

# The Writing Process for Journalist

**Writing is a process, a logical sequence of steps.** You follow a pattern in getting dressed each day, in baking a cake or in changing a flat tire. In the same way, your writing should be the product of a logical process. The successful writer gathers, focuses, orders, drafts and revises. The first step in the process is gathering. Good writing begins with good reporting. The writer must find the details that reveal meaning. You can't write writing; you have to have facts.

- **Remember The Five Ws.** Most news stories contain what are known as the five Ws. The who, where, when, what, and why of story are usually introduced in a story's opening paragraph. Answering these questions will provide you with the foundational facts of your news story.
- **Once you have the facts, decide on a focus or theme.** Each news story should have one dominant idea. That is the focus or reason for writing the story. Without a focus, stories wander and confuse the reader. To find the focus, ask yourself, what's the point? Imagine that you had to write a six-word headline for the story. What one sentence tells the meaning of the story?
- **Next, decide which of your facts are most important and place them in a logical order.** Discard all facts that don't flow from your focus statement. Like a blueprint, each story needs a plan. Each point should grow from the previous point and lead to the next one. Poor organization loses more readers than anything else. For the reader, the easiest thing is to stop reading.
- Write quickly from beginning to end so that you can spend time with the middle of your story and with the ending.
- After you have written, edit your story to make it more powerful. Make sure that you have written what you intended to write. Read it aloud to someone. Take a

break, then come back to it and revise. Be merciless in removing anything that doesn't belong.

- This process is not necessarily a straight line from gathering to revising. The writer will go back and forth, including other facts as she is revising, or changing the order as she gathers. A key point to remember is that much of the work in writing a news story is done before the first words are put to paper.

**The steps in the journalistic writing process are:**

- **Gather**
- **Focus**
- **Order**
- **Draft**
- **Revise**