

# Writing Interviews

FOR *Journalism*  
TEACHERS ONLY

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Begin writing soon after the interview while notes are fresh.

- Select and evaluate notes carefully. Include only interesting, pertinent materia..
- Follow the order of decreasing importance for news stories and most symposium interviews. Use your imagination and originality to determine the best order for a personality interview.
- Begin with an appropriate lead.
- Place your most dynamic quote after the lead in order to hold your reader's attention.
- Support your lead in the body of the story through the use of quotes and factual material.
- Alternate paragraphs of direct quotations and indirect quotations or summarizing statements. Use direct quotes for elaboration or points of emphasis or for especially forceful or colorful language. Use indirect quotes for summarizing passages.
- Make quotes more compact if possible, but don't change the meaning of what was said.
- Avoid any reference to yourself ('when asked....', 'I interviewed....', etc.) The story is NOT about you.
- Weave characteristic expressions, mannerisms, or gestures into the story if appropriate, especially in a personality interview.
- Use the word "said" for attribution. Not "says", not "stated", not "remarked", not "replied". Said. period.
- The quote is more important than the person who said it, and the person is more important than the word "said". Therefore, your quotes should reflect the order of importance.

For a one sentence quote in the body of the story, follow this format:

"This is a quote," Susie Senior said.

If the quote is longer than one sentence, you can break it up by putting the attribution in the middle:

"This is a quote," Susie Senior said. "And I said it."

At the end of the story, put the attribution in the middle, even for a short quote. Never end a story on the word "said.

"This," Susie Senior said, "is a quote."

- You may use partial quotations interspersed in your own sentences. For example:

John finds it "funny peculiar" in the senior play when he is required to babysit for a senile grandmother.

- Use synonyms for the interviewee's name in order to avoid overworking it. For example:  
the noted foreign correspondent, the author, the world traveler