**Course:** **Agriculture Communications**

**Unit Title:** Journalistic Writing Skills

**Unit Objectives:** After completing this unit of instruction, students will be able to:

A. Use Associated Press (AP) style to write a news story;

B. Research and gather information for a news story using appropriate methods;

C. Interview sources for news story using appropriate methods;

D. Write a feature article, and

E. Proofread and edit a news story or feature article using AP style.

Instructional Support

1. References

Knight, Robert, M. Journalistic Writing: Building the Skills, Honing the Craft

1. Teaching Aids and Equipment

* Overhead projector
* Board with chalk/marker

1. Facilities

Interest approach: ***Question:*** “What makes a civilization ‘civilized’?”

***Question:*** “How do people today judge and understand a past civilization?”

*Written language is the key to a civilization. Usually groups of people start with farming and become sedentary. At some point they advance enough in their farming technology to rise above subsistence farming. At this point some people can spend time doing something besides growing food. When these actions are recorded, they can be preserved for future generations.*

*We can judge and understand a past civilization and actions only if we know about them. Pictographs and artifacts can only lead to assumptions, writing gives people of all times an inside look at the writer’s perspective and decisions.*

Curriculum & Instruction

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| Curriculum | Instruction |
| 1. **Use Associated Press (AP) style to write a news story.**   Parts of Speech  Verb – Shows action or state of being  Noun- person, place or thing  Pronoun – takes the place of a noun  Adjective – Describes a noun or pronoun  Adverb – Describes a verb or other adverb  Article – filler words like a, the  Preposition – begins a phrase and includes to, like, as  Conjunctions – connectors, but, or  Comma Rules: Use commas to separate independent clauses when they are joined by any of these seven coordinating conjunctions: *and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet. There needs to be two independent clauses in order to use a comma. It is inappropriate to use a comma in this example:* I turned the corner, and ran smack into a patrol car. Remove the comma since the subject is the same for the two verbs.  When there is a subject and a verb on both sides of the conjunction then a comma is needed.  Lists: items in a list should be divided by a comma. I like apples, oranges, grapefruit and bananas.  The comma between “grapefruit” and “and” is optional but is discouraged for conciseness in business writing.  Keep in mind the serial comma is not used in journalistic writing.  Prepositional phrases that begin a sentence and contain four or more words should be separated by a comma.  For example – For a long time, I have felt this way.  Participle phrases are set off by commas. For example – Running around track, she screamed wildly.  Adjective, adjective should be separated by a comma. For example – the big, red house.  Hyphens when two adjectives have to occur together to properly describe something. Ie – Hillary was red-faced. Hillary is neither red, nor faced, but red-faced.  **E. Proofread and edit a news story or feature article using AP Style.**   1. **Research and gather information for a news story using appropriate methods.**   Audience – The information recipients. Critical thinking about the audience sheds light on the questions that need to be answered and the formality of writing.  Audience Needs and Interests can be determined through assessing the components of a news story.  Conflict  Progress  Human interest  Unusualness    Information Gathering Beyond Interviews – Websites, business profiles etc, may serve as secondary means to gather information. A pre-emptive search will help guide interview questions.  **C. Interview sources for a news story using appropriate methods.**  Interview – Interview questions should be prepared in advance.    Interviewees – Interviewees may be obtained from information in a press release but are often found through investigation. Good news stories have 2+ interview sources and may include other types of sources ie. websites, mission statements. A good rule of thumb is to find at least 1 extra possible interviewee.  Investigation – Who is an expert in this field? Were there eyewitnesses? Who do the readers want to hear from? How can I reach the interviewee?  Introduction – When working with an interviewee rapport must be established. Apprehension about being misrepresented and interviewing can be major roadblocks to a successful investigation. Begin by clearly introducing yourself and explaining the purpose of the interview. The interviewee is doing you a favor. Work at their convenience, but within your deadline.  During the Interview – Your prepared questions should serve as a guide to the interview, but active listening should garner more questions. Take notes. When the respondent says something powerful, write it in direct quotes. Clarify direct quotes and be sure the respondent is comfortable.  Source Quality – Some sources are better than others. For example an extension agent might know about a new corn product, but the inventor would be a better source if available.   1. **Use Associated Press (AP) style to write a news story;**   News writing is finding out the following:  **Who** said it? **Who** is it about?  **What** happened?  **When** did it happen?  **Where** did it happen?  **Why** is it important?  **How** did it happen?  **C. Write a feature article,**   * Feature stories are human-interest articles that focus on particular people, places and events. * Feature stories are journalistic, researched, descriptive, colorful, thoughtful, reflective, thorough writing about original ideas. * Feature stories cover topics in depth, going further than mere hard news coverage by amplifying and explaining the most interesting and important elements of a situation or occurrence. * Feature stories are popular content elements of newspapers, magazines, blogs, websites, newsletters, television broadcasts and other mass media. * A **nut graph** is a paragraph, particularly in a feature story, that explains the news value of the story.   In a feature story, on the other hand, the writer has the time and space to develop the theme but sometimes postpones the main point until the end. The whole story does not have to be encapsulated in the lead. | Punctuation Packet Pages 1 – 7.  Use the key at the bottom of the packet as a guide.  Why do we learn parts of speech?  SO WE CAN PUNCTUATE PROPERLY.  Stop at page 7 of the packet and show slides 1 - 6  Hand out AP Marks – review.  Have students proceed to page 8 in the packet.  Show slides 7-9  Complete Information Lab Sheet  Complete Interview Lab Sheet  Show slides 9- 12  Schedule and Conduct Interview  Show slides 13-26  Handout inverted pyramid sheet.  Handout Grading Rubric – From Ag Communications Rule Book.  Have students write article rough draft.  Suggestions: Assign Current Agriculture Events as Topics.  Peer review of rough drafts using editing and/or proofreading marks.  Ask students to find “hard news” articles in the local paper.  Find feature article and ask “what about these stories?”  Introduce Feature Articles.  Think, Pair Share Question  On your own paper answer the question, what is the purpose and importance of a feature article?  Write a feature article rough draft.  Peer review edits using AP Marks  Write on White Board Nut Graph Example:  Motorola has a new Android smartphone out, and judging by the looks of it, it’s going to be one of those love-it-or-hate-it devices. |

Review & Evaluation

Objectives will be reviewed before examinations. Exams will be developed based on objectives ***as taught in class***.