

TECHNIQUES FOR GOOD WRITING

"A good write up is a study in effortlessness. It must flow freely. It must be knowledgeable without being pretentious, entertaining without being vulgar and informative without being mussy". Says eminent journalist **M.V. Kamath**.

Writing is hard work. Most people give up writing as soon as they can, because it is a hard work - Remember good writing does not happen all at once. It is the result of sweat and blood - in a literal sense.

Some techniques for Good writing:-

- 1) **Writes simply:-** ✓ Simplicity is the best way to achieve clarity. Gifted writers takes to this method to convey their message. A student, a beginner in the profession of writing, will also find it easy to write in a simple manner.
- 2) **Use simple words:-** Many people think big or complicated words will impress the readers. In fact it has the opposite effect. "To write clearly, not only the most expressive but the plainest words should be chosen". Benjamin Franklin once wrote, "it is better to write ease instead of facilitate, many instead of numerous, and use instead of utilise".
- 3) **Use simple sentence:-** It is easier to write five simple sentence than one complex or compound sentence. So why not write simple sentences? Long winding sentences only distract the reader.
- 4) **Economise on words:-** ✓ Mostly writers use too many words in their draft. A careful editor deletes these at the time of editing. There is no substitute for simple, straight forward prose. You should not try to use one word more than necessary. Be on the look of phrases, word and sentences that do not add substantially to the content of what you are writing. Do not boast while writing.
- 5) **Do not use jargon:-** ✓ Each group of people has a technical language of their own - This is called jargon. As a writer you should not use these. You should rather explain the jargon if you have to

use it.

Avoid using overused words or phrases. These are called clichés. A write-up up with clichés is not considered good writing.

6) **Avoid Adjectives:-** Adjectives and adverbs are often superfluous. You build your sentences around nouns and verbs. Uses of adjective often weaken your message. A good verb denotes action and a better verb denotes action and description. So choose your verb carefully. It will reverberate and rejuvenate your copy.

Remember, adverbs and adjectives modify (limit) and verbs expand your thought and thus the writing.

7) **Tie together - Avoid jolts:-** Writing must be well knit. You knit not the words alone but the thought as well. Reader should be able to read through a piece of writing without stops and surprise. While introducing a new idea or piece of information, do not do so without tying it to other parts of a story.

Springing up with sudden jolts thoughts jolts a reader, and like a sudden jerk on a smooth road, he is thrown off balance.

8) **Be specific:-** Brevity is the soul of wit. Just you try to avoid someone who talk too much, so do readers about writing. Eliminate all that which you have said once. You have to have accuracy and clarity. But never try to sacrifice these for the sake of brevity. As I have told you earlier; if some facts need explanation, do not economise on sentences. Instead of one long sentences, it is better to explain it in five sentences.

9) **Avoid repetition and Redundancies:-** Both these traits show lack of discipline on the part of the writer. Sometimes fact need to be repeated but that is not the very case often.

10) **Cut out un-necessary words:-** Quite often you write 'really', 'actually', 'very', 'in fact', and similar others. These words do not tell much to the readers. Rather they tell nothing. So cut these out.

Different forms of writing

2

- (i) feature writing
- (ii) opinion and editorial writing
- (iii) free lance or magazine writing.

(i) Feature Writing :-

Introduction :- Until independence in 1947, Indian newspapers, being ^{pre-}occupied with political affairs with particular emphasis on the struggle for freedom, devoted little space to features. Even today, political coverage remains their staple diet, with a curious obsession with speeches of political leader not only in the central and state legislatures but also at public functions, rallies and press conferences.

Even so, more and more editors have begun to pay attention to features which give individuality and character to a newspaper and offer a greater variety of reading material to the subscriber.

If news is the lifeblood of a newspaper, editorials are its heart and features its soul. Features usually play up the human interest angle.

Main Component of a feature :-

→ A feature resembles a news story in some respects but differs in some others. Like a news story, a feature deals with facts. But it differs from a news story in that it may be longer than its news value justifies and it need not follow the standard form of a news presentation.

→ A news story has two main parts - the lead and the body. A feature also has the third component - the conclusion. The lead should consist of a summary of the subject matter. The body should elaborate on it and the conclusion should sum it up or draw a moral from it.

→ The feature writer has far greater flexibility than a news reporter.

⇒ The Lead

A feature writer has great latitude in selecting the lead. The choice is indeed limitless. The lead may be any one or one of

the lead following types or a combination of two or more of them.

- ① News Summary lead :- This is similar to the lead in a news story and should ideally embody the five Ws - who, what, where, when, and why.
- ② short single lead :- consist of a single striking sentence
- ③ Quotation lead :- The sayings of a renowned person, poet or leader may be taken as lead.
- ④ Question lead :- Sometimes a question may provide with an attractive lead.
- ⑤ Contrast lead :- Conflict and Contrast many a times provide a feature with lead which may bring forth the controversial nature of the feature.
- ⑥ Picture lead :- This gives a vivid description of the setting of the feature or evokes a mood or feeling.
- ⑦ Humorous Lead :- A humorous leads sets the tone of a feature perfectly for the reader.

The Body :-

- ① feature writing is not very different form from any other expository or narrative writing. The body of a feature is developed logically and smoothly in the same way as a news story.
- ② A feature should conform to the basic principles of good writing, that is unity, coherence, and readability.
- ③ Although the feature writer may have a greater space at his disposal than a reporter. he should present his material with brevity and elegance, avoiding superfluous words as well as cliches and maintaining high stand of writing.
- ④ By exercising literary ingenuity, the feature writer can make even a simple and ordinary incident into a vital happening.
- ⑤ The news reporter informs but the feature writer informs, entertains and educates.

Conclusion :- A News reporter does not a Conclusion, but a feature often, though not always, does. The Conclusion may be a summing up of the contents of a feature, or a climax as in a short story or a cutback or a flashback to the lead.

Types of feature writing :-

- ① Human interest feature :- The human touch is perhaps the most vital quality in the feature.
- ② Personal Narratives :- The stories of eminent men and woman ~~worth~~ are worth telling. Human interest in them survives long after they are dead. Features can be written on their life and work, their achievements and their unique contribution to the nation.
- ③ Meeting Unusual people :- The world is full of extraordinary peoples/persons whose life and work can made good features.
- ④ Travel sketches :- Travel fascinates most people even though they may be prevented by lack of money or time from visiting as many places as they may want to. Travel features satisfies a basic human desire to know more about the world we live in.
- ⑤ Historical features :- These are about persons in history book or about places.
- ⑥ Interpretative features :- These are intended to inform and instruct the reader about the background and significance of political, economic, social and religious issues.
- ⑦ Autobiographical Human documents :- feature in this category relate to personal experiences of intimate personal matters. Most of us have read 'My Experiment with Truth'. It is a wonderful account of the personal experience of Mahatma Gandhi.
- ⑧ Science features :- features to popularise science by explaining a scientific development in simple language for the lay reader fall into this group.
- ⑨ Practical guidance feature :- these are designed to tell the reader how to make, repair or collect things. Short of do-it yourself articles.
- ⑩ Miscellaneous :- The list of subject that lend themselves to feature treatment is endless, ranging from mundane activities like cooking and gardening to unusual trades and professions - from fashions and good grooming to bird-watching and mountaineering.

(ii) Opinion & Editorial writing:-

The "edit page" of a newspaper is essentially an opinion page. It is a prestigious part of the newspaper, which often gets the direct attention of the editor. It reflects the policy of the newspaper and makes a major contribution to the shaping its image.

→ In India, all reputed dailies have their column. The pre-occupation of newspapers with political developments is a legacy of the days of our freedom struggle, but in course of time, this has given way to a wider perspective embracing economic, social and international developments. In the editor while presenting his views, also expresses his concern and anguish over the development, but also suggests remedies to prevent a recurrence of the problem.

Editorial page:-

1. All the newspaper with some standing pay extra attention to the editorial page. You must have noticed that generally newspaper do not publish any advertisements on the editorial page.
2. Most often, the editorial page, which are expected to mirror the policy of the newspaper, are given a serious, some times even a dull look.
3. Until a few years ago, edit pages did not have any photographs or graphics. But of late things are changing and some newspapers now carry a photo on the edit page.
4. On edit page, generally, there are two/three edit in the first two three columns of the page, one main article at the centre of the page, one or two small articles (s) in column 7-8 position.
5. At the centre of the page is a light article, generally humorous, of human interest or informative. Since it is in the middle of the editorial page, it is also known as "middle".
6. Besides letter to the editor are also accommodated on the edit page. Sometimes, even a cartoon appears on this page.
7. If a newspaper has several editions such as Times of India, the same editorials generally appear on the same position at all centres. This is essential for the overall personality of a newspaper, its image and for making an impact on a particular issue.

4

⑧ Normally, newspapers do not carry photographs of the editor with the editorial.

⑨ On rare occasions newspapers publish editorials with the signature of the editor.

Definitions and characteristics of Editorials.

⇒ A conventional editorial may be defined as a critical interpretation of significant, usually contemporary, events so that the publication's typical reader will be informed, influenced or entertained.

The word 'critical' is used as evaluating and not exclusively as fault-finding. In other words it usually is a considered statement of opinion.

→ An editorial may also be defined as a journalistic essay which either attempts ① to inform or explain ② to persuade or convince ③ to stimulate insight in an entertaining or humorous manner. It has an introduction, a body and a conclusion.

⇒ In editorials articles are also called "leader". News Interpretation and background articles are different from the editorials in that they do not seek to convey the editorial view on the subject.

→ Hester Markel, a famous Sunday Times editor of the New York Times has said: "what you see is news; what you know is background; what you feel is opinion".

→ Newspapers also carry on their opinion pages from the Columnists. The Columnists are like lawyers presenting a particular point of view. One columnist might differ completely with another on the same subject and interpret the same development differently. Reading all shades of opinion on a major controversy would be helped to the reader to arrive at his own conclusions and judgement.

Types of Editorials:-

① The classification could be according to the purpose of editorial i.e. it may be informative, argumentative, or entertaining.

② An editorial may also be classified on the basis of its

form of compositions, i.e. it may be narrative, descriptive or expository.

- ③ It can be classified on the basis of its appeal to readers' emotions and intellect.
- ④ An editorial may also be classified on the basis of its contents which may be political, social, economic, historic, scientific etc. grouped under local, national, regional and international heads.
- ⑤ Interpretative and explanatory editorials seek to expand the dimension of the news report. Both type of editorials as well as reporters have to keep in view the requirements of a busy reader as well as of the well read persons with critical mind.
- ⑥ There are editorials that amuse or entertain. The light-pieces are usually published as the third column by major English NP. Humour on the editorial page adds to their appeal for the reader whose interests not confined to politics and economics.

Letter to the editor:-

Letters to the editor are published usually in the opinion columns. Though an editor cannot be expected to publish all letters representing various points of view on a controversial matter, he is expected to make an honest endeavour to select and publish a balanced gist of these letters on the issue.

An editor has a discretionary right to publish or not to publish any letter or article in his paper.

it

(iii) Free Lance and Magazine Writing:-

Broadly, acceptable freelance contributions can be divided into the following categories.

Article:-

- ① An article is like an essay, but it is not an essay as it is less personal and less limited scope. It is a written composition of variable length, intended to convey ideas and facts for the purpose of informing, educating, enlightening, convincing, instructing or entertaining.

- ② Every publication has limitation of space. At the same time, it has certain ideas about display. An article, and for that matter any write-up, has to fit into this slot
- ③ You may wonder about the ideal length but in fact there is nothing like an ideal length. However periodicals prefer a piece written within 1,000, to 12,00-1500 words depending on the subject.
- ④ There is no exact set of rule for how to begin an article. Generally, it can begin with a catchy introduction to attract the reader, and then ideas and facts may be ~~interwoven~~ interestingly interwined.
- ⑤ Articles can be written on unpleasun subjects - plain facts that may be unknown, new ideas to mould a project or schemes like the Narmada Sagar project, economy, science, commerce, fashion, designing, rural, urban, semi-rural, semi urban features etc.

features: -

- ① features are often linked to current events. And a writer assigned to do a news feature may be just reporting an event. Feature writers are often captivated by their own graceful writings, letting their skill overshadow the fact that they are linked ~~to~~ closely to the news.
- ② As a feature writer, you have to learn to recognise that your proper positioning is half way between news story and the feature.
- ③ Good features are always in demand. Unusual hobbies, Success stories, Inventions, interviews, personality stories and human interest stories - all can be turned into good features.

Reviews/Analyses:-

① Evaluating or even descriptive pieces can be written about music, drama, ballet or such other cultural performances. Such writing can be termed as review pieces.

② Book review :- There is another kind of review. This is associated with books. A large no of books are published day in any day out. If you are a keen reader, you can get in touch with some of the book section editors of magazines or newspapers and ~~can get in touch with~~ and can get the books in which you have specialisation. This is a real bonus for you. A book reviewer is not only pay a good sum, but it also allowed to retain the book he has reviewed.

→ while reviewing, you need not summarise the book contents. It needs an expert evaluation and the reader has to be told what kind of a book it is. You must avoid writing good or bad. You should write in a way that the reader gets know what kind of the product it is.

③ An analysis, as the word suggests, examines in detail an issue. This can be an evaluation of a scientific work or of a building project. But remember, whatever it is, it must have something novel in it. An analysis should be argumentative and deal with the pros and cons of an issue.

Some ~~scrip~~ Tips for a free lancer :-

- ① A good public relation is always helpful. Human behaviour changes the moment you present something in person.
- ② So you must have realised that besides being a good writer, you should have a good rapport with your editors.
- ③ It is also prudent to send ^{self} addressed stamped envelope with your manuscript. The rejected manuscript will come back to you. You can send it to some other publication who may use it. To be a successful freelancer, you ought to have patience.
- ④ Always send typewritten manuscripts. Editors are grave in accepting handwritten articles.

Freelancing for magazines:-

6

- ① choose a subject and do a lot of reading on it from a variety of sources through different sources journals, magazines, reference books.
- ② Draw outlines from your notes after your readings from several sources.
- ③ write a lead, build around reorganised ideas and decide whether an anecdote would be fitting to precede the lead.
- ④ in one sitting, try to write 1,000 to 1,500 words non stop. Your writing must have depth and background. Try to develop only one idea at a time.
- ⑤ Be selective. Don't try to put in all the knowledge you have acquired into one piece. Don't make it a dumping ground.
- ⑥ After completing the article forget about it for a day or two. Then again re-read it like a dispassionate and critical reader. In all likelihood, you would be able to make out where your piece is jarring, disjointed and has other flaws. Now re do it.
- ⑦ This retouched and reworked piece is likely to be flawless product. Now send it to the publication for which you have written.
- ⑧ Always type your manuscript in double space on one side of the paper.

How to build an Article:-

- ① **Story structure:-** The beginners are told that a lead must catch and hold their readers. The lead is the introduction or intro, in journalistic parlance. If possible, the intro should be startling, witty or a pithy statement.
- ② **Sentence structure:-** Beginners generally like to twist their sentences short. Generally, ~~the shorter~~. You should do this rarely, for effect. The normal rule is that nearly all sentences should be as simple and direct as possible.

- ② Sentence length :- As a rule, you must keep your sentence short. Generally the shorter the sentence, the more readable it will be.
- ④ Concreteness :- As far as possible, you should use concrete words instead of abstract ones. Abstract words confuse readers.
- ⑤ Verb :- Making the verb do the work of an adjective is preferable. The verb expresses action. If it is carefully chosen, it can even describe personality.
- ⑥ Transitions :- Learning to link paragraphs in a way that pulls that reader on is a skill that distinguishes the professional from the amateur. After the first paragraph, what comes next - you have to learn.

Styles for magazine articles :-

A writer is known by his style. Every writer writes in his own style. Some are humorous and light like that of Khuswant Singh, some serious and observant like Nikhil Chakravarty, some analytical such as Nihal Singh.

- A beginner cannot be expected to develop such a style overnight. But when we consider style and content, the focus sharpens.
- magazine writing is a distinct body of prose. usually made up of words the readers can understand and information he can absorb.
- Although diary articles are broken into sub-sections, the rule is that the writing flows from the beginning to the end through smooth transitions.
- following to be kept in mind
 - sticking to the theme
 - one story at a time
 - make it vivid
 - fiction is not journalism

Syndicate and free lanceing :-

free lancee :- If you have been regularly reading newspaper and magazines, you must have noticed that several persons write articles, reviews, features on all kinds of topics. Some of them write in several newspapers and periodicals, day in and day out, though they are not on the regular payrolls of these newspaper or magazines. They are known as 'freelance writers'.

They practise free lance journalism. Generally speaking freelance writers are not attached to any NP or magazine. Most magazines and periodicals depend a lot on these freelancers, for making these publications interesting and for meeting the reading need of all kinds of readers.

Stringer :- There is yet another kind of freelancer. A stringer is a person who resides in a far off and remote place and attached to newspaper or news agency. A stringer is paid a fixed amount monthly and sends his or her report from the locality he/she resides. The cost of posting a full time journalist proves very uneconomical. Hence generally all the major newspapers and news agencies fall back on stringers for their coverage.

Syndication :- Some of the senior-most journalists in the country today are so popular that there is a demand for them from many newspaper. The result is that most newspaper do not mind publishing the same article provided it can add to their prestige by including the name of the well known journalists in their column. Such journalists become Syndicate Columnists. Some well known examples are

- Mr. Kuldip Nayyar
- Mr. B.G. Verghese
- Mr. Nikhil Chakravarty
- Mr. M.J. Akbar
- Ms. Tarleen Singh.

NEWS AGENCY:-

feature of a news agency:-

→ What after all is a News agency

A necessary news agency is an organisation which collects or gathers news and supplies it to different newspapers, magazines, radio stations and television stations subscribing to its service. News gathered/reported by reporters/correspondents is sent to newspaper via electronic teleprinters or computers. These newspapers, in turn, pay a monthly subscription to use news agencies for the news they receive.

A news agency office is always buzzing with activity, since it has to serve not only the print media within the country, but also transmit news to AIR and DD. It also supplies news to NP and other agencies all over the world. Thus the news agency works round the clock.

→ How is it Different from a NP

- (i) The news agency does not publish any newspaper of its own. What ever its reporters write/report is ~~not~~ transmitted to the NP, AIR, DD
- (ii) there is a Constant flow of news from the news agency 24 hours a day.
- (iii) Every news agency report has to attributed to a source, unlike a newspaper story.
- (iv) There will be no comments, editorializing or interpretation in a news agency report and it will be purely a factual report.

:- ownership Pattern.

- (i) Both the news agency the Press Trust of India (PTI) and (UNI) United News of India are trusts registered under Registration of Societies Act. They are owned by groups of NP who have bought share to run them.

② These newspapers have established Boards of Directors, each headed by a chairman, to make the policies of the respective news agencies. The Board have representatives of prominent NPs as well as public figures.

Financial Structure:-

The newspaper and other subscribers pay a monthly subscription fee, plus rental charges for the computer/teleprinter, apart from the installation charges paid when the subscription was first taken. The rate of subscription is determined by specific criteria like circulation of a newspaper, and it remains the same, irrespective of whether the newspaper used the news items sent out by the agency or not.

As we said earlier, the Govt does not own the agencies. But like the Govt - AIR, DD, various ministries, and other govt departments - is also a subscriber. Ultimately, the Govt is the largest subscriber.

Growth of a News agency in India.

India Attains Independence : state of Agencies

- At the time of independence there were either foreign agencies with offices in India or British-owned Indian agencies.
- The foreign agencies are - Reuters, United Press International, AFP, AP comes latter
- In addition there were India based news agencies like United Press of India and the Associated Press of India

Formation of various Indian Agencies

→ Encouraged by the Govt, some major newspapers joined together to form a trust, and then set up independent India's first news agency, the Press Trust of India (PTI) in 1949. It took over the business of Associated Press of India - subsidiary of Reuters.

→ The PTI functioned as the only news agency for the next eleven years. It will surprise you to know that although both PTI and the UNI are professional rival, the UNI owes its birth to PTI,

- Since PTI has little competition, its working was not considered good enough for the standard of a news agency. The PTI Board of directors felt that something needed to be done to pull it out of its lethargy. One immediate solution was that another Indian agency should be set up to compete with the PTI.
- Then the United News of India was formed in 1961, and registered under the Societies Act. Like PTI, the UNI was also lucky to inherit the assets of United Press of India, then in the process of winding up.
- The PTI had headquarters in Bombay, though main administration continued to be in Delhi, while UNI has its head office in Delhi.
- Earlier in 1948 a Hindi news agency had come into being. Called the Hindustan Samachar, it was backed by some political and private groups. Later in 1966 another agency, the Samachar Bharti, came into being. Although both agencies had limited sources confined to certain areas of the country, they functioned more or less on the same lines as of PTI and UNI. Another news agency, the Asra News Intabahand (ANI) came up in the late eighties, but is yet to start all-India operations.

Emergency: The Era of Samachar.

- One of the stipulations of the Emergency was imposition of press censorship in the entire country. For the agencies, this functioned in a very special way. A censor office was established in the Press Information Bureau - which is the publicity wing of the govt - and the news agencies were directed to send all their copy to the office every hour. After the censor officer had gone through the news items and used their red pencil to cut out what should not go, the rest was sent back, to be used.
- From time to time, the Govt also issued certain directives about what to report and what not to report. However the Govt felt that not all the agencies were following these directives and the impression began to gain that one agency was less controlled than the other.
- On February 16, 1976, orders were received by the agencies that