Drone story planning worksheet

What's the story:

What purpose does the drone serve:

Story slug: _____

Date to fly: _____

☐ Exact ☐ Flexible

Time to fly: _____

☐ Exact ☐ Flexible

Location: _____

Outcome: ☐ Photos ☐ Video

☐ Other (specify) _____

What context does the drone add:

What, specifically, do we seek to get with the drone:

What privacy issues can we anticipate:

What steps can we take to mitigate them:

What ethical issues can we anticipate:

What steps can we take to mitigate them:

Completed by: _____ Date: _____

Drone flight planning worksheet

Exact location (address or lat/long):

Altitude of location:

☐ Reviewed aviation charts

Airspace:
☐ A ☐ B ☐ C
☐ D ☐ E ☐ G

Active TFRs/NOTAMs as of _____ :
☐ Yes ☐ No

Detail airspace/TFR/NOTAM restrictions:

Story slug: _____

Date to fly: _____
☐ Exact ☐ Flexible

Time to fly: _____
☐ Exact ☐ Flexible

Location: _____

Outcome: ☐ Photos ☐ Video

☐ Other (specify) _____

Need ATC permission/FAA waiver:
☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, permission/waiver obtained:
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Site survey/reviewed aerial imagery:
☐ Yes ☐ No

Over private property:
☐ Yes ☐ No

Permission of landowner:
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Public

Describe the location:

Known aviation hazards:

How many people can we expect in the area:

Plan for mitigating flight over people:

Flight-time weather forecast as of _____ (temp, precip, clouds, wind):

Anticipated weather effects on flight:

Completed by: _____ Date: _____

Pre-trip checklist

Pilot in command: _____

Visual Observer: _____

Photojournalist: _____

Journalist: _____

Est. Travel time: _____ Est. Arrival time: _____

Story slug: _____

Date to fly: _____
☐ Exact ☐ Flexible

Time to fly: _____
☐ Exact ☐ Flexible

Location: _____

Outcome: ☐ Photos ☐ Video

☐ Other (specify) _____

Drone check

- ☐ Drone Batteries charged
- ☐ Controller Batteries charged
- ☐ iPad batteries charged
- ☐ Aviation radio battery charged
- ☐ Propeller nuts checked and tightened
- ☐ Airframe inspected for damage
- ☐ Registration markings displayed
- ☐ Camera memory card checked and emptied

Info check

- ☐ Checked airspace map
- ☐ Checked NOTAMs
- ☐ Checked TFRs
- ☐ Checked weather

Briefing

- ☐ Review flight crew roles
- ☐ Read duties of each member*
- ☐ Review description of ops area
- ☐ Review expected weather
- ☐ Review known hazards
- ☐ Review specific mission goals
- ☐ Review privacy/ethical issues & mitigation steps
- ☐ Review pre-flight rules*
- ☐ Review flight rules*
- ☐ Review post-flight rules*

**See reference material*

Packing list

- ☐ Drone
- ☐ Batteries
- ☐ Props
- ☐ Controllers
- ☐ iPads
- ☐ Cables
- ☐ Camera
- ☐ Memory cards
- ☐ Filters
- ☐ Radio
- ☐ Car charger
- ☐ Pilot License
- ☐ Press Pass
- ☐ Pre- & Post-flight checklists

Completed by: _____ Date: _____

Pre-flight checklist

Story slug: _____

Pilot in command: _____ Photojournalist: _____

Visual Observer: _____ Journalist: _____

Location: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Weather	Check location conditions against weather reports	☐
Wind conditions	Measure at location, check operation maximums	☐
Flight area	Visually inspect for hazards, note, and report	☐
Takeoff/landing area	Delineate and clear of debris	☐
Operations area	Delineate > 15 feet from takeoff area	☐
Flight area	If needed, secure flight area to be kept free from people to ensure safety	☐
Pre-flight meeting	Review goals	☐
WiFi	Turn off WiFi connectivity on any UAS mounted device, including cameras	☐
Airworthiness check	Visually inspect aircraft	☐
Airworthiness check	Visually inspect control surfaces and linkages	☐
Airworthiness check	Inspect props for balance, damage	☐
Airworthiness check	Check camera/gimbal security	☐
Airworthiness check	Verify controller batteries	☐
Airworthiness check	Verify controller is on	☐
Airworthiness check	Verify UAS battery	☐
Airworthiness check	Verify UAS battery is on	☐
Airworthiness check	Verify display panel working properly	☐
Airworthiness check	Calibrate compass, if necessary	☐
Airworthiness check	Check navigation and telemetry connection	☐
Non-PIC personnel	Leave takeoff area, if present	☐
PIC	Leave takeoff area before launch	☐
Video monitor	Check wireless connection	☐
All clear check	Check takeoff area, airspace, flight area	☐
Power up	Unlock motors, increase throttle	☐
Final pre-mission check	At low hover, check telemetry status	☐
Final pre-mission check	At low hover, check prop balance and controls	☐

Completed by: _____ Date: _____

Post-flight checklist

Story slug: ______________________

Pilot in command: ______________________ Photojournalist: ______________________

Visual Observer: ______________________ Journalist: ______________________

Location: ______________________ Date: __________ Time: __________

Battery removal	Pilot in command removes the battery	☐	
Controller	Turn off after battery removal	☐	
Motor check	Touch motors to check for overheating	☐	
Memory card	Remove from camera	☐	
Propellers	Visual inspection, log changes	☐	______________
Landing struts	Visual inspection, log changes	☐	______________
Gimbal	Visual inspection, log changes	☐	______________
Housing	Return UAS to case after inspection	☐	

Fill out battery info for each recharge

Battery ID: ________	Flight time: ______	Remaining %: ______	Check for puffing: _____
Battery ID: ________	Flight time: ______	Remaining %: ______	Check for puffing: _____
Battery ID: ________	Flight time: ______	Remaining %: ______	Check for puffing: _____
Battery ID: ________	Flight time: ______	Remaining %: ______	Check for puffing: _____
Battery ID: ________	Flight time: ______	Remaining %: ______	Check for puffing: _____
Battery ID: ________	Flight time: ______	Remaining %: ______	Check for puffing: _____
Battery ID: ________	Flight time: ______	Remaining %: ______	Check for puffing: _____
Battery ID: ________	Flight time: ______	Remaining %: ______	Check for puffing: _____
Battery ID: ________	Flight time: ______	Remaining %: ______	Check for puffing: _____
Battery ID: ________	Flight time: ______	Remaining %: ______	Check for puffing: _____
Battery ID: ________	Flight time: ______	Remaining %: ______	Check for puffing: _____
Battery ID: ________	Flight time: ______	Remaining %: ______	Check for puffing: _____
Battery ID: ________	Flight time: ______	Remaining %: ______	Check for puffing: _____
Battery ID: ________	Flight time: ______	Remaining %: ______	Check for puffing: _____
Battery ID: ________	Flight time: ______	Remaining %: ______	Check for puffing: _____
Battery ID: ________	Flight time: ______	Remaining %: ______	Check for puffing: _____

Completed by: ______________________ Date: __________

Post-trip checklist

Story slug: _____

Checklist

Logging	Complete flight log	☐
Logging	Complete battery log	☐
Memory Card	Download data from memory card(s) to computer	☐
Memory Card	Delete data from memory card(s)	☐
Camera	Clean camera filter/lens	☐
Camera	Check camera filter/lens for scratches	☐

Equipment condition

		OK	Watch	Fix	
Drone	Drone battery	☐	☐	☐	_____
Drone	Drone propeller	☐	☐	☐	_____
Drone	Other drone issue	☐	☐	☐	_____
Camera	Camera filter	☐	☐	☐	_____
Camera	Camera gimbal	☐	☐	☐	_____
Camera	Other camera issue	☐	☐	☐	_____
Controller	iPad	☐	☐	☐	_____
Controller	Cable	☐	☐	☐	_____
Controller	Other controller issue	☐	☐	☐	_____
Radio	Radio battery	☐	☐	☐	_____
Radio	Other radio issue	☐	☐	☐	_____

Other equipment issues:

Mission summary

Overall, mission went: ☐ As expected ☐ Not as expected

Brief summary of mission:

Completed by: _____ Date: _____

Drone story post-mortem

Did the use of the drone successfully serve its intended purpose (see story planning worksheet for intended purpose)?

Story slug: _____

Date of publication: _____

Date of flight: _____

Outcome: ☐ Photos ☐ Video

☐ Other (specify) _____

Considering the published piece, was the time and energy investment in using the drone worth it? Why/why not?

What could have gone smoother? How?

Did you encounter any unexpected issues with the drone component of the story?
Were there any unanticipated ethical or privacy concerns discovered by you or others?

Has the drone component of the story been adequately featured in story promotion on social media?
If not, have you provided the Digital Engagement Producer with the social assets needed to do this?

Based on this experience, what ideas do you have for using the drone in future reporting?

Completed by: _____ Date: _____ Editor: _____