**Top tips for writing feature articles**

A feature story differs from a straight news story in one respect – its intent. A news story provides information about an event, idea or situation. The feature does a bit more – it may also interpret news, add depth and color to a story, instruct or entertain.

**Structure:**

- The **introduction** is the most important part - entice your reader, hook them in. Use drama, emotion, quotations, questions, descriptions.

- The **body** of the article needs to keep any promises or answer any questions raised in the introduction - try and maintain an “atmosphere” throughout the writing.

- While the introduction draws the reader in, the **conclusion** should be written to help the reader remember the story - use a strong punch line.

**Some points to keep in mind:**

- Focus on human interest - the feel and emotion you put into the article are critical. Don't think about writing a "grantmaking" story - think about writing a "human interest" story.

- Be clear about why you are writing the article. Is it to inform, persuade, observe, evaluate, or evoke emotion?

- Write in the active voice. In active writing, people do things. Passive sentences often have the person doing the action at the end of the sentence or things being done “by” someone.

- Accuracy is important - you can interpret and embroider but not fudge.

- Keep your audience clearly in mind - what are their desires, what really matters to them?

- Avoid clichés and sentimental statements - especially at the end of your article.

- Interviews for features usually need to be in-depth and in person rather than over the phone - this enables you to add in color and detail.

- Use anecdotes and direct quotes to tell the story - try not to use too many of your own words.

- Talk to more than one person to provide a more complete picture – but don't just add in sources to show how much work you’ve done. Be ruthless about who you put in and who you leave out!

- Don't rely on the computer spell-checker.

- Decide on the ‘tense’ of your story at the start and stick to it. Present tense usually works best.

- Avoid lengthy, complex paragraphs. Your article will appear in columns, so one or two sentences equals a paragraph.

**Getting your feature articles published**

- READ the publication you want to write for. This might include more than your local newspaper. It may be an organizational newsletter.

- Give a proposal first rather than full article.
• A picture sells the story - offer good quality images as prints, transparencies or digital files. Check with the editor for the preferred option.

• Obtain a style sheet for the publication.

• Submit your story typed and double-spaced.

• Let the relevant person (editor/deputy editor) in the print media outlet know you are sending them an article. Follow this up with a phone call a week or so later.

• Send your article to only one print media outlet initially. If they don't want to use it within a set time period, send it elsewhere.

This article is adapted with permission from Econnect Communication.