief for review.
Stage 4 - After approval, articles are sent to the Website Manager for publication.

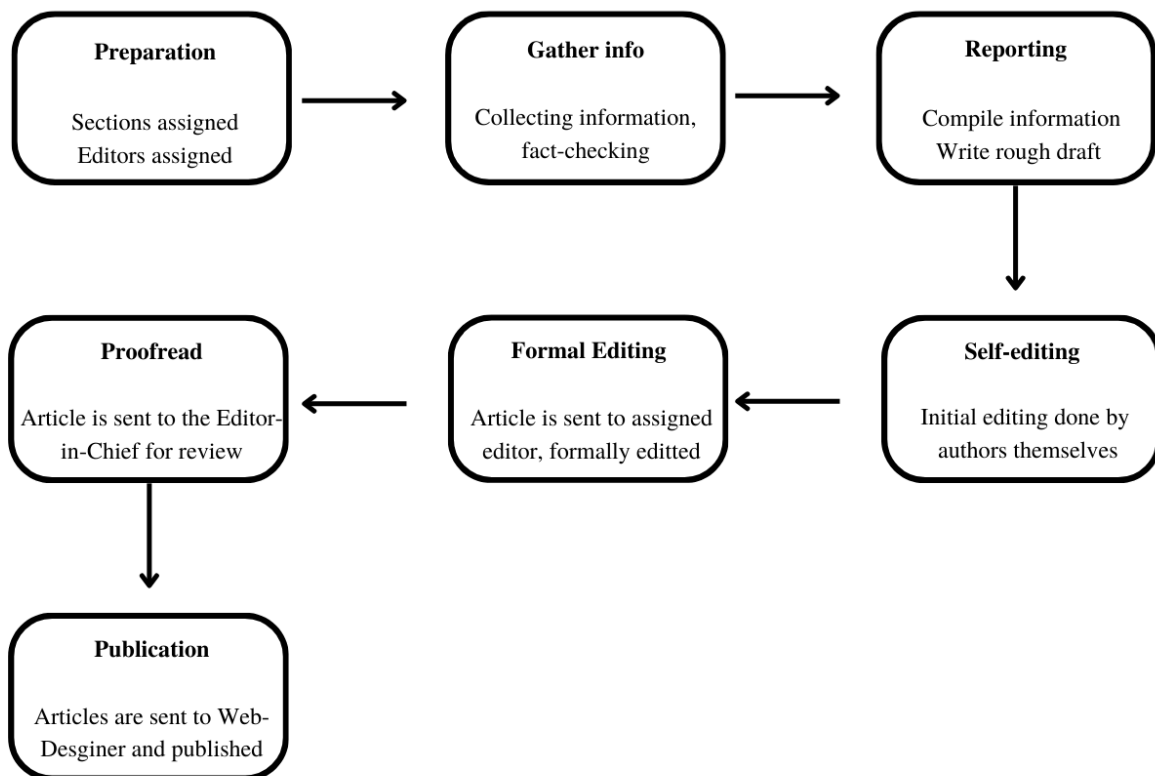Advice for editors: make it concise and precise!

Concise: Try not to add words simply for the sake of word count and paragraph length. remember to compact as much information into the lease space without losing context.

Editor's note: When several sentences revolve around the same subject, try to combine and form new sentences rather than repeating them over and over.

Precise: Try to use specific language with consideration for the 5W+1H.

Editor's note: When the writing goes roundabout by the details, try to isolate the specifics and leave no room for ambiguity! Journalism is not poetry.

Editorial Process Flowchart

Preparation		Gather info		Reporting
Sections assigned Editors assigned	→	Collecting information, fact-checking	→	Compile information Write rough draft

Proofread		Formal Editing		Self-editing
Article is sent to the Editor-in-Chief for review	←	Article is sent to assigned editor, formally editted	←	Initial editing done by authors themselves

Publication
Articles are sent to Web-Desginer and published

Questions to consider before publication

1. Is the news article following all of the Editorial policies?

2. Does the news article follow media ethics?
3. Are the articles expressing views that could lead an average person to conclude that the writer of other people can't be impartial?
4. Is the information true across multiple news sites?

SECTION TWO

REPORTER'S MANUAL

This section of the paper serves as a guide on the expected structure and format of a Phantom Press News Article. The main goal of Lord Byng Newspaper Club is to approach objectivity and help students improve their writing skills. Any violation of these rules may result in the cancellation of the article.

Asking for Help

Students are encouraged to ask their assigned Editors any questions or concerns as Editors are expected to reply to emails as soon as possible within reasonable hours.

What is Journalism?

Journalism is the collection, editing, and distribution of information related to the public. One of the main differences between journalism and other forms of writing is the idea of objectivity. Journalists are expected to be completely objective while they write articles, interview sources, research topics, and report their stories.

What is Newsworthy?

Most good news articles should include one or more of these aspects in their article. Reporters should focus on having these qualities when finding a topic and also in their writing.

Relevance

The story's importance to the audience in question. (Vancouver neighbourhood)

Timeliness

The time the event happened. The event in question should have taken place recently enough to still be relevant in current discussions.

Simplification

The stories that can be easily understood are more likely to be featured than complicated stories.

Predictability

Events that happen on a predictable schedule generally gain more attention as they approach the date, e.g. sporting events, major decisions ...etc.

Contingency

Unexpected events like natural disasters and accidents also gain significant amounts of attention.

Influential Countries and People

Generally, individuals who have more frame, have more newsworthiness. For example, if someone throws a banana at an everyday person, it would probably not be on the news, unless he is throwing it at everyone. However, if someone were to throw it at John Cena during his speech, it would probably linger in the news for a while.

The same thing goes for countries. There would be more attention paid to disasters or events happening in wealthier countries than in developing countries. For example, most people know about the war that is going on in Ukraine but not many know about the civil war that is happening in Sudan.

Style

This style that will be covered is different from the MLA style that is taught in school. This syntax guide is based on *The Associated Press Stylebook: 2022-2024* by The Associated Press and some parts of the Canadian Press Stylebook.

Purpose

The purpose is to create consistent guidelines for grammar, spelling, punctuation, and language usage for publication.

Abbreviation and Acronyms

- Commonly known titles like Dr., Sen., PM. are required before a person's full name only outside of a direct quotation.
- The names of organizations are acceptable but not required (i.e. CSIS, CRA). There should always be context.
- Writers should always avoid "alphabet soup" – which is the use of abbreviations or acronyms that readers would not quickly recognize.
- Avoid having any abbreviations and acronyms in headlines, unless it is widely recognizable (CRA, BC Hydro, BC Ferries).

Addresses

- For numbered addresses use abbreviated figures (i.e. Ave., Blvd., and St.).
- However, spell out words like "road, alley, and drive."
- Spell out street names and directional cues if they are used without a numbered address. They also should be capitalized. Ex. Turn left on **Main Street** and then head north on **Broadway**.
- If a street is a number, spell out **First** to **Ninth**, after, use figures for everything higher. Ex. They turned on **15th St.**, They exited on North **Fifth Avenue.**

 Age

- Always use figures for age.
- When age is used as an adjective or as a substitute for a noun, then it must be hyphenated.
- Do not use apostrophes when describing an age range.
- Ex. The 30-year old worker. The worker is 30 years old. He was in his 30s.

Referring To Other Works

- Always use quotation marks around the following:
    - Books, songs, TV shows, video games, poems, lectures, speeches and works of art
    - Ex. " Fortnite" has been banned from the App Store.
- Do not use quotations for:
    - Names of magazines, newspapers, the Bible, and books that serve as catalogues.
    - Ex. He reads the Bible every day.
- Do not italicize any work.

Date and Time

Date

- Abbreviate months with more than five letters. Ex. "Oct. 10" rather than "October 10th"
- Do not use st, nd, rd, or th with dates. (e.g., "Oct. 10", not "Oct. 10th")
- If the year is mentioned with a specific date and month, commas are needed (e.g., Nov. 5 2023). However, when only mentioning a month and a year, no comma is necessary (e.g., November 2024).
- Use an apostrophe before figures expressing a decade if numerals are left out. (e.g., The '90s)

Time

- Use numerals and lowercase "a.m." or "p.m." (e.g., 8 a.m., 11:30 p.m.).
- Noon is for 12 p.m. and Midnight is for 12 a.m.
- Use a colon to separate hours from minutes but do not use ":00".

Dimensions

- Height, weight, or other dimensions, must use figures and the units must be spelt out (e.g., He is 10 foot 1 inch tall.).

Distance

- Any distance over 10 must use figures. Any distance below 10 must be spelt out. (e.g. He ran 40 kilometers. Shrek jumped five meters.)

Names

- When a person is first mentioned, their first and last name must be used. After that, only use their last name afterwards when mentioning.
- Courtesy titles (Mr., Mrs., Miss, and Ms.) should not be used unless they are in a direct quotation or used to differentiate between people with the same last names.

Numerals

- Sentences should never begin with a figure unless they begin with a year.
- When trying to show sequences for people or describing wars, use Roman numbers. (e.g., World War I, Henry VIII.)
- For any ordinal numbers (first, second, third.), as stated before, spell out first through ninth and use figures for 10th and above when describing the order in time or location. (third base, 100th in a row.)
- Any voting, game scores, and ratios should use numerals.
- Political order and military operations should use figures. (e.g. 5th Artillery Division.)
- When using cardinal numbers (numbers used for counting something), spell out numbers below 10 and use figures of numbers that are 10 and above. (e.g. Shrek had one donkey and 100 fans.)
- For amounts from cents to $1 million use numerals. (e.g., $100, 000, $50.30.) For any amount over $1 million, words must be spelt out. (e.g. cents, million, billion, and trillion, etc.)

Punctuation

- Single space must be used after a period.
- Try to use the Oxford comma (comma before the "and" in the last item of a serial list) to avoid ambiguity. (Fred, Tom and Jerry are different from Fred, Tom, and Jerry)

  Apostrophe (')
    - Add an apostrophe at the end of a plural noun ending in "s". (e.g. The minions' bananas.) For plural nouns that do not end in "s" add apostrophe and "s"
    - Add "'s" to the end of a singular common noun that ends in "s". (e.g. Bus's breakdown, The girl's book.) However, singular proper names ending with "s" just add an apostrophe. (e.g. Charles' cards.)
    - Do not add apostrophes for plural numbers. (e.g. 1990s)
    - Use an apostrophe to indicate duration or measurement that implies possession (e.g. In one year's time, Five dollars' worth of candy.)
  Colon (:)

Used to introduce a list, a quote, an explanation, or to elaborate on a preceding clause.
- Capitalize the first word after a colon only if it is a proper noun or the start of a complete sentence.
- For a list or a quotation, use a colon before the list if it starts with an independent clause.
- Use a colon to introduce a formal statement or conclusion. (e.g. The results were clear: the treatment was effective.)
- Use a colon to separate a title from its subtitle. (e.g. The book is titled "The Next Conversation: Argue Less, Talk More.)
- Do not use a colon following a verb. (e.g. The committee will consider apples, oranges, and bananas.

Em Dash (--)
Used to create a strong break in a sentence or set off information for emphasis.
- Hit the dash key twice.
- There should be no spaces before or after the em dash. (I need to buy the essentials-- bread, milk, and eggs-- before the storm hits.)

Hyphen(-)
Used to connect words in a compound modifier when they appear before a noun.
- Hit the dash key once.
- Do not hyphenate compound modifiers if they appear after the noun. (e.g. The well-known author attended the event. The author is well known.)

Parentheses ()
Used to clarify additional information or add a side note.
- Use parentheses as little as possible.
- Periods should be placed outside the parentheses.

Period (.)
Used to declare the end of a sentence.
- Put at the end of every independent clause.
- Do not put space between initials. (e.g. J.K. Rowling)

Quotation Marks ("")
Used to set off exact words.
- Single quotation marks ('') can only be used for a quote within a quote. (e.g. She said, " Shrek told me, 'I need my donkey.'"
- Cannot use a quotation mark to emphasis a word.
- Periods and commas always stay within the quotation marks.
- Other punctuation must stay within the quotation but they go outside if they apply to the whole sentence.

Cities and Provinces

- Do not abbreviate any cities or provinces.
- Cities must be written with the province. (Vancouver, British Columbia)

Titles

- Capitalize formal titles when they appear before a person's name. (e.g. President John Cena, Captain Julian)
- Lowercase titles that are informal, appear without a person's name, follow a person's name or are set off before a name by commas.
- Lowercase adjectives that describe a title, like "**former** President Obama."
- If a title is more than one word, place it after the person's name or set off by commas. (e.g. Julian Wood, the deputy secretary of minion security.)

Events

- Only capitalize the formal name of events. (e.g. Vancouver Film Festival)

Additional Resources:

AP Style
Common Canadian Acronyms and Abbreviations
Abbreviations and acronyms in web content - Province of British Columbia

Ethics

Ethics are general principles and standards that are used to guide the behaviour of reporters. Although the Canadian Charter of Rights permits anyone and everyone to express their thoughts and opinions, Phantom Press is within the restrictions of the Secondary School system which results in the creation of these guidelines.

Accuracy

- Cross-check the news that you are reading with multiple news sources.
- Mistakes must be corrected fully and quickly.
- Subjects of news stories should always have the opportunity to respond to any allegations of wrongdoing.
- Headlines, videos, audio, graphic, sound bites and quotations, should never misrepresent, oversimplify, or highlight incidents out of context.

Objectivity

- Objectivity often requires the reporter to report the facts and facts only.
- If there are sides to the news that you are reporting, you should report all sides of the story.

Avoiding Bias

- Avoid stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, social status, etc.
- Determine whether the article is news reporting, or incentivized, such as advocacy, marketing, propaganda, etc.
- Avoid imposing any of your own moral values on others.
- Support the open exchange of views, even views you might find repugnant.
- If there are multiple views on one certain topic, present all sides.
- Show no favor towards one side or the other by only presenting the facts.
- Reduce the usage of emotionally charged verbs and use neutral terms instead.
- TRY TO BE AS OBJECTIVE AS POSSIBLE.

Verbs to avoid attribution

When reporting on sources it is good for you to avoid verbs such as "hope," "feel," "believe," "Want" and "think," unless it is their intent.

Verbs such as "claimed" and "admitted" cast doubt on the sources' remarks. "Claimed" makes the statements sound as if what they are saying is possibly wrong. While "admitted" makes it sound like the source has committed a crime and is confessing an error or crime.

Verbs like: "stated," "said," "reported," "expressed," and "announced" are examples of neutral terms that can be used.

Avoid Distortions

- Do not present information that is known to be false.
- When presenting information that you do not know is true or false, state nothing but the facts.
- Always fact-check information before publication.
- No deceptive editing of photos, videos, or image content.
- When reporting on quotations try not to change the quotation but if you choose to, do not change the intended meaning of the quotation.

Gathering Information

- Avoid undercover or questionable methods of gathering information.
- Rely on the most up-to-date and accurate research when gathering facts for a story.
- Be aware of hidden biases (people who keep quiet may not get their views heard, but they have views)
- NEVER PLAGIARIZE!

Minimizing Harm

- Be sensitive when seeking photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief, if you really think it is necessary to take photographs, seek consent.
- Be sensitive to those who need extra privacy due to personal safety or other concerns.
- Be cautious when identifying criminal suspects, especially of an alleged nature.
- Be aware that publicizing wrongdoings may lead to witch hunts, vigilantism, and "crowd justice", which may lead to more collateral harm than intended justice.

Avoid Conflicts of Interest

- Remain free of association and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility.
- Refuse any bribery for any manipulation of the facts.
- Try to avoid any activity that you have participated in or will participate in.

Fact-Checking Information Resources (These are hyperlinks)
1. **Snopes**

2. **Reuters Fact Checker**
3. **AP Fact Checker**

Structure
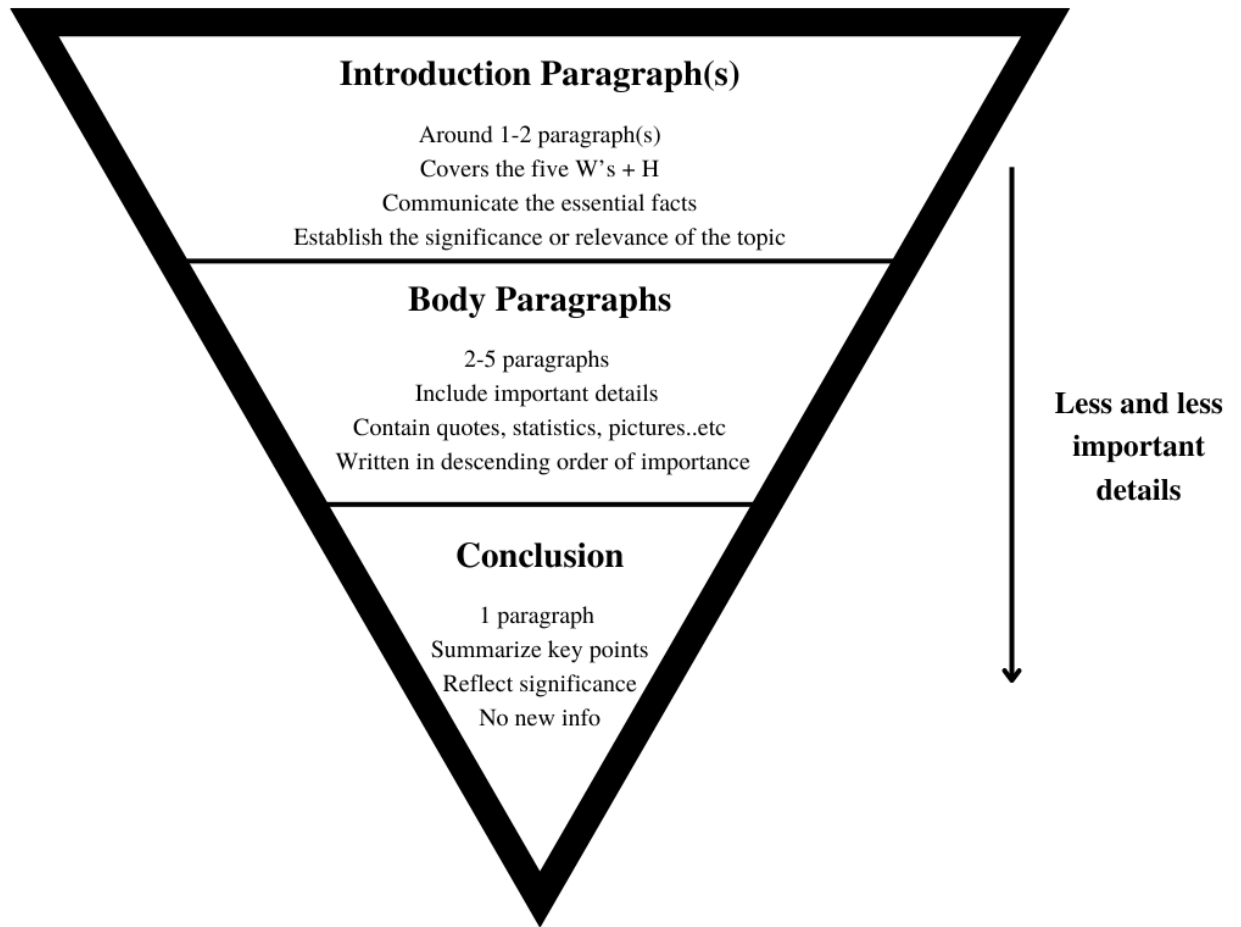
Writing

General tips
1. Paragraphs should be kept **short**.

2. **Do not** write with **jargon**. (Technical vocabulary)
3. Avoid confusing vocabulary – seek to **communicate clearly** to a broad audience.
4. Always write from the **third-person** perspective when possible.
5. **Avoid overusing** adjectives and adverbs like very. Either choose stronger verbs or just remove the redundant verbs.
6. **Avoid cliche**.
7. Connectors should be used for more fluent writing
8. BE CONCISE AND PRECISE!

Writing a Lead

This lead is the most important part of a news article because it grabs the audience's interest and encourages them to continue reading. However, the lead is different from the introduction that most of us have written in school. A lead presents the most important information right away while an introduction is broader and provides more context for a story. A lead should be around 20-50 words and should be presented concisely and clearly.

Tips for Writing a Lead
1. Decide which aspect of the Five W's and H is most important and emphasize it in your lead.
2. Although the purpose of a lead is to summarize, try to be as specific as possible.
3. Since readers want to know why the story matters to them, reporters must be concise when delivering the lead.
4. Use clear and direct verbs that will enhance the liveliness of your lead.
5. REMEMBER TO BE CONCISE!

What to Avoid
1. Avoid overcomplicating the lead and try using strong verbs and nouns.
2. Avoid any redundancy.

Summary Lead

This is the only type of lead that our club will be using. Traditionally it provides key facts about **who**, **what**, **when**, and **where**. However, it should also focus on **why** and **how**.

Examples (these are made up) :

Traditional

"The city council voted 6-2 on Monday to approve a new $12 million library downtown, set to open in 2025"

Modern
" In a bid to boost downtown revitalization efforts, the city council voted 6-2 on Monday to approve a $12 million library project, sparking debate over the allocation of city funds"

The Body Paragraphs

This should cover all of the details of the news that you are reporting. Quotes can be used to prove your points (refer back to the style guide for more info on formatting). However, this should not cover too much detail as the reader may lose interest.

Example:

"In an effort to address ongoing concerns about downtown revitalization, the city council's 6-2 vote has paved the way for a $12 million library project. The project, which has been under discussion for months, aims to breathe new life into the heart of the city. Mayor Jane Smith praised the decision, saying, "This new library will not only serve as a hub for education and community gatherings but will also play a crucial role in drawing more people downtown, which is vital for our local businesses."

Despite the mayor's optimism, the approval of the project has sparked debate over the use of city funds. Opponents of the plan argue that $12 million could be better spent addressing more immediate issues, such as infrastructure improvements or affordable housing. "We have pressing needs elsewhere," said Councilman Robert Lee, who voted against the project. "Fixing our roads and providing housing for those in need should be our priority." This sentiment has been echoed by several community members who feel the library project is a luxury the city can't afford right now.

Supporters of the project, however, see it as a long-term investment. Councilwoman Sarah Green, who voted in favour, emphasized the library's potential to drive economic growth. "By investing in our downtown area, we're investing in the future of our city," she said. "This library will bring people in, create jobs, and provide a space for learning and innovation." With the project now approved, construction is expected to begin early next year, though the debate over the city's financial priorities will likely continue."

Conclusion

This should end with something memorable like a quote or a forward-looking line on what's next for the issue or character or one last takeaway for the reader.

Example:

"With the library project set to break ground next year, the focus will now shift to how the city balances revitalization efforts with other pressing needs. Mayor Smith remains confident, stating, "This is just the beginning of a new chapter for downtown." As debates over the city's financial priorities continue, the next few months will reveal whether this investment truly sparks the economic and community renewal its supporters envision, or if it deepens the divide over how best to allocate the city's resources. For now, the city's decision marks a pivotal moment in its revitalization journey."

Resources (These are hyperlinks):

1. **Purdue University on Concision**

2. **Transitional Words and Phrases**

3. **Strong Vocabulary**

Sources

Sources are what give information to the reporter. They can be a person, document, video, photography or any type of resource where there is information.

When reporting, reporters should:
- Seek to be fair and truthful
- Factual - Double-checking information
- Allow the opportunity to answer any allegations or criticism.

- Treat source with respect

If reporters are taking direct quotations, reporters should not change the meaning or intention of the statements recorded. Reporters are expected to use their own judgement to determine whether the information is reliable, however, reporters should only **write what they know and not what they think.**

Resources

[OSINT Handbook](#)

Interviewing and Human Sources

Interviews are also sources where you can gather your information.

Basics of Interviewing

1. Be polite and respectful but also persistent.
2. Try to ask open-ended questions rather than questions with "yes/no" answers.
3. Steer the interview but do not interrupt and listen more than actually talk.
4. Bring supplies: recording device, paper and pencil, etc.
5. Understand and know your subject (In case you need to explain your question or give background context).
6. Write your questions down ahead of time but don't interrogate the subject. (You don't have to ask all of the questions that you have prepared).
7. Do not be afraid to ask difficult questions.
8. Do not be afraid of silence during the interview.
9. At the end of an interview, always ask if the person would like to add any information.
10. Think about it like a conversation and be patient.

Example questions to ask in a formal Interview

1. What inspired you to get involved in this area/topic?
2. What recent developments or challenges have you encountered in this field/topic?
3. What are your thoughts on the area/topic?

4. What advice would you give to others interested in this area?
5. Why is this event important to the students/community?

Reporters can do "Person-on-street" interviews, which is a random sampling of people in public. POS are also a subjective sampling of uniform opinions that can add a level of interest to your article. You should start with like a simple observation (ask about one of 5W + 1H) or an introduction instead of a direct question. Do not forget to smile and let them know that there is not a wrong answer. Try to build some rapport with the people that you are interviewing. Try to track any major themes that they are saying so that you can put into your writing.

Example questions:

1. The government of BC has banned cell phones in schools. What do you think?
2. How do you think the Canadian Federal Election will play out?
3. What do you think about the development of AI?
4. What are some factors that stress you out?
5. How do you feel about the introduction of Weekly Planner for signing up?

Contacting a Source

When conducting interviews with different sources, reporters can either email or verbally ask the source for the arrangement of the interview. Reporters are expected to be respectful, professional, and concise.

When contacting the sources verbally and through email should include the following:

1. Name
2. "I am a student reporter for the Phantom Press, a student newspaper based out of Lord Byng Secondary School."
3. "I am currently working on a topic/subject and I would like to interview you."
4. (optional) Include some of the main questions that you will be covering.
5. "Thank you"

Before you send emails or verbally contact a source, seek verbal clearance from an executive team member.

Levels of attribution

Before the interview begins, everything should be confirmed with the source before proceeding.

"On the record" means that everything said **can** be recorded and used in the quotations later in the article. The source's name and title are allowed to be used.

"Off the record" means that any information said **cannot** be used in the article in any way.

"**On background"** means that any information may be used in quoted but cannot mention the person's name.

Article Bank

Below are some example articles that follow the structure and contain the desired format.

"Canada orders TikTok's Canadian business to be dissolved by won't block app"
Rob Gillies - (AP)
https://apnews.com/article/tiktok-canada-china-f290fed849bcdb26edb165d55b0aa225

Referenced work

https://www.mediareform.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Reuters_Handbook_of_Journalism.pdf

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1LvUfQ8aAVYtpLCwgX_lzpPRtIpKv2pF1/view

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/journalism_and_journalistic_writing/index.html

https://journalism.nyu.edu/about-us/resources/ethics-handbook-for-students/nyu-journalism-handbook-for-students/

https://www.unomaha.edu/office-of-strategic-marketing-and-communications/public-relations/what-is-newsworthy.php

https://www.bu.edu/com/files/2021/04/WC_apstyle.pdf

https://communications.uams.edu/creative-services/ap-style-guidelines/#:~:text=abbreviations%20and%20acronyms&text=Some%20others%20are%20acceptable%2C%20depending,full%20name%20on%20first%20reference.

https://www.ap.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/ap-news-values-and-principles-1.pdf

https://www.ap.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/2022_social-media-guidelines-1.pdf

https://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/professional_technical_writing/hats.html
https://nbcuacademy.com/how-to-write-online-news-stories/

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1LvUfQ8aAVYtpLCwgX_lzpPRtIpKv2pF1/view

https://jamiejmcintyre.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/mos.pdf

[I will change them later]