

How to write a feature article

A **feature article** is a newspaper or magazine lead article that explores a range of issues, opinions, experiences and ideas. Feature articles can be informative, entertaining, analytical or persuasive or a combination of each.

A feature article may provide more information about an important issue, offer an opinion about current affairs or simply present a personal profile or humorous perspective on modern day life. Because of their content, feature articles do not date as quickly as news articles.

The author may be a newspaper staff writer who has investigated an issue, or they may be freelance writers with particular expertise and seek to contribute to a debate. Personal journalism, or the use of the first-person pronoun, is common. This means that writers may include personal references about their own feelings and attitudes to the subject.

The audience often consists of members or consumers of a niche market. For example if a magazine targets middle-aged women, then the articles, advertisements and pictures would reflect the women's interest in lifestyle, career, money, health and relationships.

The facts must be well-researched in order to avoid claims of bias or even law-suits. Authors must also present the facts in an interesting manner, and use quotes to give a sense of immediacy. They must choose a range of sources to give a balanced perspective.

The use of **narrative devices** helps feature writers maintain the reader's attention. Authors often draw on dialogue, descriptive scenes and varying tones of voice to tell stories. Anecdotes and people stories are common.



Quick Guide

1. Think about the “angle” or direction of your discussion. What point(s) do you wish to highlight?
2. Write a headline.
3. Start with a significant quote or an anecdote that captures the reader's attention.
4. Link it to the issue and explain its significance. Where necessary, include some background.
5. If you wish to include a personal slant, establish the “I” persona near the beginning of your article.
6. Outline your key arguments, starting with the most obvious point. Show a progression of ideas.
7. Support each argument with evidence to establish an emotional or a logical context.
8. Include a problem to show the issue's complexity.
9. Conclude with a final example or refer back to the opening anecdote or quote. Encourage readers to reflect on a problem.

Jane Cadzow says: “Profiles have been an important part of **Good Weekend** since its launch three decades ago . . . At their best, profiles not only tell us about other people's lives, but give us some insight into the business of being human. My subjects have included sports stars, corporate tycoons, inventors, actors, writers, fashion designers, singers, a cardinal, two former prime ministers, an intelligence officer turned whistle-blower, a Nobel Prize-winning scientist, a society hairdresser, an alleged war criminal, the ruler of Dubai, Bindi Irwin. And I haven't just met them. I have done my best to get to know them. Writing profiles is a licence to pry. I have mooched around their houses, studied their family photos and browsed through their bookshelves.” (Jane Cadzow, **Good Weekend**, 27/9/14).

Trying times: not everyone is a winner by Joey Reporter

(1) "Hardship is often sent to test us both on an individual and a community level," said Meredith Shire's mayor, Ms Jane Casey, who opened Meredith's Cultural Week on Sunday. Ms Casey reminded members of the community of the need to watch out for those who are struggling.

(2) For the past two weeks, Meredith Shire has been holding its annual Cultural Week. There have been a range of activities including a speech by local short story writer Mr Steve Creighton at Meredith Library to telescope-watching activities on the council's lawn.

(3) One of the highlights has been the discussion at Meredith Library on extraordinary experiences of young adults. Mr Creighton, who won the Shire's short story prize in 2010, referred to his own son, Matthew's traumatic experiences during the bushfires and, drawing on some of Matthew's favourite heroes, compared their responses to hardship.

(4) In particular, Mr Creighton said Matthew's initial tendency to escape contrasted with that of Stanley Yelnats in Holes (Louis Sachar, 1998), who blamed the family curse for his misfortune. It was only after Stanley befriended Zero and took risks to protect his friend that he started taking responsibility for his past. Finally, he becomes more trustworthy. On the other hand, Matthew blamed himself for the loss of the neighbour's home because of a previous quarrel. To help him let go, the family organised a fake funeral. As the balloons were released into the sky, Matthew started to release his pent up emotions. (5)

(6) I was thinking of their different responses, when I attended a film night held by the Meredith Film Society. Shaw Shank Redemption also reveals the difference one individual can make with the right attitude. With his single pitch hammer, Andy Duffresne keeps hope alive by chiselling the chess pieces and by hammering his escape route. However, he constantly

Thematic essays

"Conflict brings out the best or worst in people. "We grow through change". "People's true spirit is revealed in difficult times. Relationships provide an insight into who we are."

When writing expository essays relating to themes such as identity, conflict and justice you may wish to write a feature article or a "hybrid" format. This refers to an expository essay with narrative and creative components.

reminds the prisoners of the need to retain their spirit. When he plays Mozart's music over the loudspeaker he scores a costly but moral triumph. However, other prisoners, when released, struggle to return to normal life.

(7) So what is the ingredient that helps some people cope and grow, while others buckle?

It seems that even age cannot provide easy answers.

(8) A few days after another successful Cultural Week, our community was devastated to hear the news of the local Gerant family, whose house caught alight by one of Mrs Gerant's cigarettes. Sharon, her 16-year-old daughter, quickly dialled emergency services as she watched the flames spread. While the mother has since buried her head in shame, Sharon has had to pick up the pieces looking after her eight-year old sister. She applied to the community for help and many local workers have donated their time, energy and skills to help repair the damage.

(9) It's times like these when we have a chance to show our true spirit and step outside our ordinary lives.

- 1. Start with an interesting beginning: a short anecdote or a quote.
2. Set the scene and explain your purpose: to cover Meredith Shire's Cultural Week.
3. Show a link to the prompt.
4. Refer to a speaker/discussion at the Meredith Library. This is an opportunity for you to discuss aspects of your chosen text and similar examples that shed light on the prompt. For example, you may focus on a discussion by Mr Donavan regarding a relevant theme in your novel.
5. Make a comment. Ask a question. Perhaps include a relevant comment from a member of the audience.
6. If you wish to refer to a film or a play, include a reference to the Meredith Theatre Company or the Meredith Film Society.
7. Ask a question to prompt reflection.
8. You may conclude with a reference to a local "people" story, or a reference to your favourite poem that provides another interesting angle on the prompt.
9. Round off your discussion with a thoughtful comment.