

COLUMN

The meaning of column is a supporting arch, vertical division of a page for figures etc, or to reduce length of lines in newspapers. In journalism, columns are writings devoted to special subjects.

The word column is also used for the purpose of headlines, e.g., single column headline, double column headline or seven column lead story, etc.

Walter Limpman :

An American columnist says about column: "I began my career as an editorial writer. I always think that columnist is one who writes editorial with his name."

Community Journalism :

In "Community Journalism" column is defined as:

"Column cannot be exemplified by a single writing. Different columns are written in different styles. Moreover, they are also different insofar as their topics and subject-matters are concerned."

Z.A. Sulehri :

"Column is a piece of writing of any well-informed person who has something to say can write."

Diet E. Sergeant :

"Columns are those pieces of writing which appear on the editorial page and which carry reviews, cements and illustrations."

Characteristics of Columns :

Columns offer an opportunity for variety in content that no feature or editorial can approach. Columns can range from the philosophical to the whimsical.

The column always carries the writer's byline and in some cases, the writer's photograph. Columns appear at regular intervals and usually in the same location in the publication, so loyal readers will know where to find them. Columns may be subject-oriented, such as those on hobbies or crafts. Or the columns can be a reflection of the writer's personality, offering humour, opinion, anecdotes.

Variety of Writings :

Columns give readers a variety of writing styles rarely found in features and editorials. Columnists can and do use the language any way they want to. Sometimes, in fact, the unconventional style they use becomes a signature, an identifying characteristic.

Timely Topics :

Columnists are not intended to be “news” in the traditional sense. Political columnists do write about timely topics, but they are generally read for their personal presentation, rather than for the factual content.

Types of Columns :

There are as many types of columns as there are different aspects of life, so, we can't classify the column into any particular type. The approach of one columnist towards writing a column differs from the other columnists. But in general, we can classify the column writing into the following categories:

1. City Letters
2. Humorous Column
3. Personal Column-like Editorial
4. Specialized Column

Among the different types of columns humorous columns are considered to be the most popular type. But it is difficult to write humorous columns. Unless the writer has the command over the language and he knows the art of playing with the jugglery of words. It is also essential to provide interesting and entertaining material in these columns.

QUALITIES OF A COLUMNIST

Keeping in view the fact that a columnist enjoys a prominent position in the society and that he may exercise his influence on public opinion, most of the sub-editors and reporters chuckle a desire to become a columnist. Column writing, however, is not an easy task. A number of journalists look forward towards becoming columnists. They wish that they should be allotted a permanent space in the newspaper where they should have the freedom to express their views.

According to an American journalist, it is meaningless to procure a column in the newspaper for a writer when he does not have the ability to form ideas in his mind and reduce them into writing. Yet column writing is not so difficult that one cannot make any strides towards writing it. If one has the ability and determination to write, one can achieve the desired proficiency in this field.

1. Awareness :

By educating the readers, by informing them and by their training, column writer makes them to be aware of current situation of the country and their problems.

2. Educating and Training :

Every word of the newspaper keeps some specific objective and importance like wise column writing also has certain objectives and importance, from which the first and foremost important objective is to educate the people and train them. For example, a column writer tries to explain the problem or any specific issue in his column with complete in depth research in an easy and simple way for informing the people, make them well informed and let them to decide the right way for the solution of the problem.

3. Frankness or Informality :

A column writer tries to follow the informal pattern while writing. The columnist so, by creating the friendly atmosphere in his column, develops friendly and frank relationship with his readers.

4. Personal Expressions :

In column writing, columnists present their own views, thoughts, ideas, feelings, expressions on any topic or current domestic, national or international issues. So we find personal expressions of the column writer in the column many times. Column is the only piece of writing of newspaper in which column writer expresses his personal views and feelings.

5. To Promote the Supreme Values :

In the column, the columnist tries to promote the supreme values of the society and makes them to follow the supreme ethical values, and become the civilized citizen of the country.

6. Entertainment :

Entertainment is the element which is very much found in the columns of our everyday life. Especially in the humorous columns, element of entertainment is very prominent.

7. Identification of the Newspapers :

Columns usually become the identification of the newspapers as many newspapers are recognized by their columns or column writers. So sometimes columns become the identity of the newspaper. And readers buy that particular newspaper for its columns.

8. Variety of Topics :

Columns cover the full stretch of journalistic activity, sports, society, finance, business, economics, politics and just explain personalities. In each division, there are as many sub-divisions as there are columnists.

9. Literary Touch :

Column writing is the only writing of the newspaper which has literary touch while others like news, editorial, features do not consist this element.

10. Promotion of Democratic Values :

Column is an important source of democratic values promotion because it provides the political platform to the people and let them know their political rights as it is their political right to live in a democratic society and run their state themselves and become the part of their government.

11. Public Opinion :

Through column writing, a columnist informs the people, develops the sense of responsibility among the citizens of the nation and makes them to think about their current national, political and social problems and find collectively the solutions of these problems. By this way, columns make the public opinion in a specific way.

12. Representative of the People :

Many times columnists discuss the general problems of the people including their social, educational, religious and political problems. On the other side, they discuss the people's attitude towards government's new projects or programmes and inform the government about the people's views and thoughts.

13. Analysis :

In the columns, columnists analyse the current national or international issues with the full details of facts and figures and then finally draw the conclusion.

14. Accountability :

By analyzing the issue and discussing the current national problems, in fact a columnist is performing his duty to point out the factors, persons and the conditions which can be harmful for the government on one side and for the people on the other, either these factors belong to the government or to the people.

15. Solutions of the Problems :

A columnist presents the solutions of the problems which are being discussed in his column. On the other side he provides the proper guide line to people for the solutions of their problems.

HOW TO WRITE A FEATURE

In writing a feature, you will draw upon different skills.

Structure of a Feature :

A feature is seldom written in the traditional inverted-pyramid pattern. The main point, always in the lead of a news story, may be withheld until the end as a climax. Or the feature may be written in a narrative fashion, much like a good joke or anecdote.

(A) Organize Carefully :

First decide what the theme is. Then carefully outline the sub-points so they will support the theme. The good feature requires as much organization as the straight news story, for the feature has to flow

smoothly. News stories can be cut without severely damaging the sense, but generally all the parts of a feature story must be kept intact if it is to succeed. A good test is to cut paragraphs from the body of a feature. If the story doesn't suffer from the cut, then the paragraphs probably aren't necessary. In the well-planned story, every paragraph-every sentence-should add to the total effect.

(B) Lead :

The lead must attract immediate attention and pull the reader into the story. Lead can vary in style and content. You can use description, narration, dialogue, questions, unusual statements, call to action, comparison, contrast.

(C) Transition :

No matter how good the lead is, you need a solid transition into the body of the feature. If you think of the lead as a lure to attract the audience, then the transition sets the hook. It makes the reader want to continue. And it promises some kind of satisfaction.

(D) Body :

Sound knowledge of the Subject, coupled with good writing skills, will take the readers through a variety of experiences. For this purpose, the usage of standard writing devices of script, dialogue, documentable but vivid fact and detailed careful observation, suspense and if appropriate plot is necessary.

(E) Conclusion :

The conclusion should give the reader a sense of satisfaction. So we should tie the conclusion to the lead for showing the unity of the story. It is done through a short, tight summary, occasionally we can conclude with an anecdote or a quote that sums up the substance of the story. With narrative approach then draw a conclusion.

Length of a Feature :

Feature stories can be of any length. The fact is, editors and news directors want this variety. In the case of a newspaper, it may be that a hole in the page requires a short item. The same is true on Radio or TV. A hole in the newscast can be plugged with a short feature-almost a filler.

Short feature fillers that have a light touch (sometimes called briles) a bit of humour, something heartwarming are particularly welcome in the newsroom.

With today's typesetting technology of total pagination and automatic calculation of story length, the need to fill holes on a news page is not as common. Even so, the brief filler-feature is popular, for it gives the reader a break from the more serious straight news that dominates the page, and it helps and adds visual variety to a page.

Longer features are equally popular. In newspapers, they may be accompanied by photographs or artwork. As you work on a feature, think about possible illustrations or photographs to complement the story; For T.V. features, the visuals generally tell most of the story.

Structure of a Feature :

The difference between the structure of the news story and the feature is that news story is written in an inverted pyramid form.

But feature is written in a "pyramid form"

EP = Editorial Policy

PI= Presumable Interest

R1 = Readers Interest

These three rings are necessary for the feature writing and feature writer has to follow all these three rings while writing the feature.

Dramatic Structure :

In the dramatic structure of the feature, introduction comes first in which the subject is briefly introduced, then rising action comes and the subject goes on from introduction to rising action, then climax of event is described. Then, climax comes down towards the falling action and then finally the

conclusion comes at the end of the feature where the conclusion of the story is drawn at last. Features are written very often in the

dramatic structure and the purpose behind this is to attract the reader's attention towards the feature.