
Media I: Writing for Yearbook



Writing “Do’s”

1. Think of your story copy as another photo

- Match your story to your dominant photo on your spread, if possible

2. Center your focus on one individual, event or activity

- Academics/Student Life
 - Select specific course, project, event, test, small group of students
 - Focus on one set of “Best Friends” or capture ultimate “sibling rivalry”
 - Follow one or two students through his/her day of work
- Sports/Activities
 - If year was outstanding...go with it! (Playoffs, championships, etc.)
 - One athlete’s performance, scholarship or rituals unique to a specific team
 - Community service activities, fundraising events, awards ceremonies or dinners

3. Create formulas for all aspects of writing

Copy/Headline

- Copy Length = 10-15 sentences, depending on space needs and/or goals
- Quotes = use several thoughtful ones throughout---students rather than teachers
- Formula = Quote – Transition – Quote – Transition – Quote
- Format = past tense, 3rd person
- Headline = 3-5 word phrase, present tense – short phrase referring to copy focus

Captions

- Length = 2-3 sentence formula
- Formula
 - 1st sentence = what is happening in photograph + present tense
 - 2nd sentence = why is it happening/what is background + past tense
- Format = Identify students by year, ID students by name if 3 or less appear

4. Be Specific and Show Style

- Avoid common words: “a lot, many, it, stuff, things, some, everyone, everywhere”
- Get specific numbers, statistics, mention individual achievements (especially in captions)
- Vary sentences (by requiring that no two sentences start with the same word!)
- Write for student readability...no complex adjectives/overly wordy sentences
- Focus on the students’ activities, not the teacher’s lessons/adviser’s role

5. Be Objective & Accurate

- Avoid adjectives such as “good, bad, beautiful, successful, best”
- The way to get opinion in your copy/captions is through quotes from others
- Double—triple check correct spelling of names
- Get accurate quotes—don’t alter or “create”

1. Resist urge to “recycle” tired generalizations from yearbooks past

2. NEVER predict the future or “wish luck” to next year’s teams/students

- The focus should remain on this year, the one this book is covering

3. Don’t State the Obvious

- No school name, initials or mascot or “this year”
 - We know where & who we are and what year it is

4. Avoid Shortcuts & Repetition

- Steer clear of clichés -“Tried and true”, “Hard work and determination”, “Time to remember”
 - Don’t predict future seasons, years, proms, etc. focus on the NOW!
 - Don’t use five words when two will do by avoiding prepositional phrases
 - Don’t abbreviate
- Story copy and captions should not repeat same information
- Don’t show same person twice on one spread

Activity: Writing Captions

Work with a partner and select 3 photographs from a yearbook spread (please site pages and year) and write a CAPTION for it. You may make up the person’s name, grade and background information. Remember, 1st sentence identifies the person, by grade and is PRESENT TENSE explaining what is happening in the photograph. 2nd sentence is PAST TENSE giving more background information about the event shot in the photograph.

1.

2.

3.