

NSPA Guidelines

Part One: Coverage & Content

- The news staff uses a variety of methods to convey information, including traditional text, photos, maps, charts, tables, graphics and illustrations.
- School activities — co-curricular and extracurricular — are given prominent display and adequate coverage.
- Non-school news, news-features, features and sports stories are included and contain a local tie-in, reported early in the story.
- Academic news is given prominent display and adequate coverage.
- Coverage includes stories, photos and graphics reflecting a range of student interests and groups.
- The future angle — what is about to happen rather than what has already happened — is taken for some major news and sports stories.
- Minority groups and minority opinion are represented in stories and photos.
- Information graphics contribute facts not found elsewhere or in the same condensed form in an accompanying story.
- There are more school-related than non-school stories in each issue. Editorials frequently relate to events or issues covered elsewhere in the publication.
- Opinion content is diverse and significant, and coherently adheres to the issue(s) at hand without wandering from the subject.
- Special reports and in-depth stories are about a significant subject (serious or light). Relevance to the reader — called the “news peg” — is apparent. Stories, information graphics, photos, art and graphics contribute to the overall success of the report. Multiple sources are cited. Opposing views are reported if possible and relevant. Headlines are not sensational unless justifiably so.

Part Two: Writing & Editing

- All writing, with the exception of editorials, opinion columns, reviews and analysis, is free of the writer’s opinions.
- Stories include a sufficient number of appropriate sources to make coverage fair and accurate. A reporter makes a sincere attempt to interview the most knowledgeable sources.
- Opinion columns and editorials contain evidence of research.
- Stories are written using an appropriate journalistic form and structure.
- Writers use accepted journalistic style (Associated Press, New

York Times, Quill and Scroll, etc.) and are consistent with style selected.

- Story leads are concise, capture the reader’s attention, and feature important facts or an unusual angle.
- When writing a summary lead, each of the “who, what, when, where, why and how” angles is analyzed for importance. Generally, the writer begins the lead with the most important of these angles.
- Story leads avoid beginning with the “when” angle unless the “when” is unusual or the most important angle.
- Stories are developed with an accurate sense of the importance of detail. Important information is not buried in the story. Most stories are developed with the most important and timely facts first, and the least important facts last.
- The “why” aspect of a story is reported adequately.
- Reporters write all news, news-features, features and sports in the third person, impersonal. Some leads may include second person pronouns. Quotes with first person pronouns do not contradict this rule. Staff editorials are written in the third person plural; opinion columns in the first person; analysis, clearly labeled, in first, second or third person.
- Copy is edited and proofed carefully to check: spelling, the accuracy of numbers and other facts, sentence structure, subject-verb agreement, grammar, usage and syntax.
- Captions are written with a present tense verb, identify all prominent and recognizable persons, and give information that is not found in an accompanying story.
- Two headline varieties are acceptable: sentence-style headlines with a subject, verb and object or receiver of the action; feature-style headlines with any reasonable phrase, question or words that are clever or playful. Serious stories may require a traditional sentence-style headline. The verb in a sentence-style headline is usually in present or future tense; passive voice is acceptable.

Part Three: Photos, Art & Graphics

- A variety of photos — action candids, mugs, groups, objects — is published if relevant. Overuse of mugs or groups is discouraged. There is evidence of on-the-spot photo coverage of news and sports events.
- Photos are cropped to emphasize the center of interest in each one.
- Photo content is newsworthy, significant or unusual.
- Photos have the proper contrast, and are neither too dark nor too light.
- Color photos are reproduced with accurate color values.

- Photos are free of scratches, dust, lint, water spots or other technical flaws.
- Photos use an appropriate screen and sufficient resolution for the final reproduction size.
- The center of interest in each photo is focused.
- An information graphic includes illustrations or graphics to represent and visually interpret the accompanying facts and figures.
- Editorial cartoons are simple with concise text to quickly convey their message.
- Graphics — rules, dingbats, typographic devices — support but don't overwhelm and detract from editorial or pictorial content. Screens placed over copy are light enough to allow for easy reading.
- Column headings are consistent in design and use the same typeface to support overall newspaper design continuity. Typeface family variations, such as weight and posture, are acceptable.
- Original story art is attractive, appropriate for the content, and contributes to the reader's comprehension of the story.
- Use of clip art is discouraged. All illustrative art is appropriate for the age of the readers and matches current styles unless otherwise desired.
- A documentary image that has been altered — color in portions changed, elements moved, combined, flipped, etc. — is credited as a photoillustration.
- A credit accompanies all photos, art and graphics. Mug shots may appear without a credit.
- Images taken from Web sites are used under fair use provisions or with permission and are properly credited as such. Images not under fair use or without permission are not included.
- Facing pages inside a newspaper or newsmagazine should be designed as one unit for overall balance even though the content may not be related.
- A page one with a photo or art as its only element such as in a newsmagazine, needs an accompanying headline, caption, and a reference to where the related story is printed inside if there is an accompanying story.
- Opinion pages may vary in design from the other pages to signal the shift from objective reporting on the news-feature-sports pages to subjective writing on the opinion pages.
- Photo essays can be handled as posters or as a full page or spread collection. Generally, photos of various sizes, with one clearly the focal point because of its dominant size, are grouped with consistent margin space among them. A headline, some text and captions complement the photos.
- A serif typeface for text is preferred by readers according to various reader studies. Text is often set in either nine- or 10-point type, with one or two points leading between lines. Captions are often set in either a size one point larger than text or in a contrasting bold or medium face.

Part Four: Layout & Design

- Modular or mostly modular page makeup is used throughout the publication. Modular is characterized by rectangular shapes — horizontal and vertical — and some squares. All elements are four-sided.
- Elements — text, headlines, photos, graphics, art — are balanced informally to avoid a page that is off-balanced. Photos, rules, headlines, screens and art carry heavy or black weight. Text is gray weight or medium. Blank space, such as column gutters, is white space or weight. Sometimes the placement of the lead and second story on a newspaper page creates a top-heavy look. That may be unavoidable, and it is acceptable.
- Generally, a photo or art should not separate a story from its headline.

Part Five: Leadership

- The news staff expresses concern for the welfare of the school, students, faculty and staff through their thoughtful and constructive commentary in editorials and opinion columns, making recommendations for improvement when applicable.
- The news staff expresses concern for the welfare of the community outside the school through thoughtful and constructive commentary relevant to student readers in their editorials.
- The news staff expresses their appreciation for extraordinary accomplishments by students, faculty, staff and community members in its editorials.
- Page one, or the cover of the publication, generally contains material that is the most significant and worthwhile of all content within the publication.
- The content includes a mix of material about non-school events and issues relevant to students that will make students well-informed citizens. Effort to thoughtfully cover issues relevant to minority or underrepresented individuals and groups is apparent.
- Students use accepted journalistic forms and style. Any deviation is made because it is appropriate and valuable to readers.
- Students follow ethical practices, accept professional standards, and adhere to press and copyright laws in all aspects of their work.