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# PantherNOW Field Guide-2023

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# Terminology

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- Grafs: Short for 'paragraphs'; usually 1-2 sentences long and used to convey contextual info.
  - Lede/Lead: The introductory graf in your article that both grabs your reader's attention and answers the who, what, when, where, why and how of the story.
    - Your lede doesn't always have to answer all the questions above, but it should build enough interest and context for a reader to grasp what the article is about.
  - Source: Person, publication or other record that gives journalists information for a story.
  - Angle: The specific framework/subtopic for a story about a topic.
    - There can be many angles for one topic. For example, if you're covering a music festival, you might take the angle of writing about overseas or local performers at the festival, who the newest performers are, etc.
  - Headline: Title of the article.
    - A good rule of thumb for writing headlines and ledes is to ask, "What stood out the most about the event/club/person?"
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- Byline: States the name and staff position of the author.
- Beat: A specific section/topic assigned to writers (ex. local music scene, local cuisine, etc.)
  - The beats we assign writers to are specific to FIU: clubs, theatre school, music school, etc.
- Pitch: Suggested topic for an article.
- Evergreen: An article that will always be timely or 'fresh' regardless of when it is posted.
- Breaking news: Events that have just occurred or are currently happening.
- Jargon: Specialized vocabulary associated with a specific profession or field of study
- Niche: Indicates something meant to appeal to a small group of the population (or the student body)
- Cliché: A saying that has been used excessively, to the point that it has lost its original meaning (avoid these).
- Story/Feature/Piece: An article.
- Press release: Statement or information provided by organizations to news media publications

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# Guidelines

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- In print and digital journalism, we write using the clear and concise AP Format.
    - A quick guide can be found in the [PantherNOW website](#) under **About Us** ➡ **Writing Style Guide**.
    - It may take a bit to get used to, but it's all about practice!
  - But first, here's some FIU-specific guidelines:
    - 1) Titles
      - Capitalized before a name but not on their own: "SGA President Alex Sutton" vs. "Alex Sutton is the president of the SGA."
      - Spell out titles completely on first mention—only refer to a source by their **last name** after that (applies to all sources, whether they're the president of the U.S. or a fellow student)
        - The only title we abbreviate on first use is "Doctor" to "Dr."
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## 2) Organizations

- Spell out completely on first use as well.
  - If you're not sure of what an organization's abbreviation stands for, check [PantherConnect](#)--the information for most organizations is there, including their **roster**, **past** and **upcoming** events, and bylaws.
    - A club's bylaws document states how they were created and what their purpose is, but it's better to get that information organically (from a source).

## 3) Campuses

- You won't have to spell out FIU, but you will have to spell out the names of its campuses.
  - MMC: Modesto Maidique Campus
  - BBC: Biscayne Bay Campus
  - FIU at I-75

#### 4) Headlines

- For headlines, we're a little more relaxed in terms of their structure.
  - First and foremost, the headline needs to grab readers' attention, so while the title should be a summary of the piece, it should also be creative and interesting.
  - However, keep it short, sweet, and to the point! That's what the AP format is all about, and it's especially true for headlines.
  - While keeping in mind basic grammar, like capitalization of nouns, capitalize what you think should be emphasized.

★ A good headline:

- 1) Includes the subject
- 2) Effectively summarizes your article
- 3) Leaves just enough information out to entice readers to read more



# AP Format

- Onto more specific AP formatting...

★ Besides the [AP format](#), the foundation for any good article is a good grasp on grammar and syntax. Everyone needs to brush up on that from time to time, so don't worry if you need to Google something or ask someone about basic writing rules.

## 1) Numbers

- Use numbers for:
  - Age
  - Dates and times
  - Speed
  - Addresses and streets
  - Percentages
  - Temperature
  - Dollars and cents
  - Numerals ending in -illion (ex. 7 billion, 30 million)
- Spell out numbers at the beginning of a sentence, as in: "Fifty years ago..."
  - This rule has exceptions, such as when a sentence begins with a year.
- Use ordinal numbers (first, second, third) for numbers 1-9.

## 2) Dates and Times

- The proper format is something like: "Dec. 15, 2023."
  - Don't use ordinal numbers for dates (3rd, 5th), just use the numeral.
- Abbreviate only the long-ish months: Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., and Dec.
  - It's perfectly fine to abbreviate decades in the 20th century with an apostrophe (i.e. "The '90s.")
- Times should be written as "7 p.m." or "5:30 a.m."
  - Don't use :00 to denote the o'clocks.
  - You can also write *noon* or *midnight* instead of their numeral times.



### 3) Citations

- Quotes (statements by a source) are a big deal, and the "meat" of your article-- they make articles distinct from other publications like press releases.
- As previously mentioned, every source has a title, and it's essential to include on first mention so everyone gets proper recognition.
  - For students, always ask for their **name, year** and **major**.
    - Alumni can be cited with the major they graduated from: "Business alumni George Lopez said that..."
    - Students may also be cited with an additional position they hold if it is relevant to the context: "Luis Martinez, communications junior and treasurer of the club, said..."
    - For faculty and staff, try to find out their official position and any additional titles.
- After first mention, refer to sources only by their last name.
- For other resources, like a book or website, include them as a hyperlink when first referring to them.



#### 4) Formatting quotes

- How you format quotes affects the flow and direction of the article, and even the impact of the quote itself.
  - We only really use "said" and "explained" when quoting a source verbally, other words don't read as well.
  - For citing documents or websites, use "stated" instead.
- The standard way to quote someone: "This club is great for socializing and learning new things," said Hanson.
- You can also quote someone by starting with a graf, then splicing a quote in a way that organically continues the sentence: "Smith stated that the newer products were 'not up to standard.'"
  - Note that only a short quote should be used with this format. You shouldn't start a quote like this, and then provide the rest of the quote in the same graf.
- Or you can split the quote up in this way (my favorite way):

"I definitely think there was a better way of handling this issue," said Avidan.

"Some things are better left unsaid."

- Splitting up the quote like this lends more impact to the second piece of the quote. Plus, you don't have to cite the second piece. This format is excellent for ending an article—it's like a neat little ribbon to tie up the whole thing.

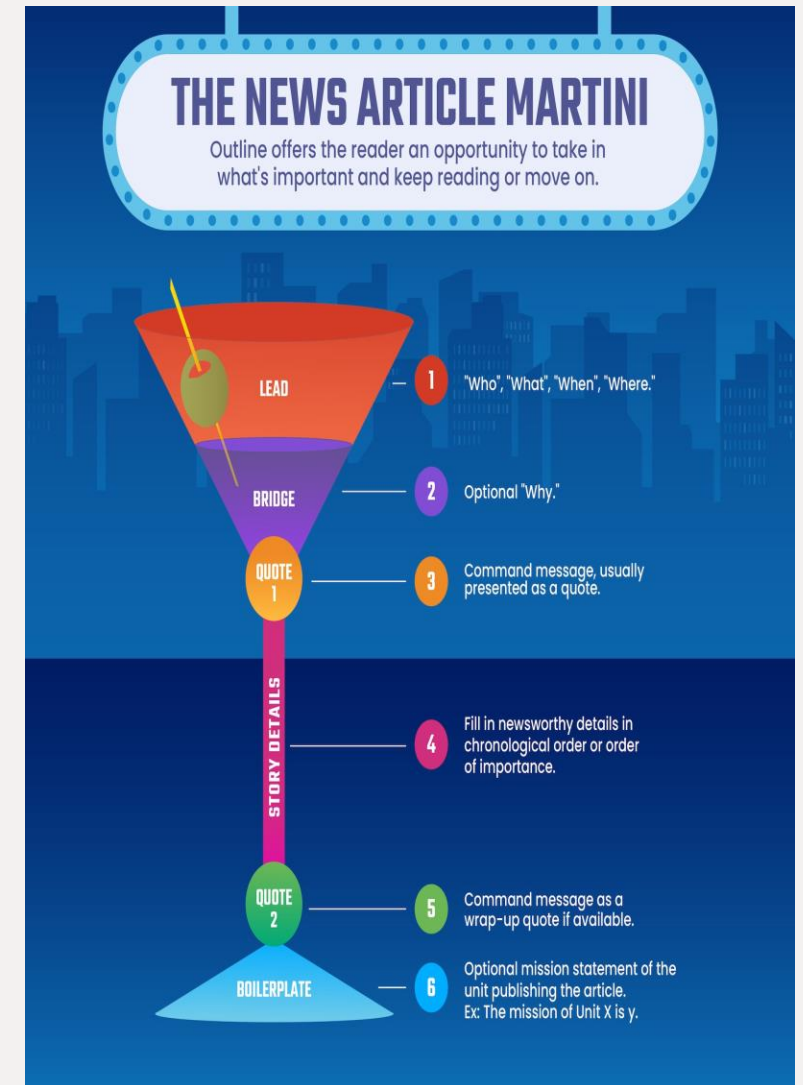
# Style

- Style in writing, as in fashion, is a flair you add to your articles to make them pop. This includes things like voice, tone and spacing.
- Voice is achieved through practice and is harder to define than most other terms here. You'll work with your editors to find the "Goldilocks zone" for your voice in your articles.

- Sometimes an article can have too many quotes, or the quotes can be too long. You can remove some quotes, trim them down, or format them differently to help.
- At PantherNOW, we skirt the line between an academic and a casual, conversational tone. While being an organized news company, our readership is the student body of FIU, so it's important for our articles to feel like they're for the students.
- We follow the Martini Glass structure, which has the most important info at the top, then the details, then a fitting conclusion (which is often, and preferably, an **end quote**).

# Style (Pictures)

- Pictures can add a lot of substance to any article that has them.
- Captions for pictures should be dynamic and engaging, not just state what is happening in the photo.
  - Always have photo credits for any photos you didn't take that you are including in your article.
  - Photo credit format: "Smoke emerges from the fog machine as the band plays their next song | Mhyanif Lozada, PantherNOW"
  - Tips for pictures:
    - Aside from being of a good quality, they should also clearly show the subject (bonus points if they clearly show a facial expression).
    - Candid pictures are preferable.
    - Try to get unique angles.
    - If other photographers are on site, don't be afraid to get in the best spots too!




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# Important Reporting Tips, Tricks and Rules

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- Always introduce yourself as a part of PantherNOW (seems like a no-brainer, but it's important)
  - Make a conversation out of your interview.
    - If you have a list of questions to ask your sources, take a glance every now and then but let the conversation flow.
      - Better yet, memorize the questions beforehand and be prepared to ask questions on any unexpected topics that might come up.
    - This, like getting used to the AP format, takes lots of practice.
  - In-person, face-to-face interviews are best, but calls work too.
    - A full text or email interview is the last resort. Text or email should ideally be used to ask follow-up questions.
  - For most sections, contacting three sources for quotes is enough.
  - Sources **cannot** view your article before publication.
  - Dress for the occasion.
  - Your approach can vary with each person you interview, but you should always be professional.
  - Writers cannot cover any organization that they are part of.
  - Always ask for permission to record an interview before and after you start the recording.
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- A photograph of a modern university building with a curved facade and a prominent circular section. The building is surrounded by lush greenery, including several tall palm trees and smaller bushes. A paved walkway leads towards the building. The sky is clear and blue.
- Ask to sit at a table or step away from a noisy area when possible.
  - Don't be afraid of asking sources to repeat themselves or to speak louder.
  - Taking some notes (digitally or handwritten) goes a long way, even if you're recording audio.
    - A good app for interviews is Otter.ai, which transcribes recordings in real time.
  - Ask around organizations, classmates and friends for things going on around campus for pitches!