

Researching and writing your story

When you have your story idea(s), the next step is to:

- Note down any sources or potential interviewees, including back-up contacts if your preferred sources aren't available
- Write a few notes of what you might ask your interviewees
- Write a rough plan of how you will construct the story

Make sure each story has the following basic information:

- Who – does it involve and who does it affect
- What – is it about
- Where – is it happening or did it take place
- When – is it happening or when did it take place
- How – did it happen or will it happen
- Why – did it happen or why is it going to happen

Writing up your story

- a good newspaper has long and short stories. So a 100 word story is just as important as a 250 word story. Try not to write above 500 words.
- Avoid writing in the first person
- In the first paragraph (the intro) you need to attract and keep the interest of your reader, so put the most important information in it, then:
- Put the next most important fact....and so on (if you do this by going through the who, what, where, when, how and why) your story will be more or less complete
- Try to include some quotes from someone you have interviewed, they always bring stories alive
- Try to keep paragraphs short, 30-40 words max
- Check all your information – is that number right, that person's age, the spelling of their name...
- Print it out and read it
- Read it again
- Get somebody else to read it

- **Save it as a Word document into the newspaper day folder – make sure your name is on top, whether it has any photos and what they are called (include this on top of the document too)**

Photos

- You will also need to take pictures to go with them. So everyone you talk to (who is going to be quoted in the story) will need their picture taking. You might want to take a photo of the new sports hall, or ICT suite or the wall display done by your class, or of a new teacher or perhaps the vegetables grown by the gardening club. Make sure you have the names of all the people in your photos.
- Take all pictures at the camera's highest quality setting – it is easier to reduce a picture in size, but impossible to make a poor quality photo bigger and better than its original setting
- Think beforehand what you want the picture to show, does it go with a story? If so, ask the writer (if that isn't you) what the story is about and what the picture needs to illustrate about the story
- Try to fill the frame with as much of the subject as you can
- If the photo is of a person, then think whether you need to photograph their whole body or just the top half, do you need them with a background?
- Try to avoid taking pictures into direct light
- Avoid very dark or very bright areas
- If the photo is of someone and something they do or have done, then make sure you ask them to pose accordingly – a cook cooking or a gardener gardening
- Always take two or three photos, all from a slightly different angle or asking the subject to move, then you can choose the best one later (it is always difficult to go back to re-take a photo that didn't turn out as you expected)
- If the picture is of a building or landscape, can you take it from a different angle or close up to show part of the detail.
- **Save the photos as jpegs into the newspaper day folder – make sure they are named so they can be matched up with the story**