AND PRESS RELEASE

UNIT STRUCTURE

8.1 Learning Objectives

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8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- familiarize yourself with the skill of column writing,
- understand the techniques of science write-ups,
- develop skill for writing press release.

8.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit has been titled writing for column, science and press release. What exactly is a column, science writing and press release? So in this unit you will be introduced to writing columns, science write up and press release. Nowadays there is a high demand for good newspaper contributions, feature or column writing and science write up. These can be considered one of the most popular forms of writing.

So in this unit, you will follow certain practical principles and methods of writing column, science writing and press release.

8.3 COLUMN WRITING

Let us begin by asking ourselves what a ‘column’ is. There are several meanings of this word.

(1) It is a standard vertical division of a newspapers page, hence comes the word ‘column’ measure.

Recently there appeared a news-item reporting the death of a flock of twenty-seven or so vultures as a result of feeding on the carcass of a dog that had allegedly been poisoned to death. The question that is uppermost here is not so much about the poisoning of a dog to death. Pariah and mad dogs that abound our streets in towns and villages need to be eliminated and the use of poison as an instrument of elimination of unwanted dogs is well understood. But what one fails to understand is the irresponsible social behaviour of individuals in matters such as disposing off dead animals. It needs hardly be stated that the most natural way of disposing off the dead dog would have been to bury it and not to dispose it off in a field so as to attract vultures and other scavengers. In this case, the irresponsible social behaviour of individuals has become the cause of the slaughter of a whole flock of vultures that have of late been included in the endangered cat-

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1



1. How does the author focus upon the timeliness of the above feature (Answer in one sentence)

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2. Choose the appropriate answer from the alternatives given

In the opening section of the feature, the author stresses as

(A) the death of a flock of vultures

(B) irresponsible social behaviour of individuals

(C) killing mad dogs using poison

Ans. : .....

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You will note that in writing a Feature you have to be cautious of the style of presenting of the material. The style is different from – in fact, just opposite to – a news report. Note this difference:

- News-reports are written mostly in the inverted pyramid formal structure and style. On the other hand, Features follow the structures of essays and discussion.
- News-reports do not present the reporter's distinct point of view but a feature does. In a feature, the author presents his / her point of view.

to tackle the topic. This would provide appropriate materials for an introduction.

In the main body you could deal with three or four main points, ideas, arguments, or aspects together with illustration and examples.

In the conclusion you could make your final point, recall the issues raised in the introduction, indicate a possible area for further study and review any important further implication.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

Fill in the blanks to complete the sentences

1. A news-report follows the structure of _____
2. A feature has a _____ structure.
3. The structure of a feature can be described in _____ stages.
4. The feature provides the writer with a scope to present his / her _____.
5. A feature is generally _____ than a news-report.

8.4 SCIENCE WRITE-UP

Science and technology is increasingly shaping and revolutionizing our everyday lives. Nowadays, we just cannot possibly think of our lives without the contributions of science and technology. So in that case the common public needs to know what scientists are doing and their inventions and other technological advancements. Science is often hard to comprehend. Science writing is difficult to digest for common people. Most people think that the difficulties of science arise out of necessity and out of the extreme complexity of scientific concepts, data and analysis. Complexity of thought need not lead to impenetrability of expression. As a result, science writing as a different genre has evolved.

Science writing encompasses a wide variety of niches that can include writing for newspapers, mass market magazines, trade publications,

3) **Objectivity –**Subjectivity needs to be avoided. Any claims that you want to make should be based on facts, not by intuition or emotion.

Certain points that need to be kept in mind while writing a science write up:

1) **Word choice –** Often several words may convey similar meaning, but usually only one word is most appropriate and that needs to be put in the given situation. For example :

   "Population density is positively co-related with SARS transmission rate."

   "Population density is positively related to SARS transmission rate**."**

   So you can see that in some contexts, "correlated" and "related" have similar meanings. But in scientific writing correlated conveys a precise meaning because it states the statistical relationship between the two variables. So, simply pointing out that two variables are related is not enough. Our readers want to know more precise relationship between the two. There fore it is important to choose the appropriate word**.**

2) **Phrasing choice**: The above mentioned idea is applicable here also in case of choosing the right phrase. For example, the phrase "writing of an investigative nature" could also be used in sciences. Also it might refer to a police investigation. So in that case a more specific phraseology needs to be used by avoiding ambiguous phraseology. Here it is noticed that repetition is to some extent preferable.

3) **Figurative Language:** Figurative language must be avoided because it is imprecise. For example "experimental subjects were assaulted with a wall of sound" does not convey the precise meaning of " experimental subjects were presented with 20 second pulses of nonspecific mating cells". Exclude similes

lead to framing of complex sentences without pause which may cause difficulty for learners. So usually simple sentence is preferred.

For example :The osmoregulatory organ , which is located at the base of the third dorsal spine on the outer margin of the terminal papillae and functions by expelling excess sodium ions , activates only under hypertonic conditions . This sentence is too long and complex .Learner has to wait a longtime to get the main idea. So instead of that sentence a more simple sentence can be used like “Located on the outer margin of the terminal papillae at the base of the third dorsal spine , the osmoregulatory organ expels excess sodium ions under hypertonic conditions . “So you can see that a simpler sentence is easy to comprehend. Hence sentence structure needs adequate care in scientific writing .

8) **Verbosity**: Use concise writing .Most of the scientific writing is space limited. Grant proposals, journal articles, and abstracts all have word limits .So you need to concisely write your scientific writing. Common phrases like “the fact that,” “it should be noted that,” and “it is interesting that “are cumbersome and unnecessary in scientific writing.

9) **Use of Passive Voice**: Generally in science write up passive voice is used to enhance objectivity .But this again depends upon the reviewer who would instruct you whether to use passive voice or active voice. Just follow few guidelines below while using active voice :

- Avoid starting sentences with “I “ OR “WE “ because this pulls you out of the focus from the scientific topic at hand
- Avoid using “I “ OR “WE “ when you are making a conjecture ,whether it’s substantiated or not .Everything that you want to say should follow from logic , not from personal bias or subjectivity. Never use any emotive words in conjunction with “I” OR “WE”. For example “I believe”, or “we believe “.
- Never use “we” in a way that includes the reader.

- Take care with your grammar.
- Beware of fashion. Words and phrases can become fashionable and over used, and their meaning often becomes uncertain.
- Use your own words as far as possible so that it because it will be more understandable to readers.
- Use words correctly .Always write with a good dictionary at hand.
- Use words that your reader will understand. Always remember knowledge of technical expressions (jargon) is often limited to a comparatively small group of people.
- Spell correctly. Use a good dictionary.
- Take care with the use of 'I' as I have mentioned earlier.

So by now you must have graduated to the level of becoming a science reporter. Just remember that a science reporter need not necessarily be a specialist in science. What is essential is a background in science and a scientific temperament. A science reporter must update himself with the latest developments of science and be aware of the major scientific research. So your job is to write the highly technical scientific news for common reader in an understandable and readable way. So enjoy writing science write ups.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3

1. What are the three fundamental aspects of good science writing?

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2. What are the different kinds of writing that fall under the umbrella of scientific writing?

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and large organizations, both for-profit and nonprofit. Early in the 20th century, Ohio Bell Telephone discovered that if it handed out “canned” news in this form, newspaper reporters would stop going to telephone rate hearings to get the information in person, thereby minimizing uncomfortable inquiries about the rates and related matters. More often, releases were used, and continue to be used, to attract the media to attend press briefings or to request follow-up interviews. Initially it was considered a form of advertising because of their self-serving content. Releases quickly became accepted for what they are today – a free source of news and information that can be used by media. The traditional format (one or two pages of double-spaced text with standardized spelling and punctuation) was developed to satisfy the needs of editors for space in which to edit the text, and typesetters who required certain kinds of editorial markings in order to follow the flow of individual pages while typesetting the text. With more and more releases distributed via e-mail and more and more print media moving to digital printing, the format of press releases has become far less important for recipients. Many public relations practitioners also disseminate their releases far beyond the media to key audiences such as employees and investors who are as interested as the media in what the organizations they support are doing.

The usual way of issuing information to the press is by writing a press release. A press release is an official, authorized statement about the policies and activities of an organization. As the company or the government has to stand by it, the press release must be factual, and correct and must project the policy clearly and without ambiguity. It should leave no scope for misreporting. This is then sent by post or by hand to various newspapers and periodicals as well as to radio and television news offices. It should also be communicated to the news agencies, who have direct tele-printer contact with the main newspaper offices in the country. The news agencies edit the release and do not send it out in its entirety. So it is always worthwhile sending out the full release as widely as possible.

The date and place are indicated on the top right side. The release should have a title or subtitle also, if necessary. In the case of releases from non-official organizations, it is desirable also to mention the designation of the person issuing the release and his telephone number.

FORMAT OF A PRESS RELEASE

Writing a Press Release

Press releases are broadly categorized into the following types–

a) general news releases

b) event releases

c) product press releases

d) social media press releases

The writing style of the press releases is common. Some of these common structural elements include:

Headline — used to grab the attention of journalists and briefly summarize the news.

Dateline — contains the release date and usually the originating city of the press release.

Introduction — first paragraph in a press release, that generally gives basic answers to the questions of who, what, when, where and why.

Body — further explanation, statistics, background, or other details relevant to the news.

Media Contact Information — name, phone number, email address, mailing address, or other contact information for the PR or other media relations contact person. The following is an example of a press release issued by the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Now let us write a press release using the above mentioned format.

8.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you have learnt what column writing, science writing up and press release is. A press release is a written statement distributed to the media. It is an important tool of public relations. By now you must have understood the nuances of writing column and science writing. We have also given few examples of column writing, science writing and also press release for your clarity. So by the end of this unit we assume that you would write column, science writing and press release following the tips given in this unit.



8.7 FURTHER READINGS

- Taylor Shirley Model Business Letters, e-mails and other Business Documents. 2006. Pearson Education.
- Sharma R.C. and Mohan Krishna, Business Correspondences and Report Writing .2002. Tata Mcgraw Hill Publishing Company.
- Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Communication Skills in English .2002.Manipal
- EEG-04. English for Practical Purposes. Business Communication. Writing Skills -2 Block. IGNOU
- *Public Relations* by. H F Moore and F B Kalupa, publisher: Surjeet Publication, Delhi.
- *Practical Public Relations* by Sam Black, Universal Book Stall, Delhi.



8.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Write a press release with a backgrounder for the organization with which you are associated.