



# NEWSPAPER

## EVALUATION GUIDE

SCHOOL \_\_\_\_\_

NEWSPAPER: \_\_\_\_\_

ENROLLMENT: \_\_\_\_\_

STREET ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP CODE \_\_\_\_\_

RATING

**TENNESSEE HIGH SCHOOL PRESS ASSOCIATION**

AT LIPSCOMB UNIVERSITY

ONE UNIVERSITY PARK DRIVE  
NASHVILLE, TN 37204-3951

# NEWS WRITING AND EDITING

## Guidelines

- News briefs are used to report routine school information.
- In-depth news stories about major events and issues emphasize the future or take a feature approach.
- Leads are concise and varied in construction. Writers make a consistent effort to grab the readers' interest in the opening paragraph, and they avoid beginning with "a," "an," and "the."
- Direct quotes are used in copy, and all sources are attributed.
- Attributions are buried in the middle or at the end of quotes. Writers normally use "said" as the attribution, unless another word fits the quote better.
- Copy is written in third person. First and second person are avoided. Writers use active voice—not passive.
- Sentences are short and paragraphs are kept to 40 words or less.
- Misspelled words, grammatical errors and punctuation errors have been eliminated. Copy consistently follows AP style.
- Headlines, written in present tense for present and past stories and in the future tense for future stories, are accurate and summarize each article's content.
- Writers do not use their opinion in stories. This includes avoiding the tendency of "cheer-leading" editorializing in the final paragraph.

## Comments and Suggestions



# FEATURE WRITING AND EDITING

## Guidelines

- Feature writing shows variety and originality of style. Writers use third person for most stories. The writer uses first person only if the stories require reporter participation, and normally he avoids second person "you."
- Quotes provide the flavor in features by using anecdotes and playing on the readers' emotions. The writer digs for unusual, meaningful quotes.
- Leads grab the reader by using teasers and descriptions. They are often "cliff hangers," which make the reader want to continue.
- The staff provides in-depth coverage to some features by packaging elements on one page or on the double truck.
- Attributions are buried in the middle or at the end of quotes. Writers normally use "said" as the attribution, unless another word fits the quote better.
- Writers localize any off-campus coverage by quoting students and faculty members.
- Sentences are short and paragraphs are kept to 40 words or less.
- Misspelled words, grammatical errors and punctuation errors have been eliminated. Copy consistently follows AP style. Writers leave their opinion out of stories.
- Feature headlines use play on words to help grab the readers' attention. Sentence heads or nutgraphs help explain the feature heads.

## Comments and Suggestions

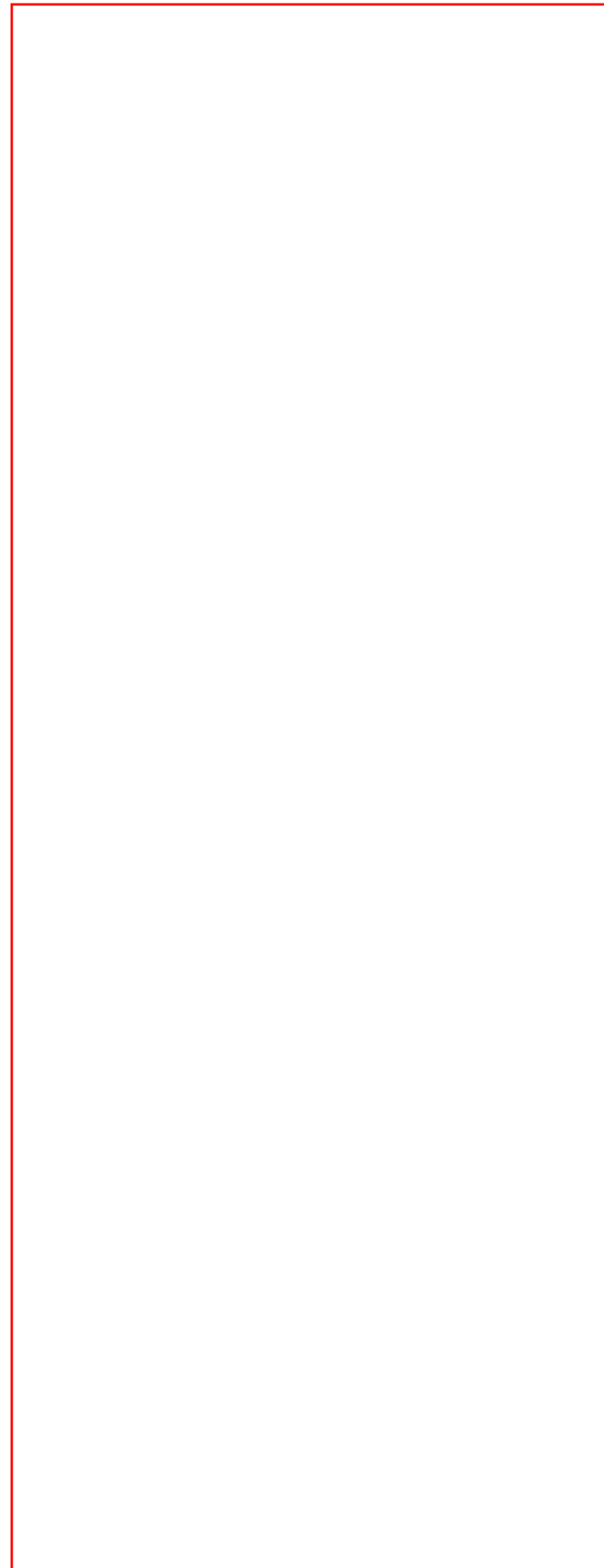


## OPINION WRITING AND EDITING

### Guidelines

- The newspaper bases at least one staff (non-byline) editorial in each issue on a major news story.
- Staff editorials avoid the Poison IVY (first person I, verbosity and second person you) of editorial writing. Editorials should be written in third person. "We" may be used if referring to the newspaper staff.
- Editorial leads are concise and varied in construction. Writers should take a stand in the lead. The editorial should have a strong introduction, reasons to support the paper's stand, and a conclusion that summarizes or makes suggestions.
- Unless direct quotes support the stand, writers' should avoid using them in editorials.
- Bylined columns supplement the opinion pages. These columns should be focused on topics of interest to teens, and should usually be about school happenings.
- Editorials should deal with issues—not people. They should be based on research.
- Sentences are short and paragraphs are kept to 40 words or less.
- Misspelled words, grammatical errors and punctuation errors have been eliminated. Copy consistently follows AP style.
- Headlines should include writers' opinion.
- Reviews include comparison and contrast.

### Comments and Suggestions

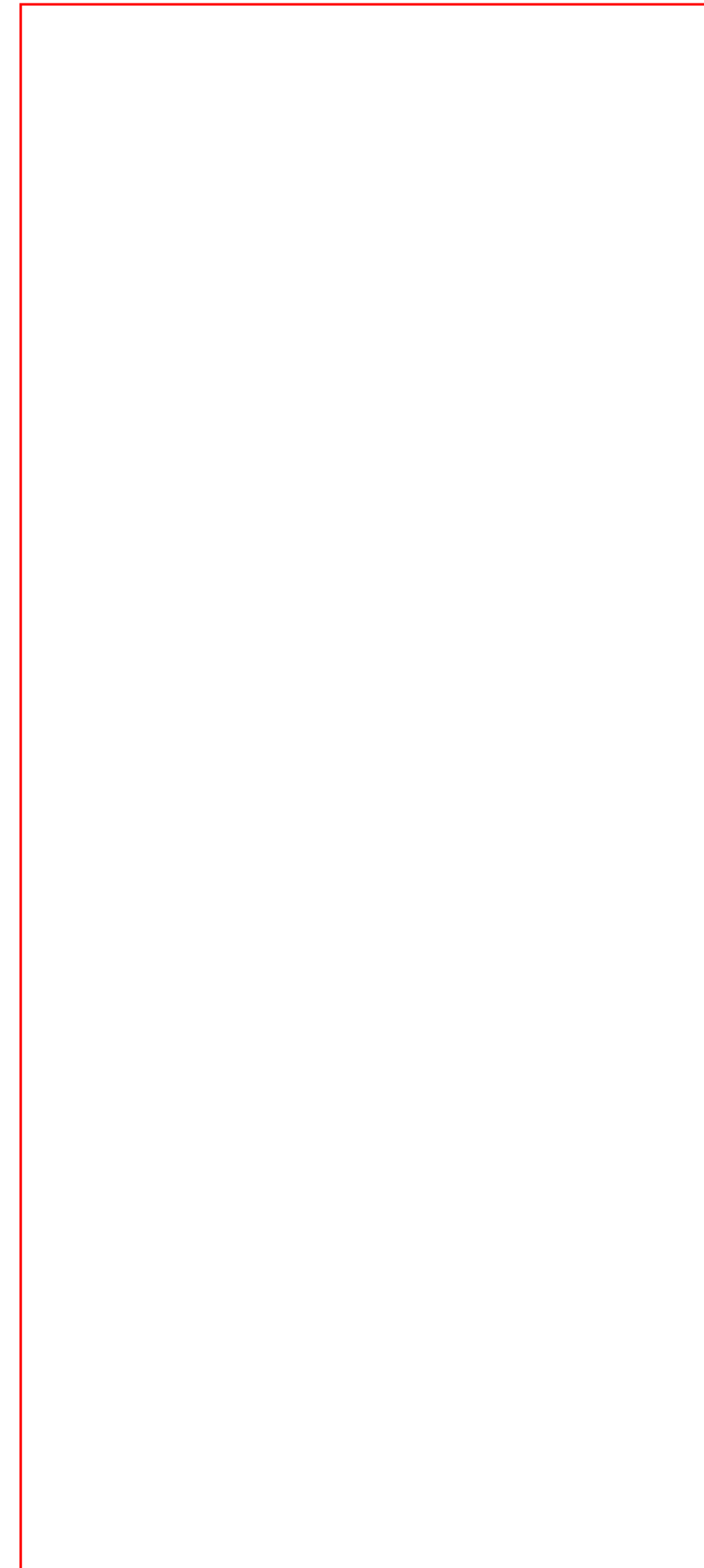


## SPORTS WRITING AND EDITING

### Guidelines

- Sports writing focuses on the future, since coverage is usually not timely. Copy should tell the strengths and weaknesses of upcoming opponents as well as strengths and weaknesses of own team. Balance the copy between girls' and boys' sports.
- Coverage stories should focus on the action on the field of play. Describe key moments in an event. Help the reader recall the thrills and chills of the moment. Avoid sports jargon.
- Use a sports briefs column to highlight past events. Use statistics—both team and individual. If someone breaks a record, tell what the old record was and what the new record is.
- Direct quotes are used in copy, and all sources are attributed.
- Attributions are buried in the middle or at the end of quotes. Writers normally use "said" as the attribution, unless another word fits the quote better.
- Sports columnists focus on school sports—not professional and college sports.
- Sentences are short and paragraphs are kept to 40 words or less.
- Misspelled words, grammatical errors and punctuation errors have been eliminated. Copy consistently follows AP style.
- Sports headlines summarize the content.
- Writers do not use their opinion in stories.

### Comments and Suggestions



## DESIGN AND GRAPHICS

### Guidelines

- The design of the publication consistently reflects its personality. Consistency in standing heads, bylines, pulled quotes, caption headings, folios, nameplate and logos is evident from issue to issue.
- Design indicates the importance of stories, and it guides the reader through each page.
- Long vertical columns of type are avoided. Modular design is evident. Column widths are varied, and the grid pattern is evident.
- The nameplate includes the school's name, complete address, zip code, date, volume number and issue number.
- There is an unobtrusive masthead on the editorial page.
- Design avoids jumping stories from one page to the next.
- Story placement avoids tombstoning or bumping headlines.
- Ads appear at the bottom of a page or along one side. Largest ads are beneath smaller ones. Ads are designed to sell a service or product.
- Type is easy to read. Headline fonts complement each other and the staff uses some display fonts for feature stories if they are appropriate and fit the content.
- Graphics are used to complement content. These include initial letters, ruled lines, color, screens and special typographical treatments.

### Comments and Suggestions

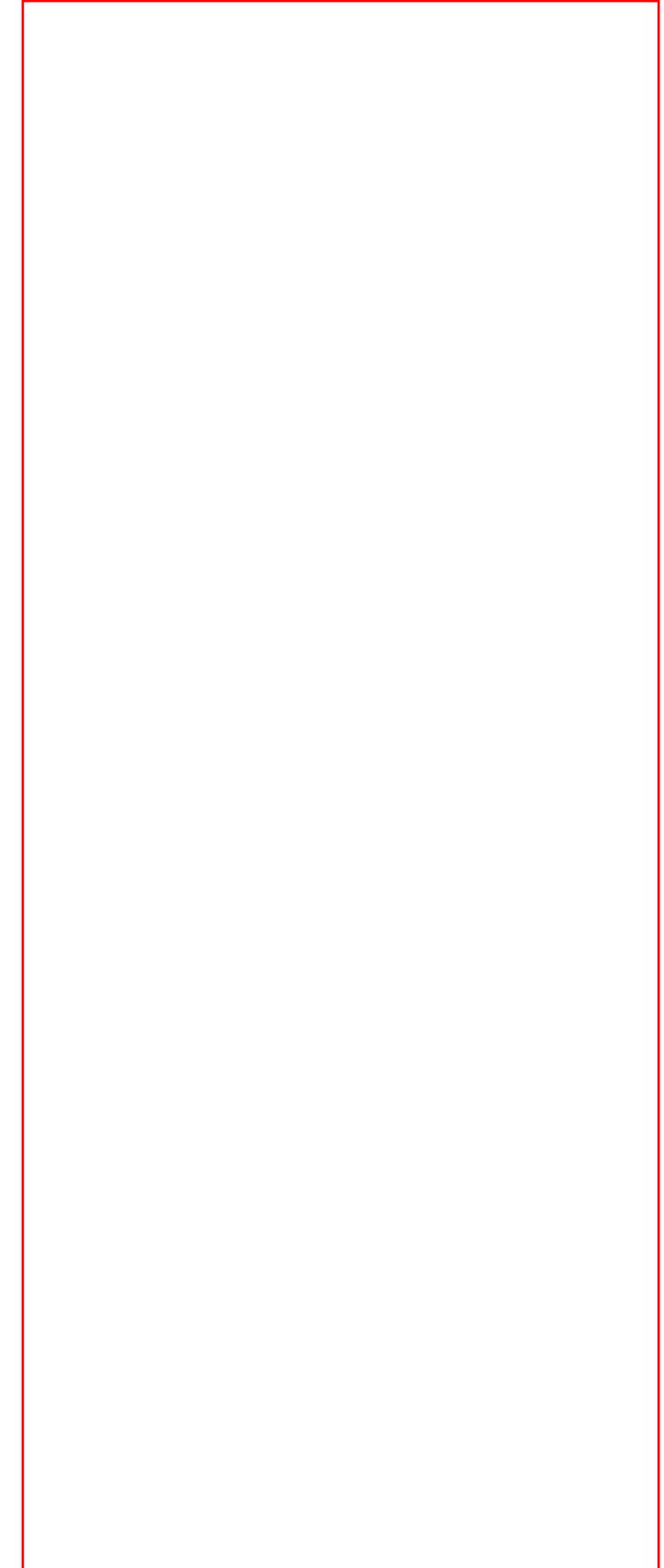


## PHOTOGRAPHY/ILLUSTRATIONS

### Guidelines

- Photography and/or illustrations enhance the content.
- Photos are clear, in focus and have strong contrast. They are free of dust and scratches.
- Photos and illustrations face toward the copy. They do not face off the page.
- For the most part, photos are rectangular in shape.
- Cartoons, comic strips and other illustrations are attractive, well-drawn and easy to understand.
- Artists use shading and/or screening when warranted.
- All photos contain cutlines, which answer who, what, when, where, why and how. Cutlines avoid beginning with names and "ing" words, and they avoid beginning with "a," "an" or "the." They are often two or three sentences in length.
- The paper avoids using posed photos or ones where the subjects are looking at the camera. Photographers capture the action as it happens.
- Cutlines are in a different typeface than body copy, and they have a visual lead-in to grab the reader. All cutlines include a photo credit.
- Photos are cropped tightly—normally within two picas of the center of interest.

### Comments and Suggestions



# COVERAGE

## Guidelines

- Content shows diversity with a strong mixture of news, features, sports, opinion and in-depth articles.
- Content is balanced and thoroughly researched.
- Writer’s opinion appears only on opinion pages or in clearly marked columns.
- The publication covers the whole school —its clubs, academics, sports.
- Coverage indicates the staff has used a variety of resources.
- Staff gives credit to all sources and does not use items from the internet without getting approval.
- Staff clearly labels photo illustrations.
- Student-related news occurring off school grounds shows the effects of such news on the school population.
- News briefs and sports briefs add to overall coverage.
- Coverage is timely, thorough and objective.
- Stories show evidence of research and skillfully conducted interviews. Sources and quotes are attributed.
- The staff supplements story content with photos, graphics and sidebars.

## Comments and Suggestions



# OVERALL EVALUATION RATING

## ALL-TENNESSEE RATING

This is THSPA's highest rating. All-Tennessee publications demonstrate excellence in all areas of production. These publications effectively integrate writing, design and visuals.

## SUPERIOR RATING

Publications receiving this rating demonstrate excellence in most areas of production. They consistently integrate writing, design and visuals into the publication, but they are lacking in at least one area of overall execution.

## EXCELLENT RATING

This rating indicates that the newspaper staff has a basic understanding of general journalistic standards. They consistently integrate writing, design and visuals into their publication, but they lack in the overall execution that makes for a Superior publication.

## MERIT RATING

These publications meet general journalistic standards, but they lack necessary depth in writing and excellence in design and visuals.

## SECTION

## RATING

NEWS WRITING

FEATURE WRITING

OPINION WRITING

SPORTS WRITING

DESIGN AND GRAPHICS

PHOTOGRAPHY/ILLUSTRATIONS

COVERAGE

# OVERALL RATING

ALL-TENNESSEE

SUPERIOR

EXCELLENT

MERIT