

# "WITS STUDENT" ARTICLE WRITING WORKSHOP

23 February 1991

## Preparation and Sources

"Cavass" widely for information and check background. It is often necessary to really "dog" a participant or witness or other person involved in a news item, until they disgorge (newsworthy) statements, insights, versions of events.

It

It is very important not to censor yourself. The sub-editors will remove libellous or illegal content.

## Restricted Areas

One may not defame (label) a person or organization without solid proof, nor criticize the legal system as related to the judiciary. Nor may one criticize the armed forces (in particular) or police without ample evidence.

One may be prosecuted for libel, or defamation of character.

Sub-editing the <sup>of</sup> This checks <sup>coherence</sup>, the accuracy of <sup>,</sup> and the grammar of a story. ~~the~~ subeditors also check that all aspects of a story have been covered.

One must bear in mind that the sub editor doesn't alter, or omit, or rewrite any of the article out of personal animosity.

### Style of news writing

The style of a publication is determined by editorial policy.

It is important not to create a "presence" in the story.

### Location in relation to the story

Location is important, as local stories provoke interest from readers. News value (or the interest a story holds for readers) is greatly influenced by the location of the story.

Local events, or events directly or indirectly related to, readers' lives are more popular than "remote" stories.

### a) The introduction to an article

The introduction is the first paragraph of a story. It is usually one sentence long. It is usually less than 30 words long. It must state the point/theme which most directly affects the readership.

There are two main types:

① The Common intro contains one news idea only. It gives the main

point of a story

② The Pontmarteau intro is used in the case of a large, complex topic which cannot be stated in a single idea.

A "general attention-grabbing sentence" must be formulated - a sentence which broadly states the content of the article.

Time and care must be spent on the intro.

Be certain not to overload the intro - set the scene with adjectives etc.

b) The content of an article

The background to a story is subsidiary to the intro.

The content is used to give the intro meaning.

The writer must focus on the perspectives of the audience. The relevance of content must be shown.

Content is the subjectivity of the publication.

-: The intro and content of a story will cater to the audience's perspectives (and will be enforced by editorial policy.)

## c) The structure of an article

- The structure is that of a reverse pyramid, as the story branches out:
- levels - ① The headline
  - ② The intro which defines the headline and states the most salient fact of the story
  - ③ Then there is background
  - ④ If space allows a chronological outline is added.

## d) The language of an article

- We use
- Economic language
  - Clear writing, in a vigorous (active voice/direct speech) style, or in a passive form to emphasise the subject if he/she has more importance than the event.
  - Present tense in the first paragraph, past tense for the rest.

- Avoid abstracts and generalisations

Simple language is used, and exactness is sacrificed for brevity and directness. Thus we use "has" not "had", "is" not "was". [Sometimes we use "was" to guard ourselves eg. hospital patient]

Be positive ≠ Mandela has not been caught

= Mandela is still free

Avoid abstractions ≠ accommodation for 600  
= 600 seats

LAYOUT WORKSHOP

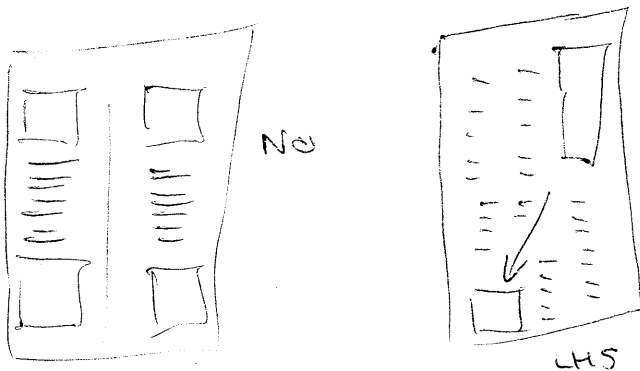
How people read affects page design:

- Photos are placed in upper right areas

As people bite at words, their eyes move left-right, up-down, thus stories are set in narrow columns.

People also tend to read single pages, so avoid 2 page spreads (except centre spreads).

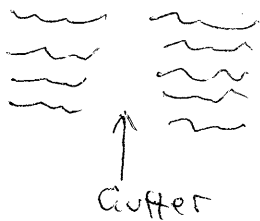
Pages are asymmetrical - for "movement", ~~forces~~ moves reader down right; prevents boredom: This is dynamic (equilibrium) or tension, rather than stasis



- People respond differently to different typefaces:
  - "Times" - literate population
  - "Sans Foot" - working class
- project different discourses.

Point size: height of letters

Copy: the unprinted page/script



Smaller columns (widthwise)

- fast movement
- less threatening
- energetic
- upright

Larger columns

- more leisurely - more concentration needed.
- thought provoking

Long columns

- always broken up by various means.

Copy: Text, for columns

### Key points

- ① Text
- ② Graphic
- ③ Headlines

### Function of headline:

- draw readers in
- inform

Musn't be too witty - obscures information

Headlines usually have capitals and small letters for shape - and readability.

(letters are read up and down)

usually higher than 16 pts.



Fully capital headline must make statement.

- Pictures - good for tone
  - break monotony
  - movement to page
  - gathered pictures (grouped pictures) denote unity, (for faces).  
Very effective
  - close-up shots of faces  
also direct reader: eyes of subjects etc.

Cropping refers to the removal of background for effect.

- big issues = big pictures
- "bleeding" - when picture touches edges, not advisable

### Other Facets of Design:

- style: a certain style breeds loyalty
- white space - allows page to "breathe"
  - not necessary to fill it
  - gives the page a certain feeling
  - if too much goes on on the page it is very badly designed (distracting)
- Borders are used to divide issues
- Folded lines:  PAGE TYPE 

- Toner box - filled boxes
  - use anywhere
  - very effective
  - not necessarily headline eg. adverts (front page corners)
  - use sparingly - very eye-catching
- Hierarchy of headlines - important stories get the bigger headlines

### Key words:

copy: 10pt, "times" typeface  
 heads: times, bold  
 caps: bold, helvetica, 12pt  
 columns: 5, justify

### Tips for creating motion:

- Drop Caps (large hanging first Capital)
- crossheads (semi-headings between paragraphs)
  - direct ad layout - break up long columns.
- Intros as held people get through story



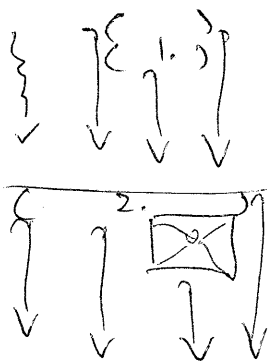
⊠ Pic

( ) Headline

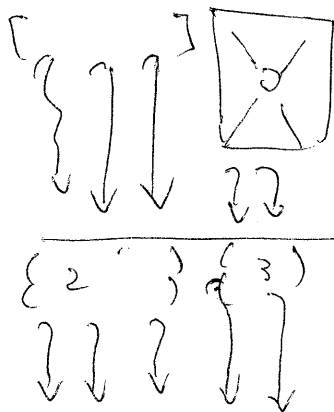
[ ] Caption

} copy

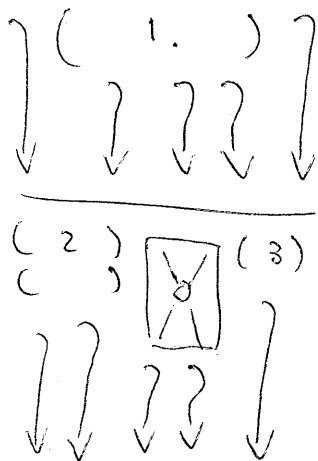
### MOVEMENT



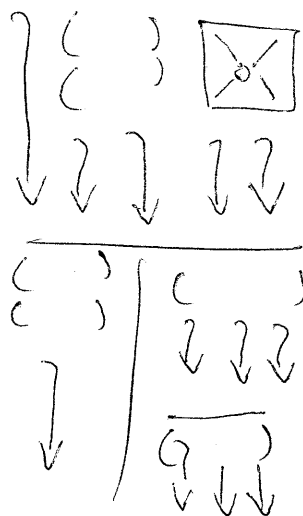
EITHER



RHS

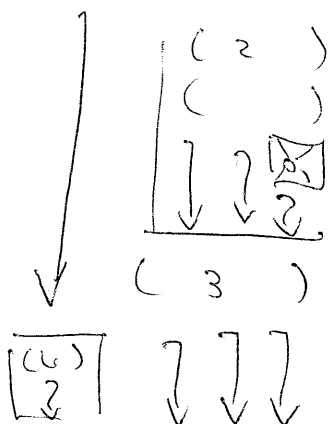


EITHER



RHS

( 1. )



### Access / Steps

1. Read stories through
2. Decide most imp
3. Measure
4. Find pics
5. Design

### Space

185 cm/ps

Not More than 126 cm/ps

TO HELP NEW MEMBERS OF WITS STUDENT IN THEIR FIRST PRODUCTION WEEK END, WE HAVE NOTED DOWN SOME BASIC CONCEPTS OF DESIGN.

AFTER THE FRIDAY AFTERNOON DESIGN SEMINAR, AND WITH A LITTLE BIT OF PRACTICE, THESE RULES WILL BECOME QUITE OBVIOUS TO YOU - SO DON'T WORRY, THEY ARE NOT AS DAUNTING AS THEY MIGHT SEEM.

KEEPING THESE NOTES ON HAND FOR THE FIRST WEEK END COULD MAKE DESIGNING MUCH EASIER.

## NEWSPAPER DESIGN

- \* Always keep within the general style of the publication, (WS must cater for a wide range of students). We must not come across as a frivolous magazine.
  
- \* There are hard-and-fast rules for design, but these can be flexible.
  - understand rules before you break them
  - learn by practical experimentation
  - design must subtly convey a message. It does so by being:
    - attractive to the reader
    - legible
    - there must be stylistic continuity
    - must communicate messages effectively
    - stories and pics on the page must be united by way of purpose/logic
    - headlines, photographs, illustrations, use of colour, etc., attract readers, but do not have too many focal points on one page.
    - contrast and balance can be achieved by using large and smaller pictures, bold and light heads, italics, etc.
    - white space can demarcate or emphasize articles
    - style should be simple and uncluttered
  
- \* GENERAL POINTS:
  - solid grey masses of writing are unattractive and off-putting
  - thick black lines/boxes add emphasis to stories
  - fewer stories facilitate better design (for reasons of simplicity)
  - use big, dynamic and clear photographs
  - boxes, shadow printing and wobbling (white writing on a black background) are eyecatchers
  - deep etch some photographs (cutting around the edge of the object of the photograph)
  - good design facilitates clearer, faster transmission of information from the writer to the reader.

\* ELEMENTS OF DESIGN

(i) Length of stories:

- narrow columns make short stories appear longer and vice versa (longer stories will seem less daunting)

(ii) Number of columns to a page: (WS may use 2,3, or 4 columns)

- the more columns, the more possible headline positions - this can be a problem, so fewer columns can be easier for design purposes
- do not use ultra-wide columns: type will become unattractive and pictures won't be able to be used creatively (eg. they will have to be bigger than necessary) (or they will have to be heavily cropped)

(iii) Headlines

- different typefaces communicate different images
- fewer stories mean fewer headlines and design can remain simple

(iv) Design/layout

- emphasis is usually on vertical display, i.e. stories usually run down a page, rather than across. Some stories running horizontally can provide an attractive contrast.
- each page has a focal point (usually the headline of the lead story and the main picture)

(v) "Constants"

- certain constant elements in a newspaper give that publication its character
- constant elements include: format (~~WS is A4~~)  
title piece (WS logo)  
regular features  
(eg Nurden)  
logos - letters, editorial

- changes in design must be introduced gradually so as not to "shock" the reader
- \* There must be continuity from one page to another. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT DESIGN/OVERALL APPEARANCE MUST BE MONOTONOUS
- give the best stories prime (focal) positions on the more noticeable pages - the right hand pages
- do not place "clashing" stories close together (

- \* Front page: a picture, no writing (usually)
- \* Page 2: a roundup of short news stories from other campuses
- \* Page 3: centre: news stories and focuses
- \* Centre spread: the feature: an in-depth, or the analytical news focus
- \* editorial (half a page running vertically) followed by letters - usually 2½ pgs
- \* satire: Nurdin, our "resident" comic character
- \* arts: two or three pages devoted to culture, music, etc.
- \* sports: two or three pages of campus sporting events
- \* back page: usually an interview with a person of interest to students or who influences student life.

\* PHOTOGRAPHS

- plan your photographs where possible, so as to avoid bland shots - know what needs to be emphasised
- horizontal shots draw a reader's eye from left to right across a page; vertical shots draw the eyes down
- if you have a good picture, give it as much space as possible to gain it impact

Photographs must:

- be appropriate and enhance the story visually
- impact the reader
- fit the overall design of the page
- be of good quality (correct lighting, focus etc)

## ***Wits Student: : What's on ...***

**Weekend away:** seminars, jorls and workshops —this Friday (15 March). It will cost about R25 for Friday night and the whole of Saturday, including food. Transport or financial hassles can be sorted out, speak to anybody on the editorial collective.

Every one must meet in the offices at 5pm on Friday.

**Deadline:** 19 March — hand in all articles! Speak to people on your phone list if you need help with your stories.

**Newswriting Training Workshop:** 14 March (this Thursday), from 3pm - 5pm

**Computer Workshops:** 21 March (next Thursday), from 2pm-3pm and from 3pm-4pm. These will deal with computer literacy as well as practical training.

**Production Weekend:** 22-26 March, in the offices. There will be hands-on training workshops in design and layout, computers and photography.



# WITS STUDENT PHONELIST 1991

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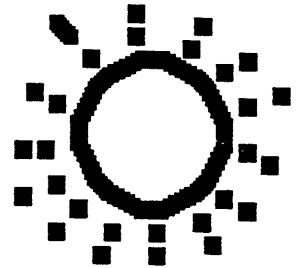
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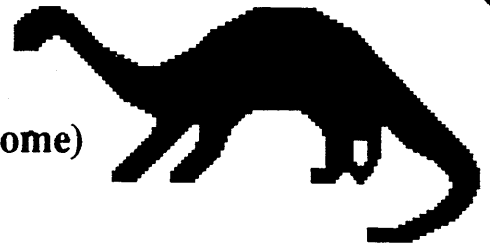
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