

## D. COMMUNICATION SKILL - WRITING

## UNIT 26: WRITING ABOUT A LEGEND - NON FICTION

Many wonderful things go into good kid nonfiction: great ideas, careful research, excitement, humour, and an understanding of your audience. But most of the elements of good nonfiction can be boiled down to three key elements: focus, vitality, and appeal.

Focus can also help a writer with organization. Now many writers don't outline before writing the article, but if you cannot outline from the FINISHED article, then you have organizational problems. A successful focus should allow you to approach the topic logically and smoothly. It should allow you to classify important things you want to include --group them -- and move from one to the next logically. If you find odd things just happened to get tucked into a paragraph, making it difficult to say that paragraph is about a single thing, then you need to look closer at your organization.

A focused well-organized article should be able to be summed up in one sentence. For example, an article on the "discovery" of the North Pole might be summed up this way: "The final Peary expedition to the North Pole overcame conditions totally incompatible to human life and secured a permanent place in history." This one sentence sums up what is found in the article--specifics about the harshness of the location, specifics about the suffering of the people, and a peek at the historical significance. With a solid three-fold structure, organization could be smooth and simple. A three-fold structure to your organization will often produce a solid nonfiction article for most magazines.

Vitality



Good nonfiction for kids is so intensely researched that the writer becomes a kind of expert on the subject so that that expertise can be translated into clear readable prose. It's very difficult to write clearly about something you don't totally understand and an editor can always spot places where a writer is fudging over something she isn't really sure about. And intense research will lead to intense excitement about the subject--if you find the research boring, you've picked the wrong subject. It's also very difficult to write exciting prose about a subject that bores you.

One element of nonfiction with vitality is crisp prose: strong verbs, clear sentences, no extra wordiness. Imagine that you have to buy every word you put into the article--are you spending wisely? Or are you using extra words in an effort to sound scholarly or professional? Kids don't care about scholarly and professional -- they care about clear, lively and interesting. So do editors. By researching carefully, you'll demonstrate your scholarship by translating what you've learned into clear lucid prose--fancy writing won't convince anyone. Thorough information presented well with crisp language will.

Passive voice tends to creep into nonfiction because it feels more "writerly" when we're approaching nonfiction. It's also a sure sign of missing that really crisp readable style. So always check your sentences and make sure the subject of the sentence is doing something and not being done to--then you'll be writing stronger and with more vitality.

## Appeal

Kid appeal can come from a number of different sources. If you can put a kid into the article--you'll have kid appeal. For example, an article about a specific kid training for the Olympics is going to be more appealing than a non-specific article outlining how much training is necessary for Olympic

athletes. An article on a kid who started a community project to recycle water bottles is going to be more interesting than an article on the importance of recycling.

To catch a kid, show a kid--it's definitely more appealing. And for teen magazines, it's virtually essential. Few teen magazines approach any kind of topic without specific kids in the piece sharing from their own experience.

If you write a piece that will provide lots of visuals (whether you're sending your own photos or not), you'll have instant kid appeal. If you look at magazine articles on virtually any animal topic, and you'll see this form is dominated by photo pieces where the pictures do as much as the words. Kids want to know but they also want to see. Photos put a reader directly in contact with the subject so a topic that leads to clear picture opportunities, you'll have a kid favorite.

A third sure fire kid appeal is humor. Humor is one of the ways many magazines present material that might seem didactic otherwise. Humor is a major element of most teen quizzes, where readers laugh but also think more about what makes a good friend, what is an appropriate boy/girl relationship, how to handle parent/kid friction, etc.

Humor can also play a point in other kinds of nonfiction, adding a bright moment to some heavy facts.

One question every writer should ask himself/herself--why will a kid want to read this? Ultimately, that question is more important than "Why should a kid read this?" It doesn't matter how much good an article will do if a kid won't read it. So, make certain kids you catch the reader with your focus, vitality and appeal. You'll make editors happier too.

Editors of most children's magazines and most children's book publishers want to see where you got your information in an article. Most of us know the "rules" of sourcing:

Wikipedia is not a source, don't list it.

Encyclopedia are not sources, don't list them.

Keep web sources to a minimum, and choose carefully so you only used very credible websites.

You don't just need to keep track of which sources you used, but what you got from each source.

So assuming you have chosen your sources carefully and used the web mostly to help get you up to speed on a topic and to find other avenues of research. It's probably time to share those sources with an editor. The way we share is a bibliography.

The word "bibliography" may be giving you shuddering flashbacks to your high school term paper, but a bibliography is a source list designed to help an editor track back and check your facts. A bibliography shows an editor that you are a careful researcher and that your information can be trusted. So they're worth the time to do them.

Now don't panic if you are not an organized person. Even if you love to research, it make take serious effort to become good at keeping the kind of records needed. Some writers are completely comfortable judging the information and using it carefully, but find it hard to remember to use the same care in keeping track of the source of that information. Unfortunately, keeping track of sources is essential or you won't be selling an article. Editors flatly don't trust any writer that much--so you have to have a bibliography and it must be done right.

To do a decent bibliography, there are certain bits of information you must keep track of ...

The title and author of a book or a magazine article used. (You'll also need this info for articles on websites)

The publisher (for a book, this means the publishing company, for a magazine it means the magazine title)

When it was published (For a book, this will just be a year, for a magazine, it will be most detailed -- include a volume number for the magazine if available).

For a book, the city of publication.

For all print media -- the actual page numbers where you got specific information (and you should probably photocopy these too -- so you'll have them if a publisher asks.)

When you're using an internet source, be sure to also get the URL and the date you collected the material. Again, print out the pages because web pages sometimes vanish and you may need the print outs to show an editor.)

When you're using a direct interview, you'll need the person's name, how the interview was collected (face-to-face? On the phone? Via email?) and the date of the interview. You'll also need contact information for the source, and credentials.

Then when you've collected all your material and written your article, you'll need to use the careful notes from above to build your bibliography. If you're an institute student, you already have information on the structure of each entry in Essentials of English. If you're not a student, there are many sources online to help you. If you really don't want to build your bibliography from

scratch but you do have all the notes on sources that I mentioned above, you can use a free online bibliography maker, Easy Bib, [www.easybib.com] to make the bibliographic list for you--then just paste it into your document file and do any tweaking you might want. There are a number of nonfiction children's authors who regularly use this resource to make bibliographies.

What if you totally cannot find a piece of information normally in a bibliography like the city the publisher works from? Don't panic, just leave it out. A writer's bibliography is not a scholarly document upon which you will get a grade, it's an informational one. It allows editors to track down your source material and look at it if they want. So mostly you need to give the information needed to track the source down. There's no prize for best bibliography, just for the most accurate one, easiest for an editor to use, and for the quality of sources cited. And for those things, the prize you get comes in the form of an acceptance letter! We all love those.

### Judging Reader Age Pointers

Stories and articles for very young children...

Are read to the child, not by the child.

Use concrete language and avoid abstract concepts.

Focus on family situations and the challenges of being small. (fiction)

May include talking animal stories where the animal is a "stand-in" for the reader.

May mix information with fiction to gently inform while entertaining.

Depend heavily on illustrations to help tell stories.

Use nonfiction that is photo driven.

Stories and articles for young readers...

Use short sentences without complex clauses -- average sentence length rarely exceeds reader age. (Thus, a manuscript targeting 7 year olds would average 7 words or less per sentence.)

Introduce complex words in context to facilitate young reader understanding.

Focus on family situations and school. (fiction)

Include talking animals only in folktales and humorous stories.

Rarely mix fiction and nonfiction -- information is usually presented in

**Q: Write a short fiction on your hero**

article form.

Use short paragraphs and fact bites rather than narrative nonfiction.

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## UNIT 27: INTRODUCTION TO EMAIL

Email or Electronic mail is a method of exchanging messages between people using electronic devices. Invented by Ray Tomlinson, email first entered limited use in the 1960s and by the mid-1970s had taken the form now recognized as email. Email operates across computer networks, which today is primarily the Internet.

A few tips to write an organised email are given below:

1. Write a compelling subject line.
2. Tailor your greeting to the industry and situation.
3. Make your first line about them.
4. Explain why you're reaching out.
5. Provide value for them.
6. Include a call-to-action.
7. Say "thanks" and sign off.
8. Follow up with them.

Dear John,

My name is Jarin, junior copywriter for XYZ. I came across your email address on the open marketing position posting on Indeed. I wanted to contact you on phone to learn more about the position, but there's some network constrains. I would love to know about the open position in detail.

I am looking forward to your reply.

Thank You!

Regards,

Janifer



Q: Write an email to your teacher asking for permission to take part in the inter-school quiz competition

