



WRITING NEWS

THE 2011/2012 GATEWAY GUIDE

Published by 

The Gateway News Guide

a.k.a. “Help! I don’t know how to news!”



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(make sure we got that thing you sent us)

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GATEWAY NEWS

Hello, and welcome to the *Gateway News* section for the 2011/2012 publishing year!

My name is **Aaron Yeo**, and I'll be your News Editor this year. We hope you'll have fun as you join us on our adventures in student journalism over the course of this upcoming year.

What I'm For

I want to teach you, awesome newswriters, and there are two reasons why. First of all, through this process, **you'll become great writers** who will help fill *The Gateway* with solid writing throughout the year.

Secondly, *The Gateway* is a **great campus volunteer experience**, and one where you'll hopefully unearth valuable writing skills. We believe you will use these skills in all of the writing that you may choose to do — in your essays, papers, legislative bills, and love letters. Learning to write concise, interesting prose is a skill that can be broadly applied in many places in your life.

We editors are willing to help in any and every way with getting this so-called news-writing thing down. **Don't hesitate to ask questions** — give me a call, email me, or if you dare, approach me in person (I'm not actually that scary). I'll be happy to answer and address any concerns you might have. That's what I'm here for. Feel free to discuss how to start your story, or if you're not sure what you're doing when you're writing it, or even to just hang out. However, I do not recommend coming to me to talk about

your recent breakup, because I have a pair of headphones and I'm not afraid to use them.

Either way, **this guide is meant to help me help you**. It covers all the basic things every *Gateway* newswriter needs to know, so that I don't forget to tell you anything when we talk in person. This guide is meant to be comprehensive, but **if it doesn't cover some of the questions you have**, let me know right away.

Just remember, your third grade teacher was right — there really is no such thing as a stupid question.

What You're For

There are a few myths about becoming a *Gateway* volunteer. For example, to write here, you need to have some experience, like writing at your high school newspaper. *False*; we're open to anyone, experience or no experience, although it might help to know a bit of English. Some people think volunteering here takes days of painful arthritis-inducing typing with little to no reward. Again, *false*; while it obviously takes a bit of time, volunteering here will allow you to develop great writing abilities, and of course it's always nice seeing your name in a newspaper, especially when it's not followed by "sentenced to six years."

What would help you out is **an open attitude toward news**. There are challenges to news writing, but that said, the volunteers who get the most out of the paper are those who **respond to these challenges with energy**. Nobody, not even the editors, gets an article absolutely perfect all the time — the best way to learn is to scrutinize your work, read other newswriting, and find ways to do it better next time.

Don't worry; you're not alone on this endeavour. I'm here to help with some good ol' fashioned **honest and constructive criticism**, in an effort to realistically assess your work. But what we want to see is you coming back and building upon what we're saying, taking that criticism, and working on ways to improve. Keep an open attitude and constantly strive to do better, and you'll become a formidable writing force to be reckoned with.

Philosophy

Socrates taught Plato, and Plato taught Aristotle. Got it? That's all there is to modern philosophy. *The Gateway*, however, has a philosophy of its own. Allow me to present the guiding tenet of *Gateway News*:

Cover issues and events that are significant to students clearly, fairly, and accurately.

We're here to make sure that everyone on campus knows what's going on. To do this, we must thoroughly and accurately report the facts on what's important. This means we need to write it **clearly** so as many people as possible can understand it.

We need to make it as **accurate** as possible so our readers know they can trust this information and we retain our credibility as a newspaper.

And we need to be **fair** in our coverage. This means that you take the role of an impartial observer in all the things that you happen to be writing about, and report what goes on without inserting your own perspectives and opinions — to be biased in your writing is called **editorializing**,

and it is **unacceptable** in news writing. Don't fret if you have opinions — we all do — just be sure not to express them in your articles. It is up to the reader to interpret the facts as they see fit.

Lastly, staying **relevant** is something we need to strive for constantly. This is accomplished by being clear, accurate, and fair, but also by covering stories that interest and affect our readers. We don't make the news, but we get to select what stories make up the section.

Your job as a news writer is extremely important in upholding these values in our news content. As Neal Ozano and Chris Miller put it in the 1997/98 *Gateway News Guide*, "We're the rock in the sea of turmoil that is *The Gateway*. We can step on toes if the story allows it. We're not here to make friends. We're here to report the facts, and only the facts. If you can't be objective, write an opinion piece."

How to News

If you've read a news article lately, you might have noticed a lot of quotation marks and "he said's" and "she said's." They're not being lazy; in fact, quite the opposite. They're doing what every news writer must do: **conducting interviews**. Bereal; you're not an expert on everything, so you're going to have to talk to someone who knows something. Sometimes you'll have to talk to a scientist about his or her latest discovery. Sometimes you'll need to do a little more. When an interviewee seems to be particularly one-sided, it's definitely advisable to talk to someone else, too. Remember, news strives to be unbiased, and if all you're getting from the university official is that higher tuition is great, try to find someone who thinks oth-

erwise.

I can't stress enough that it is **IMPERATIVE** you have quotes in your articles. In news, no quotes equals no credibility. We won't publish any article that doesn't have quotes.

It's also crucial to remember to **use common sense** when writing and compiling your information. News is not about being an automaton who strings together quotes or just regurgitates the information they've found to make an article. You have to know what you're writing about, and know why you're writing it. After doing your interview, you should have a good idea of the main points of the story, and you should be able to tell that story in a few hundred words. Even though this is news, don't be afraid to develop your own voice. That allows the article to be more than just a list of quotes from someone else. After all, you are the writer.

But remember: question everything, and double-check all your facts — just because somebody says something happened one way, doesn't mean it did. Publishing false information can lead to big trouble for you as a writer, us as editors, and the Gateway as a newspaper. You also need to be aware that it's an offence to print a story without a subject's consent or with incorrect information that lowers their reputation. That's called **libel** and it has to be avoided at all costs. **Beware:** using your brain doesn't result in a lack of objectivity. It just means you should use your head to assemble an accurate and concise picture of the story from the pieces you're given.

The Rules

I'm no Roman dictator, but there are a few

simple rules that can make this experience enjoyable for all. Don't worry, I'll be gentle.

1. If you take a story, you must

finish it. If the story collapses due to reasons beyond your control, let me know ASAP. I understand that these things happen. If I know about it far enough in advance, I can find another writer or another story to fill your spot. If you wait until the day it's due, I'll have to pit you against my gladiators.

2. You get a week to complete an assignment, which is definitely enough

time to get in all your interviews and actually write the article. Your story will be due by **5 p.m. on the Saturday** before the issue. This way, I'll have time to send it back to you by **2 p.m. on Sunday** for revisions or to ask you questions, if necessary. After taking a look over these edits, you'll need to send a second draft of your story back to me by **6 p.m. on Sunday.** If you do not meet these deadlines, your article may not be printed. If missing deadlines is a consistent problem, I may ask you to stop writing for the section. If you need an extra day or two, ask, but don't just take extra time.

3. Your articles should be **around 500 words**, unless otherwise specified.

Feel free to go over that word count, but don't be under — if I have to, I'd much rather cut down a few sentences than be forced to add words that aren't yours. If you do decide to go over, keep it under 600. It's a newspaper, not a romance novel.

4. **Keep in touch** with me as your

stories are coming together. The best stories are often the ones that have been talked through between the writer and I.

5. Conduct yourself with integrity and honour when conducting Gateway business. Don't be a douche, because whatever you do reflects on *The Gateway* as a whole.

Now that that's out of the way, here's a quick rundown of how you get to work with me.

1. Get a story. There are a few ways to do this. The easiest and most common is to come by the office on Fridays at 3 p.m. and check out the weekly news meeting. You can pick up an assignment there, or get one from me when I send out an email with the week's leftovers. If you're really adventurous, you can even hunt down your own story ideas and suggest them to me.

2. Assess the story. Figure out what you don't know about the story, what people would want to know, and, most of all, why students should care, and what they would want to know. Brainstorm a list of people who will be able to tell you more about the story and brainstorm some questions for them.

3. Contact the appropriate people. Make sure you take steps to arrange your appointment early in the week. Have a sheet of questions prepared in advance. Remember to inform your photog (photographer, assigned by the photo editor) once you've confirmed interview times.

4. Conduct your interviews. Be businesslike when doing so. That doesn't mean wearing a three-piece suit and bowler, but rather a firm, friendly handshake and a well-meaning attitude. The more comfortable everyone is the more likely the interview will go smoothly.

5. Transcribe your interview(s) and compile your information (quotes and other research). You should be saving this information for at least a year; both the recording and the transcript.

6. Write up your article.

7. Self-edit and proofread it.

8. Submit it to me via email or telegraph (include your notes and interview transcripts) and complete revisions on it under our direction.

9. We'll edit it and **publish** it in the paper. You celebrate with a beer or non-alcoholic beverage of your choice.

10. Come back and talk to us about your article.

Interms of putting this all into practice, the next few pages contain more in-depth information for your perusal.

1. Getting the Story

A "story" is a topic or an event you can write an article about. They can be fickle things. Some are easy, some are tough, and some die faster than goldfish.

You can get a story from two places: us, or you. We will be presenting news

stories at meetings that take place at 3 p.m. every Friday in the Gateway office — if a story seems interesting to at might not have made the news list yet.

If you have any stories you'd like to cover, or know of any juicy leads, let us know. We encourage you to bring your own ideas to the section. However, you must run the story by me first. The Editor-in-Chief and myself have the final say on what makes it into the section, and you should recognize that. Any story ideas should fit *The Gateway's* philosophy of being clear, fair, and accurate to U of A students.

2. Assessing the Story

Now that you have a story, what do you do with it? Well, first things first: **take a few minutes to assess the situation.** This includes thinking about things like:

- What does the story mean?
- What's my angle on it?
- What don't I know about the story?
- What do I need to know?
- Who should I interview and what should I ask?
- What kind of research do I need to do?

When given a story, you'll most likely be offered some kind of **point of reference** to begin with. It might be a press release, a printed article, or a phone number and verbal description (hopefully you take some kind of notes!). Take what you've been given and go through it. Ask yourself things like, what is this story about? What makes it so important that readers should know about it?

Next, think what "angle" you'll take in writing the story. If it's about a new Canada Research Chair for a chemistry professor,

you could do a profile on her — or you could write it about how Arts professors have a disproportionately small number of research chairs in comparison. Try and think up of an angle that's both interesting and important. There are often many ways to approach a story: consult with your editors and choose the one that seems the most appropriate for the context.

Also, make sure that if you are given a printed article as your point of reference not to take the exact same angle as that writer has taken. Offer readers something different, consult different sources, and think about ways you can make your story more suited to a U of A audience. We have different readers than other papers such as the *Edmonton Journal*.

Now **figure out what you don't know about the story.** What sort of questions does the topic or event raise? Whom does it directly affect? What will they think about it?

Research is a key element at this point. Can you look up information on what you don't know? If you don't know where to start, give us a shout, but try these places first:

Has our paper run stories on the topic before?

Who are the major players you should interview? Get their names, titles and phone numbers. Your editors usually know all the local power figures. But be imaginative, too: who else can you think of that might be affected by or have an opinion on the subject?

Try searching through directories — the university's online "find a person" directory at <http://webapps.srv.ualberta.ca/search/>, or the phone book — for additional contact information. Check **other media sources** for information — try news websites like

globeandmail.ca, canada.com, Google News, and CBC. Check out other student newspaper websites or the national wire at www.cupwire.ca to read news at other institutions. Some good bets are searching the U of A website (www.ualberta.ca) and the SU's website (www.su.ualberta.ca).

Research ensures **you won't waste valuable interviewing time** asking redundant questions, and also allows you to **gain some background knowledge** to ask some intelligent questions, which is always a bonus.

3. Contact the Appropriate People

At this point it should be pretty easy to think of people you can talk to about the story. **As a general rule, try to think of at least two people, each on a different side of the issue, that you can interview.** Don't let time or location limit you: you can use a *Gateway* phone to call long-distance for free, or use *The Gateway* interview room for in-person interviews.

Included as appendices in the Duck Book (the guide to *Gateway* style) are charts detailing the who's who in the Students' Union, the university administration, and postsecondary education governmental contacts — three groups you'll be talking to often as newswriters.

In the next section, we'll talk a little bit more about the magic of actually setting up a concrete interview.

4. The Interview

Now that you've thought of people to interview, **think of at least five questions you**

can ask each person. It may help to think about how the topic or event affects them when formulating questions. For example, can you anticipate what their reaction will be? Also, think about how they relate to the angle you've chosen: what do you want to hear from them that's most relevant to your angle? Focus your questions on that.

It's important to think of all these things beforehand, because interviews can often be the only things holding up a story from actually being completed. **Therefore, arrange the interview as soon as possible so you can better structure your time.** Also, be prepared before you call to arrange an interview. You never know — you might get the interview right away.

A) Setting Up the Interview

Getting an interview means contacting the person, identifying yourself and the information you want, and then making an appointment to see him or her. Try and be flexible, and arrange something that's more convenient for your interviewee. It's always easier to do an interview if person, even if it is a little intimidating at first. But if time or location are factors, a phone call is also suitable. Try to avoid "interviews" over email — they tend to produce very static, dry, and robotic quotes. If it looks like an email interview might be your only choice, let me know first.

If you reach a secretary when calling for interviews, which will happen when you try and call important people, remember your manners. Secretaries can make or break your chances of getting an interview. Suck up like crazy, but follow the drill: identify yourself, make it clear that you represent the *Gateway*, and state the

reason you are calling. Most secretaries will ask for your deadline — this means the latest they can call you, and *not* when the story has to go to print. This means that the latest they can call you will typically be about 3:00 p.m. on the Friday before your story is due. Keep in mind that most university employees (and other people who work in the “real world,” too, for that matter) operate on business hours and you can’t do interviews over the weekend.

Don’t worry if you don’t hear back from a secretary, or even the source itself. They likely haven’t forgotten about you, but instead have chosen not to care. But don’t fret; call back, and reiterate why you’re calling, and above all be polite. If you’ve emailed them, give them a follow-up call soon, because some people don’t always check their emails on a regular basis.

Persistence is a very important part of what we do.

You might also have to talk to public relations people instead. That’s not always a bad thing, as sometimes they could have just the info you’re after, but of course, other times they’ll just get in your way. Still, be nice to them and you’ll get what you need.

B) The Basics

There have been volumes written on good interview strategies and tactics, but we’ll hit only the basics here, as there are still quite a few of those. If you’re interested in knowing more about interviewing technique, just ask.

Experienced interviewers know exactly what they want to accomplish with an interview. You should arrive at your interview with a plan in mind, well

aware of what information you need from this person and how you’ll get it. That doesn’t mean trying to get them to say what you think, but rather provide good answers to your questions.

Arrive early. Being late is a real no-no — and who knows, you might overhear or see something important while waiting. Plus, you can use the extra time to go over your goals and questions. This will help you conduct the interview efficiently and constructively.

It is absolutely critical that you enter an interview objectively. **Don’t let your personal opinion enter the conversation.** You need to gain your interviewee’s trust before you can acquire information; being objective will show that you’re there to get their perspective. Then, and only then, will they speak willingly and openly with you.

Conduct the interview like a conversation, not an interrogation; you’ll find the subject more at ease and open with their answers. Remember, if someone’s uncomfortable, either you or your interviewee, the process can be painful.

Be professional, but not cold; friendly, but not familiar. Consider the nature of your interview and who you will be interacting with; some interviews or events dictate a dress code. In other words, don’t arrive for an interview with the President wearing shorts and offensive slogans on your t-shirt. Do not chew gum, smoke, put your feet on the desk, or take any other liberties. If you’re at all unsure of the spelling of the interviewee’s name, get them to spell it for you, as well as their official title and any other details you’re unsure about. Don’t hesitate to ask them this — they’ll likely be appreciative of the extra care and attention you’re taking to get it right.

C) The Questions

We've already emphasized the importance of being objective, but let's do it again: **you must not let your personal feelings on a subject enter into an interview.** A good interview depends less on the questions than on the spirit of questioning: if you make your subject get defensive, they will stop talking. **Make sure you appear interested** — even if it means faking it — and repress any natural urges to argue.

Think of it like that first date. You don't want to scare them off, or make them feel uncomfortable, and the more they talk the better. Don't be afraid to ask them to explain a little more on topics you're not entirely clear on; you're talking to them because they're experts on your topic, and sometimes they might skip the simple stuff, but they'll be more than happy to explain them. At the same time, don't make yourself look like an idiot.

The more questions you have, the better an interview you can conduct. Go into your interview with **a plan for a beginning, middle, and end**, and keep in mind **two or three points** that you want to get.

Be prepared to **digress from your question list** if your subject starts talking about something else; when you do this, they often have to deviate from the answers they had in their head coming in, and that's when you can get your best quotes.

Your interview can begin with the easy, logistical stuff. These questions should answer the **Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How** of an issue. You may not be able to pose these questions so easily, but you must be able to answer them after the interview is done.

Opening with these questions is a great way to build trust; they're easy questions for your subject to answer and talking

about familiar territory will put your subject at ease. These questions also serve to remind your subject that you have a job to do and show that you're willing to be objective about it. This will make your life easier when you get to the tough questions.

Keep your questions open-ended — do not ask “yes or no” questions. Make your questions direct (“What difficulties do you see in mixing sexual profit and education?”) but not accusatory (“Is this a way for you to justify prostitution in an academic setting?”).

If you get a “PR” answer, **try to dig beyond the obvious** and ask your subject for more details that will help you dig deeper into the issue. This goes back to your question lists. When making up your list, try to hit the angles others might have missed.

Be careful with the tough questions, but don't be afraid to ask them. **If you've stepped on a nerve, you may get a really great answer.** If someone doesn't want to answer you, they won't. Most people will appreciate straightforwardness over hedging, so if you've got a tough question, just ask it. That said, it's possible to distance yourself somewhat from the tough questions:

NOT: “Don't you think that's a lot of money to spend on office renovations?”

BUT: “How would you respond to critics who say that's too much money to spend on office renovations?”

Keep in mind that if you're going to use this particular approach, you should have actual critics in mind, in case your subject challenges you with “which critics?”

ALWAYS end your interview with “Is there anything you'd like to add?” Most people will answer this with “No,” but then

add something — this is where you'll often get the all-time best quotes, so don't forget to ask. Also make sure to ask if there is anyone else you can or should contact on the subject. Oftentimes the interviewee is one of the best sources for future interviews because of their knowledge and connections. Thank your subject for their time and help, and then get moving on the story while the information is still fresh in your mind. **It's also a good idea to ask if you can contact them again** in case you have other questions later on down the line.

One last thing to note is that if you're worried about interviewing, you are welcome to shadow with the news editors on an interview. You are also welcome to read transcripts of interviews — we have quite a few available if you're interested. Just shoot me an e-mail and I'll get you all prepared.

D) Record-keeping

Unless you're Raymond Babbitt, your memory probably isn't good enough to keep track of everything that's said in an interview, so you'll need a handy-dandy way of recording everything that goes down.

The Gateway office has a few recorders available for you as writers to use, but I strongly, strongly recommend investing in your own digital recorders if you're planning on writing a lot. Come talk to us if you'd like any more information before purchasing. Even if you use a borrowed recorder, you can often download your interviews straight onto your computer.

No matter what recorder you're using, **bring a pad and paper** regardless. Although the recorder permits a more

casual and conversational feel, it may break down — and if you haven't been taking notes, you'll be screwed. Doing both ensures you've got things covered, and it'll help you stay focused. Being able to quickly jot down new questions that come to mind as the interview happens will help you get the information you want. You can also note the time on the recorder when a subject gives a good quote to speed up your transcribing later on. Also, learning how to write in some kind of shorthand system is a great skill for all aspiring journalists.

Everything said in an interview is on the record. It is generally understood that when talking to a journalist, things said are on the record, unless otherwise specified by both the reporter and the subject. It is considered common courtesy to ask a subject if they are comfortable being recorded.

Here in Canada, only one person in a phone call needs to be aware of the conversation recording; a.k.a. you. That being said, even if a subject does not wish to be recorded, anything they say can be written on your notepad and is still valid for quotes.

We would caution you **not to go off the record** unless absolutely necessary. If possible, encourage the subject to talk about the material on the record. But, if it's completely necessary to go off-the-record, make sure you honour the request after the fact. **Do not use information that's off the record.** Doing so can harm our reputation with the subject, who could be a valuable resource for other stories. Make sure you **let your news editors know** that you went off-the-record so that we can discern which information from the interview is valid for publication. But all that trouble can be avoided if you just keep everything on the record, right?

5. Transcribing

When the interview is over, transcribe — type up — the relevant parts; you don't need to transcribe everything, as this can be tedious and time-consuming. You'll learn to pick up on key quotes and information that can be paraphrased as you go along. Be sure to send the transcription in along with your story. There are two reasons for this: one, we may need to look at the original quote when editing your story; and two, we need to protect ourselves should a dispute over the accuracy (or existence) of a quotation arise. The latter point is especially important when dealing with a controversial and potentially inflammatory issue, in which case you should also keep the audio recording. If the association's president said he's a meth addict and a father of two prostitutes, make sure you have something to back that up. And in this case, an .mp3 sure beats a scribble on your notepad.

6. Writing Your Article

A) Compiling your information

By this point, you should have all the information you need to start writing your article — **but not so fast!** Take another moment to sit down and figure out what you've got in front of you. After a while, you may develop your own strategies and approaches to article-writing, but if you're

lost, we can help.

Take your transcription and grab all the research you did earlier and take a look through it. Figure out the Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How for this article. Figure out what the main subject of interest is in your article now — it might be different from what you thought it was earlier. Does this information fill in all the gaps that you thought of earlier? Does it reveal something you hadn't thought of earlier? Do you need to do more research? If you're stuck or at all concerned about how to proceed, don't hesitate to come to me and ask. I won't laugh at you. I promise.

Keep the important information prevalent, and maintain the student-relevant focus. You will (almost always) find you have more information than you need, so decide what information is most useful to your audience.

Keep your notes after your article is finished — you never know when you'll need to refer to them when you're done, and it may be extremely important in the future to know just what happened when your article was in the works. You should keep your notes and recordings for at least a year after the article's publication. But even after a year, you still don't have to delete them! Your news editors make it a sport to go through old stories and reminisce about past interviews. And besides, hard drive space is so cheap nowadays, there's no reason to delete 'em.

B) What your article should sound like

Because news is read by readers on the go (different than magazines or books), it's a

rule to make every word count. University essay writing is flowery and expansive writing — the fine art of BS. You've got to forget it when writing news.

Be as direct and succinct as possible in your writing. That means no overwriting: don't use big terms where diminutive ones can do.

NOT: *"In the event that the SU finishes repairing the elevator in SUB ahead of schedule..."*

BUT: *"If the SU repairs the SUB elevators early..."*

Explain things as simply and clearly as possible, and put the important stuff ahead of the not-so-important stuff. Make it clear and concise so readers can absorb the story easily. If it's difficult to read, they won't read it.

Read lots of newspapers to get a feel for the newswriting style. Look at the story they've covered: what's the main idea? How fast did they get to the point? How did they structure the story? How does the prose sound? How did they work quotes in? Where did secondary information go?

Don't assume the average student knows everything that you do. Spell out acronyms and explain everything that might not be immediately obvious.

And once again, remember the *Gateway* philosophy. Your job is to be fair, present the facts and arguments on both sides, and let the readers form their own opinions. **Don't insert your own opinions or interpretations in the article at any time.**

C) The Inverted Pyramid

We write our news in the style called the *Inverted Pyramid*, where the most important stuff comes at the top of the article and works its way down to the least important, like a pyramid standing on its head.

This style means that the first three paragraphs are the most important. **The busy student will likely only read this first section of your article.** It's your job to make sure those paragraphs have all the information they need to understand your story.

Your **best quote should be within the top three paragraphs**, most often in the **third paragraph**. Very rarely will you put a quote as the first paragraph. This is a special paragraph discussed in the next section: it's what we call the *lede* (pronounced "lead" (rhymes with "read" (maybe "bead" is better))). The second paragraph is also pretty important, as discussed in the section after that.

You'll generally find that the rest of the article will structure itself following these three paragraphs. Putting the rest together depends on your discretion, noting what we've said in this document as a guideline.

For your first few articles, the structure will be very valuable to you. Later, when you're accustomed to writing hard news, some experimentation is in order. And if you read the newspaper frequently, you'll discover different structures. But while learning at the *The Gateway*, the inverted pyramid will be a great tool for you; you should have it mastered before you start experimenting with other things.

D) The Lede

The first paragraph is what's known as a

lede. **It's the crucial hook that draws a reader into your article.** It should be one sentence, and less than 30 words. It should contain the essence of the story, and provide some context: what is this article about and **why should we care?** If the reader doesn't feel it's important, he or she won't read any more.

There are many types of ledes that fit different sorts of circumstances, but the most basic type of lede is the **summary lede**, or the 5W lede — who, what, when, where and why are answered in the first sentence.

Here's an example from the *BBC News*: "A German student 'mooned' a group of Hell's Angels and hurled a puppy at them before escaping on a stolen bulldozer, police have said."

While it doesn't answer "why," it's also captures the most interesting and captivating content to get the audience to continue reading.

There's a lot to say about ledes, so if you'd like to know more, just ask. We have lots of material on hand to help. In short, ledes need to summarize the article briefly, but in an interesting enough way to encourage readers to continue reading.

E) The Nutgraph

The nutgraph is your second paragraph and should sum up the main points of your article, kind of like **a thesis statement** for the rest of it. It generally shouldn't be more than a couple of lines, and should clarify anything left hanging in the lede (such as why the student did such heinous acts). Together with the lede, it should give a brief but thorough summary of the story. As you may have guessed from the name, they contain the entire story in a nutshell.

F) Quotes

Quotes are the cornerstone of your story. **There must be quotes in your story or it isn't a news article** — it could just be a fairy tale as far as we're concerned. They provide the flesh to the bones of the story and add what is called the "human angle." If there's controversy in the story, **make sure both sides are presented adequately and early in the story**; otherwise, your writing might be perceived as biased.

Use quotes for **opinions and feelings**. Paraphrase your source when it comes to facts and figures, because you can usually explain it better than they can explain it verbally, and they usually make for dull quotes. As stories vary so much, you'll have to use your instinct to know what the best quotes are for the purposes of your article — for example, when they use a really great choice of words to describe something, when they say something brilliantly stupid, or when they just say something so much better than you could ever write it yourself. Note: you can edit quotes slightly to make them clearer (removing "um"s or "uh"s, for example), but it is imperative that you **retain their original nuances and meaning as closely as possible**. Also, you **cannot** take one section of a quote out of context so that it sounds like the speaker means something that they didn't.

Try to **preface all your quotes with paraphrasing** to provide some transition. You should lead in with a general introduction that sums up but doesn't give away the crucial details of the quote, and also doesn't simply restate the quote.

Bales said slavery cannot be reduced to a simple equation of good vs evil if it

is to be understood.

“Slavery is actually a relationship. It’s a social and an economic relationship, which is grossly unequal, marked by violence, [and] horrific exploitation.”

Also, try to **establish some sort of dialogue between the sources in your story**. Don’t let the quotes come out of nowhere: you want them to seem like they’re responding to each other. For example:

The accumulated university surplus totals \$120 million more than budgeted for, said SU Vice President (Academic) Mat Brechtel, a surplus that would have eliminated the need for tuition increases during each year.

“The average surplus is \$30 million,” he said. “Across the board, that’s \$1,000 a student, and no increase this year.”

But University Vice President (Finance & Administration) Phyllis Clark said the surplus was a misreading of the financial statements.

Clark said the SU analysis simply read a part of the statement that stated a surplus, but didn’t take into account numbers showing the University currently has an “unrestricted net asset deficiency,” or deferred debt that is still in the process of being paid.

“They didn’t look at the statement that said the operating account which shows the \$5.5 million deficit that we had last year. I don’t think it’s a mistake, just an easy oversight,” Clark said.

When inserting quotes in an article, make sure to qualify them in the past tense. For example:

“I was just on my way back from Smoky Lake, and I just started to smell things,”

Eldridge **said**.

One final note on quotes: you will eventually come across a major stakeholder in a story that refuses to comment. **When this happens, say so in the article**. This will serve two purposes: first, it will give the story, the *Gateway*, and you more credibility by showing you at least tried to get an expected voice to comment.

Second, if the story is major/controversial/requires a follow-up, the source is more likely to comment later if you acknowledge their original refusal. If you ignore them, they will ignore you.

7. Submitting a Story

Before you do any sort of submitting, **spell-check and self-edit your story at least once**. If you don’t, I might make fun of you for misspelling “pen island.”

Then, once you’ve got copy you’re happy with, you should **hand it in to us and stand by**. (Not literally. This can be done electronically! It’s the 21st century, people!) Stories can be submitted in a few different ways: you can e-mail articles to **news@gateway.ualberta.ca**, preferably as an attachment in Microsoft Word, or by pasting the copy into the body of the email itself. A Word document with 12-point Times New Roman and lines between paragraphs is best. If you send me that nonsense size 11 Calibri, I will change it to Times New Roman. You can also bring it on a USB key, or you can type up your story at the *Gateway* office.

You need to check your email after you’ve sent the story in and look for your edits and notes that I’ve made. If you’ve sent me a Word document, I’ll have done everything in the Track Changes feature. It might look a little daunting or confusing at first, but

again, don't hesitate to ask me on how to work with it (it's really quite intuitive) and you can insert your changes on top of mine.

You'll get my edited version by **Sunday at 2 p.m.** I may need to **ask you for clarifications**, or **I may need you to tweak the story a bit**. If you can do this yourself, you'll learn something you can use for next time. Even after you tweak the story, I might edit it further. This will mostly be for grammar, but things could be a little different in the printed paper, especially if we need cut for space.

I want to avoid having any bad experiences for our volunteers, so for this part of the process, I'll try to keep you involved as much as possible. If you have any questions about how your story was edited, come see me, or shoot me an email.

8. What We do

Once you've sent off the final copy to us, it's pretty much out of your hands. That doesn't mean I get to intercept your article and litter it with profanity and dick jokes, but instead where we as the *Gateway* put everyone's articles together and create that shiny newspaper you see on the stands.

Your starring role is **the heavy work**: finding the story, researching it, setting up and conducting interviews, and then pulling all your information into what we call "copy."

You hand in your copy to me and stand by for the less involved part: I edit it for spelling, grammar, structure, flow, and content. I may hand the copy back to you for tweaking or re-working, but once I'm all finished, the copy passes to the Editor-in-Chief Alexandria Eldridge, who also edits for structure, flow and content before giv-

ing the fully edited copy back to me.

I put the copy onto a page design the layout and add photos, a headline, and other fun stuff like "kickers" and "cutlines." (Journalists have to abide by all sorts of grammatical rules that we like to make up our own words from time to time.) When all this has been placed, the page gets proofread by the Managing Editor Justin Bell. I make any changes he asks me to make, or if I disagree, we throw down the gloves for a couple rounds of fisticuffs, after which I usually go and make the changes he asked me to make anyway.

Then each page gets checked again by the Editor-in-Chief, and more corrections are made, before one final check by Editor-in-Chief Eldridge over the entire section.

It's a lengthy process, but it makes for a top-quality production with as few errors as possible. To see this all in action, come by the *Gateway* office on a Tuesday and watch us tear our hair out live. You're welcome, and indeed encouraged, to partake. Popcorn and non-alcoholic beverages will be served at a nominal fee.

A few last things

The Gateway follows some stylistic guidelines that are outlined in our handy-dandy *Duck Book*. Ask your editor for a copy, and get the full story on *Gateway* style — but here's a few tips to get you started.

Numbers: Spell out all numbers from one to nine, and when a number is at the beginning of a sentence (which you should avoid if possible). Use digits in all other cases: one, two, three, 24, 3,000.

Keep all the numerals together up to 999. At 1,000, a comma is introduced to separate the thousands from the hundreds and so on: 8,345, hookers operate each night in

Alberta.

Currency: Use the \$ sign followed by digits (in the above style) for figures up to \$999,999. Round large figures unless there's a good reason not to. Avoid decimal places unless they're significant, and for figures in the millions or higher, round and put a number followed by a space and the word "million" (or "billion," et cetera): \$1.75 coffee, \$12 cocaine, \$147,850 jet-plane G6, \$7 million of ducks, \$13.8 billion swimming pool.

Dates: Try to avoid using dates unless talking about a specific, important event. Readers are more familiar with general terms (earlier this year, last week, next Tuesday) than specific dates. When necessary, write month, then day (if necessary, add a comma then add the year): March 30; July, 2010; September 11, 2001. (Fun fact: if you're talking about the events that occurred on September 11, 2001, we actually prefer "Sept. 11")

Percentages: Spell out the word "per cent." That's two words, not one, and definitely not "%."

Titles: *The Gateway* does not use courtesy titles (such as Mr. or Mrs. or Ms.), and usage of Dr. is only done when the person in question is a practising medical doctor, not someone with a PhD. Use their most relevant title (which would be a professor or researcher).

Abbreviations: Identify organizations by their full names the first time you mention them and by abbreviation after that: In general, assume your readers are intelligent enough to figure out that VP stands for Vice-President, and not vaginal penetration.

Two easy ways of being more direct are to look for **redundancy and the passive voice**. Examples of redundancy include "mutual cooperation," "violent explosion," and "awkward dilemmas." Because there are no gentle explosions or convenient dilemmas, the "violent" and "awkward" are unnecessary.

Passive voice is a little more tricky to spot and harder to define, but you'll get a feel for it. It's when patient and agent are reversed in a sentence. Normally, you want to be in active voice, which means the agent does something to (or with) the patient.

For example, "The dog chased the cat" is active, because the dog (which is doing the chasing) is mentioned first. "The cat was chased by the dog" is passive, and it is both wordier and less urgent-feeling. One trouble that can arise is not even mentioning the agent, which is entirely possible in the passive voice: "The cat was chased," and that leaves unanswered questions. Passive voice is almost always bad.

Good Luck!

So that's the intro to the world of *Gateway News*! Stick around, and your involvement with this paper could produce some great rewards. Aside from the potential for scholarships, jobs, and valuable life-experience, you'll meet interesting people, make valuable contacts, and learn to think critically — who knows, you may find a talent and passion for journalism you would have never known about otherwise. You'll discover the rewards of digging for answers and finding out the truth. You'll have fun, you'll learn lots, and you'll find you emerge a slightly (or perhaps radically) different person than when you entered. We hope you enjoy the ride.

