

COLUMN WRITING:

“When news is in wind, readers, listeners and viewers lean into it, feeling for its meaning, trying to detect its importance to them and their lives” ~Conrad C. Fink

**That’s where the columnist comes in. The columnist is an expert in the tools of the trade.
The columnist reports, analyzes, comments, and personalizes the news.**

6 Steps to Quality Column Writing

1. Strong Reporting

- > Develop strong hard-news reporting skills.
- > Make an argument; Your opinion is only as good as your facts. Do your research.
- > Get out. Conduct your Research in the field.

2. Curiosity

- > Have a ‘want to know.’
- > Always question. Always ask. Don’t always believe.
- > Get out. Be curious; be ‘in-it.’ Watch, ask, talk, observe.

3. Cutting-Edge Instinct

- > Sniff the wind. Feel what is out there and what people are saying. But more importantly, what they are THINKING.
- > Follow major news breaks or hot topics.

“I learned long ago as a reporter that there is no greater privilege than to have people share their stories with you”

~ Eileen McNamara, *The Boston Globe*

4. Have a Heart

- > Find the ‘human angle.’ How does it affect__?
- > Realize everybody has a story. And everyone’s story is important. They matter.
- > Minimize harm.

5. Develop a Voice

- > Sharpen that all-important LEAD.
- > ‘Juice’ your grafs later in the story to keep the reader ‘in.’
- > Avoid the cute stuff. (unless the subject matter demands it).

6. Have Fun

- > Enjoy it. You have one of the most coveted journalism gigs.
- > Get to know your world and your readers. Embrace them.
- > Don’t lose you. Your sense of self is what makes you unique.

DEVELOPING VOICE

“There is, I think, a voice in all of us that reacts to life as a continuous monologue. That’s the voice we hear inside our heads when we are writing. It’s not necessarily the voice you use while speaking; in fact, it is usually quite unlike it, but it is the voice we hear when while thinking , a voice that is as singular as we are.”

~Tracey O’Shaughnessy

“How I learned to write is being a **V**oracious reader all my life” ~Mary McCarty, Dayton Daily News

“I think of it as letting the voice that is yours **O**ut” ~ Ellen Goodman, Boston Globe

Iclose my eyes before I write. Then I just say what’s on my mind” ~ Ron Jackson, Kankakee Daily Journal

“Write **C**inematically. Think of the lead as an opening shot of a movie.” ~Stranding

“A good **E**nding should stay with you and make you think a little bit” ~ Bruce DeSilva, Associated Press

Have a Point

“Type the point of your column in one sentence without a comma. If you cannot write it in one sentence, then you are not ready to write”

~Derrick Jackson,
The Boston Globe

The Central Conflict

The central conflict is a column’s overall theme. Smaller conflicts and observations are the building blocks to the main focus of the story. Tell a story, don’t just make observations.

~ Stranding

The 4-S Formula

~ Make it **short**
- *not too wordy*
~ Make it **simple**
- *it has to be readable*
~ Make it **sound**
- *apply principals, ethics*
~ Make it **sing**
- *powerful voice*

~Robert L. Haught,
The Oklahoman