



EDITORIAL ADVICE

Top 10 Tips for Writing Effective News Features

NewsUSA

(NU) - For a feature to get guaranteed placements, it has to appeal to editors nationwide. So how can you reach out to news professionals and encourage them to pay attention to your message?

You've already taken the first step by contracting with NewsUSA. Our writers and editors are experienced professionals. They know what editors want because they've been there. And they're happy to write the feature for you. It's a significant part of NewsUSA's service.

Of course, if you want to take a crack at it, that's OK, too. Either way, understanding the NewsUSA approach to writing features can help you work with the editors in achieving the best results.

Here are 10 guidelines for writing effective news features.

1. Write for your audience.

Your feature should appeal to a broad, general newspaper readership. Use layperson's terms and avoid technical jargon.

2. Follow The Associated Press Stylebook, the universally accepted journalism standard. Use this style and editors will be inclined to give your feature serious consideration. Break the rules and your feature may not place.

3. Make a keen statement in your first paragraph. Leading with a question or a statistic that alludes to your most important point often works well.

4. Think in terms of "news you can use." Educate readers or give them tips and information that they can apply to their daily lives.

5. Avoid commercialism. If your feature reads like an ad or press release, editors won't run it. Product promotions don't work well except around the holidays — and even then, they should be accompanied by consumer tips.

6. Remember, the shorter the better. Editors often have limited space to fill. Our standard 7-inch, two-column format allows for about 350 to 400 words.

7. Use quality photos or graphics, or omit the art. We do not recommend product photos or company logos because they make the feature appear too commercial. Instead, use clear, high-resolution photos of active people.

8. Keep headlines and captions short and to the point. We use standard typesetting guidelines, such as a minimum font size of 24 points for headlines.

9. End your feature with a Web site, e-mail address or phone number. Readers need to know where they can get more information.

10. Do not use trademark, service mark or registered mark symbols, or textual "tricks" to draw attention to company names, products or Web sites. AP style prohibits the use of registration marks, trademark symbols, brand names in all uppercase letters and certain uses of italics, boldface copy, parentheses and quotation marks. Since this may lead editors to label features "advertorial" and throw them out, we reserve the right to remove our placement guarantee when such symbols are used.