

# A roundabout path to JOURNALISM

## TOP TIPS FOR NEWS REPORTING

1. Choose an interesting event or happening to write about.
2. The first paragraph should tell the whole story in as few words as possible, so that, even if someone reads no further, they will know what has happened.
3. Add more detail to the report over the next few paragraphs putting the most important information near the top. If reports end up being too long for the newspaper, they should always be able to cut from the bottom.
4. Make sure that your report answers the six Ws and H questions. WHAT happened? WHEN did it happen? WHY did it happen? WHERE did it happen? WHO did it happen to? HOW did it happen?
5. Try to use some quotes in your report. You might need to interview someone for it. This will make your story more interesting.
6. Don't waffle or make the report too long, keep the sentences short and punchy.
7. Read back over your report to make sure that it all makes sense.
8. Check your facts.
9. Check your spelling.
10. Finally think of a good headline for your report that will grab the attention of your readers and will make them want to read it.

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It is often said that journalism is a calling rather than a job. I could not agree more.

Although I am sure there are many people who grow up knowing that they want to be a journalist, I must admit that I was never one of them. I have always had a voracious appetite for the printed word, whether in novels or newspapers, but I was a consumer rather than a creator. Even though I did write the occasional article for the school newspaper during my high school years, I never felt compelled to take it further. I was going to be an engineer, or maybe a lawyer. A journalist? No thank you.

At university I ended up majoring in English studies and political philosophy after a short sojourn through law, followed by more studying as I made a valiant yet ultimately futile attempt to avoid the real world. Although my university did offer journalism courses, it still did not occur to me to enter the trade.

Fresh out of university and with a Masters degree in English studies in my hand, I did a bit of lecturing, which did not really appeal to me at the time, followed by a stint in educational publishing. It was not bad, but it just lacked a little something.

It was not until I relocated to the Cayman Islands that I

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had my first taste of real journalism. As with many journalists, it was one of my passions that served as bait - sport, in this case. With a good eye for photography and a love for various games at which I was no good as a player, reporting on sports seemed a natural fit. It provided an easy transition into journalism, as all the 'useless' information I had been gathering over the years suddenly became very useful. The fact that I had flitted from sport to sport as it became clear that I was no good as a player also helped, as it had gifted me an understanding of various sports and just how challenging they can be.

Although sports still holds a special place in my heart, after a while I was given the opportunity to broaden my horizons, working on a number of different publications including magazines, each with its own unique challenges and rewards.

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that even though I thought I knew quite a bit about a subject, I had barely been scratching the surface. The profession also allows a lot of room for personal and professional growth as you develop your writing and photography skills through experience and training.

Yet for me, the biggest attraction of journalism is that you can make a real difference. Apart from doctors, law enforcement and rescue services, I do not know whether many other people can really say that.

Keeping people informed about the world around them and doing so in a fair and balanced way presents a new challenge each day. And then there are the people - not just the people you work with, but the different people from diverse backgrounds you will interact with on a daily basis. As a journalist your people skills can be every bit as valuable as your writing skills.

Looking back, it would not have taken much to push me into journalism earlier. All I lacked was the exposure.



## BE A JOURNALIST FOR THE DAY & win a Lenovo Netbook



### TOP TIP!

Try to use some quotes in your report. You might need to interview someone for it. This will make your story more interesting.



Two lucky winners will have the chance to spend a day at the Caymanian Compass, where they will learn how a newspaper is run, what job roles and opportunities there are, how deadlines are met and what skills are needed to write and publish the news. Plus they will be able to put together a video report and read a news bulletin for the radio.

**EACH WINNER WILL RECEIVE A NETBOOK**

Students are invited to write a short news story or make a video of them reporting the news. It can be about anything they think is topical – but it must be local news.

One winning news story and one winning video will be selected by the editor and printed in the Caymanian Compass and the video posted online at [caycompass.com](http://caycompass.com)

**DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES IS 23 OCTOBER 2011**

Find out more at [caycompass.com/beajournalist](http://caycompass.com/beajournalist)

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