

Story Standards for Journalism

- **All news stories are a minimum of 200 words.**
- **All feature stories are 300 – 500 words in length.**
- **All direct quotes should be accurate and appear before the person quoted's name.**
- **All indirect quotes should have the person quoted identified before his paraphrased quote.**
- **Write to more depth in feature stories.** Feature stories have been often too shallow in depth. Do not settle for short, uninformative information. Ask the second or third level of questioning to elicit solid information. If you cannot get depth to your stories, don't do feature stories.
- **Never include yourself in a news or feature story.** (Never use the pronouns "I" or "we" referring to yourself. Also, avoid using the pronoun "you" in a story.)
- **Never start a story with the time.** Time is very seldom the most important element of a story.
- **Always do a fog index for your stories.**
- **Identify all people quoted and referred to in your stories.** (Principal Susan Dell said... or Freshman Tom Graham said...)
- **When attributing a source, Use full name first, then just last name.** For staff members, use respect title and then full name, then just respect title and last name (Mr. Michael O'Leary, English teacher, said..." then "Mr. O'Leary added..."
- **Don't pretend to know what goes on in people's minds.** Don't write "She thinks..." or "He enjoys..." rather write "She said she thinks..." and "He said he enjoys..."

- **Use the past tense of verbs.** Don't write "He says..." but rather write "He said..."
- **Make sure your stories are logical.** Use transition sentences to connect quotes having opposite opinion: **Don't write:** Principal Susan Dell said she favors suits and ties as a dress code. Freshman Tom Graham said suits and ties are stupid. **Instead write:** Principal Susan Dell said she favors suits and ties as a dress code. Many students however feel this is a bad idea. Freshman Tom Graham said suits and ties are stupid.
- **Interview people who either have something to do with the story, who are active in school activities or who represent a large number of students.** Don't just get quotes from your friends and relatives. You're a reporter; go talk to people.
- **Polls should be done well or not done at all.** If you are doing a real poll, talk to at least 30-40 people and get quotes that represent that point of view. Asking 10 people how they feel about a school issue isn't a poll, it's a feature story.
- **Get pictures whenever possible.**
- **Redo Incompleted stories by Friday of the week returned.**
- **Find a way to spell correctly.** Never misspell a person's name. Always check the spelling with the person interviewed. If you can't spell or use a spellchecker, find someone to proof your story before you pass it in.
- **Send all stories to the student newspaper.** The address is newspaper@mail.conval.edu