Researching and Writing a News Story

The following is an excerpt from *The Elements of News Writing* by James W. Kershner.

1. Select a newsworthy story. Your goal is to give a timely account of a recent, interesting, and significant event or development.

2. Think about your goals and objectives in writing the story. What will the readers want and need to know about the subject? How can you best tell the story?

3. Find out who can provide the most accurate information about the subject and how to contact that person. Find out what other sources you can use to obtain relevant information.

4. Do your homework. Do research so that you have a basic understanding of the situation before interviewing anyone about it. Check clips of stories already written on the subject.

5. Prepare a list of questions to ask about the story.

6. Arrange to get the needed information. This may mean scheduling an interview or locating the appropriate people to interview.

7. Interview the source and take notes. Ask your prepared questions, plus other questions that come up in the course of the conversation. Ask the source to suggest other sources. Ask if you may call the source back for further questions later.

8. Interview second and third sources, ask follow-up questions, and do further research until you have an understanding of the story.

9. Ask yourself, “What’s the story?” and “What’s the point?” Be sure you have a clear focus in your mind before you start writing. Rough out a lead in your head.

10. Make a written outline or plan of your story.

11. Write your first draft following your plan, but changing it as necessary.

12. Read through your first draft looking for content problems, holes, or weak spots, and revise it as necessary. Delete extra words, sentences, and paragraphs. Make every word count.

13. Read your second draft aloud, listening for problems in logic or syntax.


15. Deliver your finished story to the editor before deadline.