



## Whodunnit!?

**Take 1: Write everything you remember from watching the one scene (As many details as possible)**

**What did others notice that you did not?**

## Whodunnit!?

Take 2: This time take notes while watching the scene

### Questions:

1. Were you able to notice more this time around? Why do you think that is?
2. Do witnesses get to have a second chance to view incidents they have been part of? How may this affect their perspective of an incident?
3. As a journalist, why would it be important to take notes while researching or interviewing for a story/article?
4. Is the human mind perfect? Why or why not? Explain your answer in detail.

## Whodunnit!? (Follow up)

1. How many of the changes did you notice while you were watching the video? Why do you feel you saw what you did and not others? What things affect what we perceive in any given situation?
2. If you were asked to remember details about the video tomorrow, how much do you feel you will remember?
3. What if you were asked to tell the details about the video in a week?
4. A month?
5. How does time affect perspective?

**Read and annotate** the following article about journalism.

The purpose of journalism is to provide citizens with the information they need to be free and self-governing. Your job is to inform.

So how do you write a solid article?

What do you need to keep in mind while you are researching and writing a story?

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## **Citizen Journalism 101: Tips for producing a good story**

There are characteristics of journalistic reporting that set it apart from other categories of writing. While it can be narrowed down to a few simple guidelines, they are important to the credibility of content. All of these principles apply to all forms of media even though they might be worded for use in text or print.

### **POINT of VIEW: Writing in Third-Person Perspective**

As a reporter, your testimony is not an important part of the story. It's your job to talk to other people and collect information from them. These people are called witnesses or sources. As such, your story should **not** be told from a first-person perspective.

Example of first person:

*I walked up through a crowd of people and saw the flames coming from the top of the building.*

Words used in first-person perspective are **me, I, mine, us, our** and so on. If what you see cannot be denied by anyone else who sees the same thing, those same details can be given in the story in the journalistic third person perspective.

Example of third person:

*Twenty-five minutes after the alarm was sounded, flames were visible coming from the roof of the building. "I've never seen a fire spread so quickly," said John Doe, a 25-year resident of the area who lives three blocks from the location of the fire.*

It is encouraged to use timely, first-person accounts of events like fires or other emergencies. These eye-witness submissions, however, should not be confused with producing a news story.

### **SOURCES: Using More than One Source**

A story without a source is prose or opinion (sometimes both) and **will not hold up as a news story**. Stories with only one source, no matter how important, always appear weak and one-sided. Using testimony from two to four sources is standard. However, creating a news story is not a competition in how many sources you have. Quoting any more than four different sources in a story make it feel crowded and confusing. The key is to find sources who are relevant to the story or who are authorities on the subject matter.

Events like fires are typically straightforward. While an ordinary witness can provide believable testimony, someone representing ownership of the burned building or someone of authority from the fire department should be sought for comment. When the essence of a story provokes multiple opinions, it's important to find sources who reflect these differing stances.

## **Different Sides of the Story**

You are at a city commission meeting where they have to decide if they're going to commit to a route for a bike path. The commission seems supportive of the bike path, but many residents who live along the proposed route have come out to speak against it. Now imagine you write a story that only focuses on the commission and their apparent support for the bike path. The residents would be outraged, and for good reason. Stories with subject matter that involves different viewpoints need to represent each in order to be seen as credible by the audience. Ideally, representatives from all sides—in this example, one resident who is against the bike path, maybe the group of people promoting the bike path—should be quoted. A nice touch would be to talk to one of the commissioners, too. As a journalist, it is your responsibility to accurately relay information. Advocates of a certain stance are opinion columnists, not news reporters.

## **MECHANICS: Putting the story together**

### **The Lead**

The most important structural element of a story is the lead. The lead is usually the first sentence, or in some cases the first two sentences, and is ideally 20-25 words in length. In video or audio reporting, the establishing image or spoken sentence is the lead. The goal is to articulate the most encompassing and interesting statement that writers can make in one sentence, given the material with which they have to work. While a rule of thumb says the lead should answer most or all of the five Ws (who, what, where, when, why), few leads can fit all of these.

Example:

*Fire destroyed a house on Main Street early Monday morning.*

Notice how this simple lead is able to tell what, where and when in just 10 words.

### **Nutgraph**

This is a type of paragraph used particularly in feature story writing that summarizes the background and significance of an event. It explains the context of the event/article to the reader.

Example:

*When Grand Rapids native and established artist Mic Carlson talks about his relationship with St. Francis, it is always in the present tense.*

*That is because the relationship he shares with the patron saint of environment, animals and representative of peace is one that he says is constantly growing and evolving.*

*Currently, construction of a prayer garden has begun at St. Ann's Home, located at 2161 Leonard St., which will feature over 20 of Carlson's miniature bronze statues of St. Francis.*

In this example, the third and final paragraph would be considered a nutgraph. It explains why the previous information is relevant and timely. It indicates what will continue as the topic or subject matter of the story. Notice

how little information is provided in the lead, or first, paragraph. This is a tactic in feature reporting and documentary style production intended to draw in the reader or viewer.

## **FACT CHECKING**

When a source states something as fact, it's important to find another source to support that fact. While it is a fact that the source made a certain statement and can be quoted, if the statement is wrong it weakens the story and can be detrimental to a source's credibility. If statistics are used in a story, they should also be attributed to a source and double checked.

## **ETHICS**

Integrity and trust in reporting is critical for effectiveness, for each individual citizen journalist and for The Rapiidian as a whole. When creating news content (as opposed to opinion, commenting or nonprofit self-publishing), these are important ethical considerations and standards:

1. Seek truth and report it fully. Inform yourself continually. Be honest, fair and courageous in gathering and reporting the news. Give voice to the voiceless, and hold the powerful accountable.
2. Seek out and disseminate competing perspectives without being unduly influenced by those who would use their power counter to public interest. Remain free of associations and activities that may compromise your integrity or damage your credibility.
3. Minimize harm. Be compassionate of those affected by your actions. Treat sources, subjects and colleagues with respect, not as means to an end. Do not lie, pose or misrepresent yourself.
4. Don't write about someone related by blood or marriage, or someone with whom you have a personal or financial relationship. Don't use your position to seek benefit or advantage in business, financial or commercial transactions. Don't take freebies.