

HANDBOOK FOR STUDENT JOURNALISTS

A guide for reporting about the world,
from around the world.

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The smarter the journalists are, the better off society is. For to a degree, people read the press to inform themselves - the better the teacher, the better the student body.

- Warren Buffet

Handbook for Student Journalists

If it were left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate for a moment to prefer the latter.

- Thomas Jefferson

Handbook for Student Journalists: A guide for reporting about the world, from around the world. First Edition.

Written, compiled, and edited by Malcolm Cecil-Cockwell and Zachary Fryer-Biggs, in collaboration with the International Partnerships Foundation, International Partnerships Press, and *Dispatches International*.

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INTRODUCTION

Journalism is about telling the right story, the right way. Finding the right story can be difficult due to the glut of somewhat credible and often sensational information that clogs the arteries of modern media. Telling a story the right way is a challenge, as the excess of poorly reported stories can make even good writing seem redundant. At times it appears that journalism has fallen into a sorry state, from which it may never recover.

What is needed is a new style and a new method of writing, especially for student journalists, who are energetic, dedicated, and distributed widely around the world.

The journalistic style advocated in this handbook is unorthodox, unique, and improves upon the common form of student journalism. Many publications produced by students and professional journalists attempt to cover the news of the world with parroted reports, which regurgitate previously published information about familiar issues. This form of journalism is useful for informing the general public about basic facts, but does little to improve the overall understanding of important global events.

History – not journalism – is the business of repeating previously stated information. This handbook therefore proposes a journalistic style that requires interviews with eyewitnesses and experts, such that readers are provided with the raw stories and opinions that truly define the news of the world. Readers become engaged because they can analyze the well-presented quotes that act as the spine of every article. This method of in-depth reporting can be paired with an accessible writing style to unveil a world previously unseen by readers.

Student journalists who study this handbook will be prepared to produce credible and readable articles in this style, which present fresh and valuable perspectives on issues of global importance. Groups of skilled and dedicated student journalists who work within the parameters of this new style will form commendable and worthwhile publications that carry the general understanding of ongoing global

events to new heights.

Due to a variety of factors that have converged with the dawn of the new millennium, many professional publications around the world are closing international bureaus and radically cutting reporting staff abroad. As a result, entire regions of the world are becoming less covered and people are losing knowledge of current events in those areas. A less capable press is a less free press, and history has shown that international reporting is a staple for every democratic and humane society.

The authors of this handbook, along with their colleagues from *The Epoch Journal* and *Dispatches International*, have volunteered themselves to help fill the expanding news vacuum. By producing this handbook, the authors hope other student journalists and their publications will become better able to harness communications technologies and employ classic techniques to write credible and readable articles that are based on personal stories and exclusive information from experts and eyewitnesses.

This handbook can be used for reference by student journalists and for other educational programs that require students to research topical issues of global importance, interview experts, and finally write in an accessible and informative style. Readers of this handbook should add their own notes, so that the experiences and lessons they acquire throughout their careers as student journalists are preserved and neatly compiled. Such notes and other suggestions would be appreciated by the authors of this handbook in order to ensure later editions are more detailed, comprehensive, and useful.

The first part of this handbook describes the three steps that student journalists must adhere to when writing credible and readable articles. The three major sections are divided into the tasks of researching issues of global importance and identifying potential topics for articles, contacting and interviewing experts and eyewitnesses in order to acquire personal stories and exclusive information, and finally writing in a rational and comprehensive yet concise and readable manner. Each of these tasks is split into five smaller parts, which can be referenced as an article starts to take shape.

The second part of this handbook consists of a series of guides, briefs,

and supplements that discuss a wide variety of other issues that especially pertain to student journalists. Although the list of issues is not comprehensive, and the descriptions of the issues themselves are not exhaustive, student journalists should find these neatly compiled summaries informative and practical. The list of recommended books and reports at the end of this handbook should also be useful for learning more about the aforementioned issues.

Most of the information in this handbook is from the personal experiences and reflections of the authors, who have worked together as student journalists on several publications and many projects. The authors' colleagues at several publications have also contributed to this handbook by sharing their thoughts and ideas. Some information is borrowed from credible writers and educators who have published their own treatises on various facets of professional journalism. Because the entire field of student journalism is undefined and awash with self-proclaimed experts, this handbook is informal and should be used as a basis for the development of other student journalists.

In summary, the authors have written this handbook with the needs of their fellow student journalists in mind. This handbook will help student journalists acquire good stories and identify good topics that can be crafted into credible and readable articles that are based on interviews and other sources of exclusive information. By advocating a new style that relies on interviews and effective writing, the authors hope to encourage a form of student journalism that will provide the raw stories and opinions that define the news of the world.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

There are two authors of this handbook. Neither author would ever claim to be an expert on journalism, but both are seasoned student journalists who have worked on a variety of publications and written credible and readable articles. In writing this handbook, they have discussed their experiences with colleagues and thereby determined the techniques that are great, those that merely work, and mistakes that should be avoided.

Malcolm Cecil-Cockwell is from Huntsville, ON, Canada, and is studying at the University of Toronto. He works as a forestry sector analyst and has consistently freelanced since 2006. Malcolm wrote his first book, *Objective Ecology*, about the business implications of climate change in 2007. He regularly volunteers with a variety of organizations, including *The Epoch Journal*, the Strivers Foundation, and Kiva Microfinance. Malcolm is the Founder and Executive Director of the International Partnerships Foundation.

Zachary Fryer-Biggs is from New York City, NY, United States of America, and is studying at St. John's College. Zach is the Founder and Editor-in-Chief of *The Epoch Journal*, a leading American student publication, which was named a finalist for the Associated College Press' 2008 Pacemaker Award. Zach has worked with War News Radio, Talking Points Memo, and with four different printed publications. Zach joined the International Partnerships Foundation in early 2009 as the Editor-in-Chief of *Dispatches International*.

The authors have worked together since 2006, when Zach founded *The Epoch Journal* and Malcolm joined as Managing Editor. Malcolm and Zach have freelanced a definitive history of direct action tactics in the radical environmental movement, which has required dozens of interviews with radical environmentalists across North America. Their book about radical environmentalism will be published in late 2009.

The authors collaborated on this handbook to improve the state of student journalism. They welcome feedback from other student journalists, and can be reached at info@internationalpartnerships.org.

A BRIEF WORD ON STYLE

While this handbook can be used by student journalists around the world, the guidelines within have been drafted to accommodate the styles, methods, and techniques of two publications in particular: *The Epoch Journal* and *Dispatches International*. This brief section summarizes the essential aspects of the journalistic style advocated in this handbook.

Dispatches International and *The Epoch Journal* offer something to the world that many news sources, suffering under the strain of budget cuts, are unable to provide: breadth with depth. Student journalists working for *The Epoch Journal*, by employing Skype to reach the world, and *Dispatches International*, by relying upon reporters around the world to delve into the stories in their local communities, have the opportunity to fill the void left by mainstream media outlets.

Regardless of the merit attributed to the journalistic style of *Dispatches International* or *The Epoch Journal*, neither publication can or should attempt to replace daily news sources, such as *The New York Times*, or even weekly news magazines, such as *The Economist* and *Time*. These sources usually convey facts in an inverted pyramid. This conventional style of professional journalism is only worthwhile if the information is new.

The student journalists writing for *Dispatches International* and *The Epoch Journal* cannot replace daily news sources, but they can outdo professional journalists by capitalizing on their greatest advantage over mainstream media outlets: access. This access, be it achieved with Skype or through interviews conducted on the ground, is unique to student journalists.

The journalistic style advocated in this handbook requires that interviews be brought to the forefront, so that readers are transported to the location of the stories discussed in articles. Quotations, complemented by well-executed description, allow readers to come to know both quoted words and the characters behind those words.

Historical context is permitted in articles only insofar as is necessary to understand the issue at hand. Grandiose narratives about history are better left to historians. In summary, exclusive information, attained through interviews with experts and eyewitnesses, underwrites the journalistic style advocated in this handbook.

Facts are important and should underwrite the claims made and ideas presented within an article. Never should an unchecked fact be presented by a student journalist as true, since a single false claim can undermine the credibility of an entire publication.

According to this style, approximately 35% of an article should be composed of quotations with roughly another 20% dedicated to introducing interviewees and quotes. The main task presented to student journalists is weaving together the experiences and opinions of interviewees so that a narrative appears within the articles.

Student journalists serve as the eyes and ears of readers, who have neither the expertise nor the time to explore the topics that are contained in articles. This means student journalists have license to add their own observations and conclusions about what has been seen and heard.

While remaining the eyes and ears of readers, student journalists are not the mouthpieces of interviewees. Regardless of interviewees' claims that specific facts are important or that their points of view are correct, student journalists must also act as a filter for the massive quantity of information and opinion compiled in each article and strive for accuracy and credibility in all their writing.

The articles of student journalists must be fair, but not necessarily balanced. Articles should be written with an open mind and all prejudices abandoned, but not every side needs to be portrayed as fact or be philosophically justified. Opposing claims can be laid out to favor one opinion over another, and this is best achieved through the words of others. Allowing the reader to identify the angle of an article will prevent the assumption that the writer has an agenda.

Articles must be both credible and readable. Student journalists must walk the line between artistic excess and bland simplicity. They should choose words that give a clear picture to readers, without

hesitating to offer details; yet they must not make such a mess of flowery language that the reader gets lost in superfluous descriptions.

All writing must be original and tailored to the requirements of each article. Plagiarism is a despicable crime that should be avoided by all student journalists at all times.

Student journalists must strive to write articles that are clean, crisp, and informative, but should include specific observations about situations and interviewees. They should note, for example, if an interviewee noticeably hesitates before answering a specific question or seems nervous during the course of an interview.

The conclusions of the student journalist should play a role in articles. There should be a driving force behind every story, because an aimless article will not interest a reader. Every article should offer a conclusion, or least an overall depiction of the issue being discussed. Many good articles end with a prediction of where a story or situation will go in the future.

This brief section summarizes the essential aspects of the journalistic style advocated in this handbook. Although far from exhaustive, this section outlines the philosophy of *The Epoch Journal* and *Dispatches International*. Guidance for each step of the researching, interviewing, and writing processes can be found in the subsequent chapters of this handbook.

On the whole, articles written by student journalists must be based on opinions and stories attained through interviews. The style of the articles in *The Epoch Journal* and *Dispatches International* must focus on readability and credibility, with the intention of transporting readers to the location of important global issues. By writing in this style, student journalists will create excellent publications, thus beginning to fill the void left by mainstream media outlets around the world.

PART I:

**THREE STEPS FOR WRITING A
CREDIBLE & READABLE ARTICLE**

STEP #1: RESEARCHING

If we knew what we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?

- Albert Einstein

Student journalism, as we noted at the beginning of this handbook, is about telling the right story, the right way. A worthwhile article is a well-compiled, well-researched, and well-written assortment of stories, facts, observations, and conclusions. This assortment of news and history, which is referred to as a topic, is perhaps the most important aspect of any credible and readable article.

You need to have worthwhile topics to pursue the good stories and to conduct good research so that you can write good articles. The articles that appear in our publications are especially dependent on having worthwhile topics because of the emphasis on personal observations and other exclusive information that is usually obtained through interviews. This section describes the steps that student journalists must take to determine a good topic and to conduct thorough and comprehensive research.

Before considering the steps that lead to a good topic and constitute good research, it is worth noting the consequences of skipping these steps. What happens if you don't have a good topic? Time and resources will be invested in a dull and redundant piece of writing that is neither new nor readable. Furthermore, as a student journalist, if you do not have a good topic, you will not know who to talk to and – even worse – if you do happen to schedule a good interview, you will not know what to ask.

What happens if you do have a good topic? You will be able to uncover facts and stories that major publications are not even aware of and are certainly not writing about. Your interviews will be acute and useful, and your contact list will develop at least as quickly as your credibility. Every now and then, if you are diligent and lucky, you

might stumble onto a great story within a good topic. Most importantly, your articles will be consistently credible and readable, and you will be respected in the field of student journalism.

Even after you start to determine your topic – and let's assume that it is indeed a good topic – research is required to refine the focus and determine the structure of your article. More research is required to confirm assumptions and justify pursuing leads and suggestions offered by people that you interview. If these steps and others are taken patiently and confidently, your article will mature into a credible and readable document that shines light on an understudied but nonetheless significant global issue – subsequently people will read your writing and your efforts will be recognized.

Research for the initial step in the article-writing process, therefore, should never be overlooked or taken lightly.

In many cases, the editors and advisors at your publication will help you narrow down your options for a topic by assigning a beat or identifying a general issue that should be explored. When you are assigned a beat, your topics will consistently be about a region of the world, such as Africa, Mexico, or Beijing, or a facet of society, such as education in Canada, health care in Iraq, or democracy around the world. When you are assigned a general issue, your topics will be drawn from an ongoing global occurrence, such as the financial collapse of 2008, the Maoist rebels in Nepal, or the elections in South Africa.

If the Editor-in-Chief of your publication does not help you narrow down your options for a topic by assigning a beat or identifying a general issue, you will have much more freedom in determining your topic. Even if you are assigned a beat, you are responsible for being curious and observant about your immediate environment as well as the world at large. The best articles are the result of curiosity. Your editors, while making an effort to remain knowledgeable about events and situations, maintain a global perspective and follow the larger news stories so as to be able to place the individual articles written by student journalists in the broader context.

Your editors are in a good position to judge whether your proposed topic is significant on the global scale. But this generality, while

necessary, has its drawbacks, primarily being that your editors cannot focus on individual areas and stories with the same astute eye that you can turn to a specific topic. Therefore, it is your responsibility to keep your eyes open and maintain your curiosity so that you can propose good topics to your editors.

Regardless of the influence or assistance of your editors or advisors in determining a topic for your article, the initial steps of the process are essentially the same. This section explains the series of steps that must be taken to determine a good topic and form a good basis for your article. The steps suggested in this section are abbreviated and interchangeable, so some steps might be taken all at once or at staggered times.

CHOOSE AN ISSUE

Before you settle on a topic and start working on your article, you need to be up to date on news and knowledgeable about current issues of global importance. The editors and advisors, as well as other student journalists, at your publication will probably give you some guidance on this front. In any case, you need to be familiar with the major newsmakers and other issues so that you have a base from which to work on the topic of your article.

You should start by thinking about any major occurrences in your area that you could investigate or look further into. Then, you should start reading newspapers and news magazines to get a feel for the hot issues of the day. Keep an eye out for the big stories that all the major publications are covering. For example, if the *Washington Post* in the United States, *The Economist* in the United Kingdom, and the *People's Daily* in China are all talking about the pirates in Somalia, you should consider this a hot issue.

Many hot issues go cold after a few weeks. For example, the concern over the world food crisis, which was one of the most widely read topics in 2008, has essentially dissipated in North American publications. Other hot issues, like the case of Tibet in China or the

drug wars in South America, stay hot for long periods of time because readers are consistently interested in the developments of smaller aspects of the issue. Every now and then, these issues erupt and all the major publications focus their coverage for a few weeks until the public interest subsides to its previous level.

Our publications want to address topics within the major global issues that will still be hot after going to press. This is because our publications are not frequent enough to break major stories; by the time readers have a copy of our publication in hand, other sources of news will have acquired and expressed many smaller articles with many specific facts. As a student journalist, your articles must strive to offer depth, with mostly exclusive information from interviews, and thereby provide a new perspective on topics within major issues that other publications have overlooked.

An important aspect of this process is focusing on off-the-radar stories within the larger news coverage. The authors of this handbook, for example, collaborated on an article detailing the difficulties of the health sector in Iraq during the ongoing war. While the war was clearly the focus for most mainstream publications, the medical treatment available to citizens of Iraq was largely ignored. With a couple of interviews detailing the personal stories and experiences of citizens in Iraq, the article covered the issue and provided a perspective on an otherwise unnoticed aspect of the war.

While there may be local coverage of a topic, the audience for *Dispatches International* and *The Epoch Journal* is worldwide, so topics should focus on areas that have not been covered by major international publications. This standard is the basic test applied to all proposed topics before student journalists start writing their articles. Since both *Dispatches International* and *The Epoch Journal* supply substantial publication space for each article, even if a topic is mentioned locally you will assuredly be able to supply greater depth to an international readership, which has little knowledge of the topic.

When they begin researching for an article, some student journalists like to read the news online and open up lots of articles at once, which are usually available on the websites of major publications, while others prefer to acquire a few printed copies of reputable or alternative magazines and newspapers. Whichever method you prefer, you should

strive to acquire an understanding of essentially every major issue within the region or facet of society that you will be writing about. This usually entails reading several articles from several publications about each issue.

Whenever you travel within your own country or abroad, you should read local publications so that you can see what other regional news groups are writing about. An article written by one of the authors of this handbook about revisionist history in the case of the Kamikaze pilots in Japan was inspired by a brief blurb read by the other author while he was traveling in Japan. Another article about the fragile financial structure of Dubai was inspired by a conversation with an expatriate businessman when one of the authors was traveling in the United Arab Emirates. Your eyes and ears must always be open in case a story comes to you.

You need to read articles printed by new publications and smaller publications as well. While these sources are typically less reliable, since you will be doing your own research, you do not need to focus exclusively on large and established publications. The smaller or newer newsgroups frequently have a niche in terms of the focus of their articles, and therefore may be able to offer an altogether different or new perspective on an issue. When reading stories from such publications, always keep in mind that you cannot always rely upon their information as fact, and thus you must make an effort to confirm the foundations of their stories before undertaking your own article.

In addition to remaining significant for long periods of time, the issue from which you will draw a topic for your article should also be of interest to you. You should strive to understand the nuances of the issue. If you aren't interested or aren't qualified to write about that issue, your topic will be too simple and the writing in your article will be dull. But if you are interested and have basic qualifications, your topic will be pertinent and interesting.

If you have no knowledge of finance and a limited interest in business, for example, you probably should not write an article about the reaction of Wall Street to the Obama administration's cap on executive compensation. But if you are interested in international development and have some knowledge of economic theory and entrepreneurship, you would probably be capable of writing a good article about the lack

of microfinance institutions in India. You should also keep in mind that since most of your readers will not be experts on the field of your article, you don't need to be a qualified expert yourself.

Part of your job as a student journalist is digesting information and presenting it in a format that incorporates quotes and other exclusive information from interviews. An incredibly rewarding part of writing a longer article on an overlooked issue is that by the end of your research, you will likely be the most knowledgeable person in the world on your topic. This is because you are probably the only person who has spent the time assembling the old as well as new pieces of the story and placing them in the context of world events. In the end, you must determine whether you can become sufficiently knowledgeable about a topic during the research process to make undertaking an article worthwhile.

When you propose a topic to your editors and advisors, they will inevitably ask you why the story is relevant to current events and therefore worth writing about. This is the other standard test of newsworthiness when an article is focusing on an ongoing but underreported issue. You will have to prove to your editors and advisors that the story has been overlooked by other publications or that it will become important in the foreseeable future.

If you want to write about Tibet and China, for example, simply restating the situation is not worthwhile for the reader and such a proposal will probably be rejected or ignored by your editor. But if you present information about a new series of protests, or some other situation that has changed, then even a seemingly stale topic can become timely and interesting again. As a student journalist, it is your responsibility to find timely, interesting, but nonetheless underreported issues to write about.

Overall, choosing an issue is a creative process during which you should evaluate the nature of the issues being covered by major publications around the world. You should set aside a substantial chunk of time – most likely many hours over the course of a few days – in order to determine the issue that you are interested in, qualified to write about, and that will still be significant when your article goes to press.

When you have caught up on the news and settled upon an issue, you should inform your editors and advisors of the issue that you want to write about. Upon receiving approval and commencing the process of considering potential topics within the issue that you selected, the real work will begin as you peer further into the vastness of the issue at hand and begin to understand the research required to craft the structure of your article.

DETERMINE A TOPIC

Having read extensively about the ongoing global issues covered in both mainstream and alternative publications, you should have a good idea of which issues will remain hot and still be important by the time your article appears in print. After speaking to your editors about issues that your article might focus on, look over each issue again and determine two or three specific aspects of those issues that you are both interested in and qualified to write about. While previously the focus of your research was on understanding a diversity of issues, you now want to understand the complexity of specific issues and thereby identify potential topics.

You should look up more articles and reports about each issue from major media outlets, such as the British Broadcasting Corporation, *The New York Times*, Al Jazeera, *The Economist*, and the most significant dailies in your area. Be sure to read articles, press releases, and even blog posts from publications that are local to your area or specific to the issues that you are focusing on. The more preliminary research you conduct, the more likely it is that you will strike on a truly underreported issue of global significance.

As a student journalist, your aim in looking further into these issues should be twofold. First, reading extensively will help you develop a thorough understanding of the issues so that your research later on in the writing process will be strategic and efficient. Second, and more importantly, examining the focus of other media outlets and publications will reveal the focus of the global media and thereby indicate which topics within the major issues have been overlooked.

As you start selecting some topics over others, you should try to balance these goals and thereby hasten the identification of a good topic for your article.

Because your article will strive to provide factual depth and personal accounts of global issues, which are acquired through extensive research and interviews, the ideal topic for an article will have been underreported. Writing good articles about topics like these entails a trade-off that you will have to confront, because the lack of coverage by other media outlets usually means that credible facts are few and far between. This further justifies our focus on articles that are based on interviews.

Identifying underreported topics within major issues can be difficult, but a few techniques will help you recognize topics that maintain the potential to become excellent articles that are based on interviews. For example, when you are looking over every available article from a variety of publications about major global issues that you are interested in and qualified to write about, you should always read critically and take note of gaps in facts or accounts presented by other publications. If you notice that the different newspapers and websites are all forgetting to ask an important question, this void of information could become the basis of your article.

Another good technique for identifying good topics within broader issues is to consider your ability to access people and information that pertain to the topic, relative to the same ability of other publications. Your access to interviews will often be better than much larger newspapers and magazines. For example, if a student journalist lived in a region of China impacted by the earthquakes in 2008, or knew people who did at the time, they could conduct interviews and thereby obtain details about the disruption of life caused by the earthquake – something that a large publication would not be able to do. This exclusive information would justify an article on the earthquakes in China.

You should keep in mind that interviews will be the backbone of your article and that you need interviews with experts and eyewitnesses that are relevant to your topic within the broader issue. If your focus is on the Russian invasion of Georgia, you will probably not be able to write about the approach of the Russian government to the invasion because

you would be unable to gain access to high-ranking officials and would have difficulty making your story worthwhile. But if your article focused on the lives of those living in the areas impacted by the invasion, you should be able to obtain interviews, especially if you live nearby or if you are using Skype.

Overall, finding an appropriate topic within an important global issue is a time-consuming and contemplative task. You will need to read extensively and critically examine other publications to find an underreported topic that truly has the potential to become a readable and credible article that is based on interviews. Personal experience and an ability to find information and personal stories will also determine the nature of your topic. You should especially remember that as a student journalist, you must always be on the lookout for good stories, even when you are not working on an article.

When you do settle on a topic that has been ignored by other publications and media outlets, or has not been covered from the angle you wish to take, you should be sure to inform your editors and advisors. You should at this point prepare yourself for the long hours of research and writing ahead, but be sure to savor the well-earned sense of awareness and excitement about the journalistic endeavor ahead of you.

CONDUCT EFFICIENT RESEARCH

As previously mentioned, some well-known journalists have said that when you write an article, you become the world expert on that topic for at least a few weeks. This is particularly applicable to our publications, given the focus on underreported issues and emphasis on interviews. While knowledgeable individuals and experts will share with you personal experiences and other exclusive information, your knowledge of the topic covered in your article will primarily be based on thorough and comprehensive research.

When conducting research, you should keep in mind that there are three main sources of information: advocacy groups or individuals

which include charities and political action groups and possess an agenda expressed in their writing; news groups whose reliability and objectivity vary; and encyclopedias, which are mostly reliable but can be out of date or of questionable quality when they are community generated, like Wikipedia. All three of these sources are valuable in some way to student journalists, who must gather information from as many reliable sources as possible when they are preparing to write an article.

Many student journalists find a comprehensive encyclopedia to be an effective starting point, in order to get a basic background on a potential topic for their article. By doing this, you will acquire a basic but broad understanding of the issue and thereby have a greater context in which to organize the more specific information that you will find later. You should not rely upon one encyclopedia for this sort of general understanding because regardless of the quality of the institution whose information you are reading, errors do occur.

After reading through a few encyclopedia entries, you should look at news reports of the issue that you want to write about. These do not need to relate directly to the issue itself, but they can provide useful background information about related groups or events. Even straight news reports can have an undisclosed slant in the writing, and you should therefore read a number of articles from several different sources before you allow yourself to feel confident that you have received a balanced account of the issue that you want to write about.

After you have read the encyclopedia entries and news reports, you should turn your focus to advocacy material. While this source of information is the least reliable and almost always slanted to arouse the emotions of readers, it can be helpful in pointing to related issues. For instance, material from Doctors Without Border might be useful if you are writing about the genocide in Darfur, especially because the quality of the information from the Sudanese government might be particularly poor. With that said, even some high quality humanitarian groups and advocacy organizations have been known to tweak numbers and other information in their reports.

When you are confident in your research and have more or less selected a topic, you should prepare yourself for even more research. Before you start contacting people for interviews and thinking about

the structure of your article, you will need to understand every important facet of your topic, remember important dates and know the names of key individuals, understand recurring themes or historical echoes, and be able to recall the angle and focus of other media outlets and publications.

Because the task of researching a topic can be arduous, there are a few tips and tricks that have been conferred by generations of journalists unto each other. These techniques are particularly valuable to student journalists, who are now more than ever bombarded and overwhelmed with data, news, and other information. By following some essential advice, you will be able to avoid the mistakes made by your predecessors in the field of student journalism and thereby will be more efficient in understanding issues and producing credible and readable articles that are based on interviews.

The most important technique for making preliminary research efficient is to remain focused on the task at hand. For example, you should not be wondering about the opening sentence of your article while you are still trying to determine an important global issue that your article might discuss. Similarly, you should not try to make contact with people for interviews while you are only researching your topic. By staying focused on the task at hand and seeing each step through to its completion, your research will be more thorough as well as more efficient.

The same advice - to focus on the task at hand - applies just as much to all of the other steps noted in this handbook.

You should also be sure to remain focused on the issues that you are considering for your article and thereby avoid drifting across the sea of current events without a plan or purpose. Although creatively drawing connections between topics is an important part of the research process, you need to restrain yourself and make sure that your time and effort are concentrated on developing an understanding of the issues from which you will draw your topic. You still want to make sure that moments of brilliance in your analysis of research - which are so often lost - are recorded so that they may be of use when you structure and eventually write your article.

The best way to stay focused while remaining creative and

simultaneously recording important thoughts is to write down notes and other ideas as you read. Some student journalists like to research with a notepad or file cards in hand, on which they jot down important points. Others prefer to mark up printed articles with highlighters and pens, while noting the especially significant facts or ideas with stars, exclamation points, or other symbols. Regardless of the method, keeping a written record of your research is a fundamental part of the research process and will simplify accessing information and referring back to salient points, names, or questions.

Another essential technique for efficient research is following up on the notes that you make. For example, if you are writing an article about the health care system in Canada and highlight the name Tommy Douglas, when you are reading through your notes you should indeed find key facts about Tommy Douglas and decide if he is pertinent to your article. Similarly, if you put a series of stars next to a really good quote in another article, you should find out who said the quote and consider interviewing that person for your own article.

The act of marking especially good quotes and pursuing interviews with the people who said the quotes is crucial. Keeping a list of people who are knowledgeable about your topic and therefore might be worth interviewing will save valuable time later. By following up on your notes, you ensure that the effort you invested in conducting preliminary research is sustained.

Similar to taking notes throughout the research process, you also need to keep a good record of your research and keep track of where you acquired your facts. This entails keeping a working bibliography, which is very different from an academic bibliography; an academic bibliography follows a specific format, whereas a working bibliography only retains the information needed to quickly find important documents or facts. Keeping a good working bibliography is particularly important when you are working on longer articles over the course of several months.

The most efficient student journalists apply numbers to the documents that they consult and record necessary information that will help them locate the same document again, such as the author, date, title, page number, and web address. The numbers assigned to the documents correspond with information that is kept elsewhere. Such a

comprehensive working bibliography will not be printed with your article and might never see the light of day, but is nonetheless very important in the event that other people or publications challenge the facts that you present in your article.

Overall, researching an issue and eventually a topic for an article is a cyclical process that starts broad and slowly narrows down onto the most important facts and individuals. You need to keep a record of your research so that you can find important facts as you need them, and you need to keep a record of your thoughts so that you don't lose any potentially brilliant ideas. The entire process, which usually leads to an extraordinary understanding of specific aspects of important global issues, requires diligence and a commitment to thorough research.

When you are conducting research and garnering further information about the issues or topics that you have decided to write about, you should be in frequent contact with your editors and advisors. They will apply their experience to your efforts and help you focus on the most important events or individuals that you come across in your research. Although the research process never really ends, you will find yourself thinking more and reading less as you bolster your knowledge and understanding of your topic.

REFINE YOUR TOPIC

As previously noted, the topic is the foundation of every article and is therefore one of the first steps in the research process. But just as much as your research and interviews will be determined by the general topic that you decide to pursue, your topic will also shift and adjust in response to the information that you acquire by reading pertinent reports, articles, and other publications. This means that determining a topic is an ongoing effort that continues throughout the research process, as new information and ideas come to light and influence your understanding of the topic that you initially selected.

Being able to balance the demands of your original topic and the

information drawn from further research and eventually interviews is the mark of a good journalist. Keeping all of the facts and ideas in your head can be difficult, but organization and thoughtfulness can ensure that the research process is efficient. This section explains how to apply and interpret the facts that you compiled when you were researching and how to narrow the focus of your efforts so that you eventually confront the topic that your article seeks to address.

At this point, you have identified an issue of global importance and selected an underreported topic within the larger issue, or a topic which has only been reported from another angle, but holds potential for a readable and credible article based on interviews. You have developed an understanding of the broader issues at hand and are comfortable conversing about the key events and important individuals pertaining to your topic. But before you contact anybody for an interview or get ready to start writing, you will have to revisit your topic and do some fine-tuning.

Just as you looked over your list of global issues with a critical eye to decide if they held the potential to support a good topic, you now need to look over the topic that you have selected and decide if it can support a good article. This means you will need to consider many aspects of your topic and critically analyze the potential for a readable and credible article that is based on interviews. The more thorough and candid you are during this final assessment of the topic you have chosen to write about, the better your article will be when it goes to press.

You will need to ask yourself if your topic is conducive to an article that is based on interviews, if it will support a lengthy article, and if it is unique among existing articles from other publications and media outlets. All these questions and more need to be addressed by you, because your editors and advisors will likely trust your judgment on the suitability of your topic.

Many topics are interesting and hold the potential for a somewhat readable article that is based on regurgitated facts, but only carefully constructed topics can support articles that are based on interviews and other exclusive information. You need to consider your ability to contact recognized experts, credible witnesses, and notable pundits that pertain to the topic that you have selected. Before settling on your

topic, you need to be confident that you can secure interviews with at least five individuals with diverse views and from a variety of backgrounds who can provide you with exclusive and reliable information.

Short articles can be just as informative as long articles, but your articles must offer depth and breadth and therefore must be of some length. A topic is usually capable of supporting an article of ten pages or more if it has many facets that can be explored and analyzed as the article progresses. Furthermore, your topic will support a lengthy article if it can accommodate several stories based on the experiences of the people you interview, requires a brief overview of recent or past history, and has an undetermined conclusion.

For those working closely with the authors of this handbook, keep in mind that writers with *The Epoch Journal* have less time to write their articles and are expected to write shorter articles than student journalists who contribute to *Dispatches International*. Either way, the basics steps for writing a credible and readable article based on interviews are the same, and both groups of student journalists should strive to determine such a good topic that even some worthwhile quotes or information must be omitted in order to keep the article under a certain length. This mindset will help to ensure that all the material in the article itself is worthwhile and interesting.

Topics that entail controversy between the accounts of eyewitnesses and experts are especially suitable for lengthy articles. In addition to being thorough and comprehensive, the construction of debates in your articles is a valuable method for conveying an enormous amount of information while maintaining the interest of readers. Creating controversy also helps you avoid making unnecessary value judgments within your article. If your topic entails tactful, tasteful, and well-articulated controversy, your article will be interesting, as well as readable, credible, and informative.

Another important consideration when refining your topic is whether or not it will accommodate a degree of personal opinion. There is nothing wrong with being opinionated in an article, as long as your evaluation of circumstances and situations is based in fact and clearly noted as editorial content. In addition, you should avoid writing an article in which the opinion is the purpose of the article. Opinion

adds spice to an article, but cannot serve as structural support. If you are going to include editorial content, you must make a good faith effort to interview an individual with a contrasting opinion so that the reader has the opportunity to evaluate your judgments. A good topic does not need to accommodate personal opinion, but your own experiences and ideas can contribute greatly to the relevance and effectiveness of an article that is based on interviews.

Your article should always focus on the stories that are told to you by the experts and eyewitnesses that you interview. For instance, while it would be difficult to make an article about the origins of Swine Flu unique, student journalists with access to people who have contracted Swine Flu have the opportunity to write unique – as well as readable and credible – articles. With access to somebody who has lived through the experience of Swine Flu, you can write an article that offers a new perspective rather than simply regurgitating information about the virus itself.

To write a story that does not focus on the experiences of individuals who have lived through the events in the news is to reject the greatest advantage your publication has as the product of an international group of student journalists, who strive to produce credible and readable articles about underreported issues of global importance.

Giving due attention to all of these requirements when determining the topic of your article can be difficult, but after a while you will be able to quickly identify good topics while reading about important global issues. Some of these criteria will manifest themselves only after you start interviewing people. Nonetheless, every topic that you settle on must always be notably unique and underreported. You should consistently ask yourself if your topic will be fresh and interesting to your readers, and if it will be important and unique in the world of student journalism as a whole.

Overall, refining your topic to a specific and unique question is the last major step before you start constructing a framework for your article and preparing to conduct interviews with experts and eyewitnesses who can share exclusive information and stories about the topic that you want to write about. You need to ask yourself a variety of questions about the topic you have chosen and make sure that it can support a lengthy and perceptive article that will be readable, credible,

and pertinent when it finally goes to press.

You should keep your editors and advisors informed about any progress you make when you are refining your topic. They will be relying on the diligence of your research and comprehensiveness of your knowledge about the issues at hand, so you must be able to present a clear and candid case for the credibility and applicability of your article. After receiving final approval from your editors and advisors for the topic of your article, you will be ready to start creating a structure that will act as a foundation for your article.

STRUCTURE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Creating an intellectual framework for the information and ideas that you have collected throughout the research phase is the bridging act between researching and interviewing for your article. By putting your information in a logical order that can be referenced and revisited as needed throughout the next phases of the writing process, your efforts in gathering information will bear fruit. Some people would say that this step is among the most significant when writing an article, because only the best topics are ever brought to this stage.

Before you start contacting knowledgeable individuals and witnesses for your article, you will need a relatively complete structure that prioritizes key issues within your topic and identifies gaps in your own knowledge. By creating such a framework, you will know what kinds of information will eventually fit into your article. The topic of your article, and therefore the structure discussed here, will both shift and evolve as you obtain new information through interviews; nonetheless, you will find yourself referring back to this structure throughout the remainder of the writing process.

Similar to refining your topic, this step rests almost entirely on your shoulders because your editors and advisors will be relying on your own diligence and knowledge about the topic you have chosen for your article. While they will be able to help you identify important aspects of your topic by shining an objective light on the questions that hold the most potential, only you will be able to foresee how

different clusters of information fit together within your topic. By accepting that this autonomy entails responsibility and subsequently creating a comprehensive structure of your knowledge, you will gain the confidence of your editors and advisors and you will have all the ingredients at your disposal necessary for producing a credible and readable article.

What does structured knowledge look like? Some student journalists create an enormous flow-chart of the important dates, events, people, and ideas that compose the topic they have decided to write about. Others make a bullet-point outline that they can add to, take away from, and move around as they gain more information. And yet others prefer to write a few paragraphs about each of the major sections of their topic, also adding and taking away information as they conduct interviews and further research.

Whatever method you prefer, you should structure your knowledge in a manner that gives due weight to facts and information that you have gathered from other publications and media outlets. This compilation should be divided into groups and prioritized in such a way that you can recognize the points that need to be mentioned in your article and especially the points that can act as leads for further inquiry. Remember that all of your information should be properly attributed to the appropriate documents, so that you can locate the sources that you used throughout the research process, if need be.

Perhaps the most important part of the structure of your knowledge will be the empty groups, or the sections that indicate a lack of knowledge. The more information that is lacking the better, because – assuming that you were diligent and thorough in your research – a gap in the information within your structure indicates that other publications and media outlets have overlooked these points. This provides you with the opportunity to acquire that information through interviews and discussions with credible witnesses and knowledgeable individuals.

Whenever a section of the structure that you have built with your research indicates a lack of information, you should think of a question that accurately reflects the deficit of knowledge. Make a note about the potential for this question within your article and think about how this information would relate to other aspects of your topic.

The questions that you come up with should be detailed and comprehensive, so that you are equally aware of the information that you lack and know exactly what information you need to acquire through interviews.

For example, if you are focusing on the topic of how the civil war in Sri Lanka has affected wealthy citizens and you realize that there is no information about looting in the war zone, you should write in a question about how conflict between classes has been indicated by theft. You should then look for information about this topic within the publications of other media outlets; if nothing turns up after looking into many different sources, you can assume that this is a question that has not been addressed and prepare yourself for a pursuit of information and stories about this overlooked subject.

After you have created a structure for your research and identified the gaps in your own knowledge, you should think about what your article might look like in terms of style and tone as you gain further information through interviews. This entails considering the angle of your article and your ultimate goal in producing a readable and credible piece of writing.

Including your own opinion in your article is helpful as you are probably better informed than the reader on the topic of your article and therefore capable of making a judgment on aspects of your topic. But the presentation of your own opinion should be conservatively regulated. If you believe that your opinion is the logical conclusion of your article, you should try to include quotes or other information that is consistent with your own ideas. This technique allows readers to form conclusions based on information that you present, and allows you to maintain your status as an objective student journalist.

You do not need to formally document the anticipated angle of your article, since your ideas and intentions might change significantly throughout the interviewing and writing processes. But you should have an idea of where your research is leading, so that you can strategically secure interviews and draft questions that reflect your intentions as a writer. Your editors and advisors will be better able to help you if they are familiar with your goals for the article.

Overall, structuring your knowledge is a difficult but necessary

bridging act between researching and preparing for interviews. You should try to anticipate the future form of your article as it relates to the topic that you have selected, and you should pay particular attention to gaps in information. The more effort you put into structuring the information that you have gained throughout the research phase, the more effective and efficient your interviews will be and as a result your article will benefit.

When you have created a structure for your article, you should review it with your editors and advisors so that they can help you determine a final focus for your article and identify good interview opportunities. Although you should have prepared your own list of questions, potential interviewees and additional research points, your editors will also be able to help you draft questions both for interviews and for further research. Upon receiving approval from your editors and advisors and completing the research phase of the overall article writing process, you will be ready to start conducting the interviews that will define your article as a credible, readable, and unique example of student journalism.

CONCLUSION

Every great article is dependent upon the firm foundation of research. While researching is frequently tedious, without the information gleaned from this effort you cannot write a good article. In addition, every article is dependent upon a good topic in order to reach its maximum potential in terms of readability and credibility within the field of student journalism. Thus, in spite of the less than glamorous nature of research, it is not to be taken lightly.

Student journalism, like professional journalism, relies on a few basic principles. The best student journalists are first and foremost hard working, but also quite lucky. A writer has to be fortunate in terms of finding the best possible contacts for interviews and finding a story at a moment of great change, but the odds of such a discovery are greatly improved if you are always on the job. Researching therefore helps you find the topics that are most likely to yield great stories. The

work of Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein for *The Washington Post* on the Watergate scandal in the early 1970s is a testament to the need for both hard work and luck.

Your research will also put you in a position to make the most of your interviews by asking better questions, and it will help you more effectively understand the significance of your interview after it has been conducted. At the risk of dwelling on the downside of not being diligent throughout the research process, it is worth mentioning yet again that if you fail to conduct proper and well-organized research, your articles will never be good, no matter how hard you try to compensate in other areas.

In conclusion, you should always appreciate the necessity of researching topics for potential articles about underreported issues of global significance before trying to conduct interviews or write the article itself. Researching in accordance with the recommendations and guidelines laid out in this section will ensure that you are effective and efficient as a student journalist when you interview experts and eyewitnesses and eventually start writing credible and readable articles that are based on interviews.

STEP #2: INTERVIEWING

Every interview needs to be somewhat adversarial, which doesn't mean you need to attack the person, but you just need to look at it like you're trying to get information that has not been written about before. If you're doing an interview, you need to have conversational tension.

Chuck Klosterman

Everybody who has seen something significant has a story to tell, and people in positions of influence always know some facts that are either kept hidden or are merely overlooked by the world at large. The only way for student journalists to access the stories of eyewitnesses and attain the exclusive information that makes an article both credible and readable is to conduct interviews.

In a nutshell, our publications are seeking to produce credible and readable articles about understudied or differently studied global issues. The topic that you select will ensure that your efforts are directed towards an issue or angle that has been overlooked by other media outlets. Your writing style will consistently improve as you get more experience until your articles are highly readable. This means that the only outstanding general requirement for your article – credibility – depends on your efforts to conduct good interviews and write about them.

Some people truly enjoy conducting interviews and are excited at the prospect of obtaining exclusive information from people they would never otherwise talk to. Others detest having to conduct interviews and find the process exhausting and nerve-wracking. Often student journalists start out disliking interviews, but over time develop an affinity for conducting interviews as they gain more skill, develop their own style, and recognize the value of the information obtained through conversations with experts and eyewitnesses.

Since you will have to conduct interviews for every article regardless

of whether or not you enjoy the interview process, this section explains the importance of interviews and describes the steps for conducting an interview in a professional manner. As with almost everything else in this handbook, you will improve your skills through trial and error as well as by observing colleagues and mentors who have more experience.

You will recognize the importance of interviews when you read groundbreaking books or feature articles from well-known writers and publications around the world. The exclusive information acquired through interviews lends a great degree of credibility to your articles. By speaking with eyewitnesses and experts, you will have access to stories, concepts, and facts that other publications either ignore or are ignorant of. The thoughtful presentation of such exclusive information indicates to a reader that you are both diligent and thorough in your efforts to write about the underreported aspects of important global issues.

Interviews also provide a plethora of material that makes an article more readable. For example, an article can more effectively and interestingly explain a humanitarian crisis by quoting a story from someone who has suffered hardship instead of simply offering a number of facts about the number of people killed or displaced. Human interest gives depth and meaning to simple facts. Similarly, a complex theory about economic development or political maneuvering can be more efficiently and passionately conveyed by a quote from an expert than by a rigid definition drawn from a manifesto or formal report.

The importance of interviews in readable and credible articles can also be understood through an analogy that compares a good article to a healthy human body. If the topic that you end up choosing acts as the skeleton of your article, the interviews that you conduct will be the muscle and organs. This indicates that the more thorough and robust your efforts to conduct good interviews, the stronger and more credible your article will become.

Some inexperienced student journalists think that good research and a comprehensive survey of existing publications can compensate for a lack of interviews when writing an article about significant global issues. To return to our analogy, the facts and ideas that you uncover

by reading previously published pieces will only act as the skin of a good article. Like skin, these facts are an important part of any article because they protect and substantiate the claims and stories from interviews that act as the organs and muscle of your article. But nobody should ever think that proven facts – no matter how obscure or groundbreaking – can ever adequately substitute for interviews.

If you don't take the time to select your interviewees with care and purpose, you will eventually conduct useless interviews and even miss the opportunity to conduct interviews with significant individuals. Although your article will not directly suffer from uninformative or frivolous interviews, the consequences of conducting a useless interview is at least wasted time and a missed opportunity.

The more dire consequence of not being diligent when deciding whom to interview is overlooking a key individual or organization that has something significant to say. This will affect the quality of your article and will be regarded as a weakness on your part as a student journalist by your readers, editors, and fellow writers. As a result, if your article has too few interviews when you submit it to your editors, it will not be published.

This section explains the steps that you must take to determine whom to interview, acquire their contact information, and finally to ensure that your interviews are useful to your article and produce exclusive information that would otherwise be unavailable. By following these steps, your articles will be all the more credible and readable, and over time you will develop a valuable network of contacts from which to draw on in the future.

DECIDE WHOM TO INTERVIEW

Everybody has a story and everybody can tell you something interesting. But good articles that are readable and credible require unique stories and exclusive facts that have not been reported by other media outlets. Just as you must commit a significant amount of energy and time to studying ongoing global issues and determining an

appropriate topic for your article, you must also be thoughtful and diligent when deciding whom to interview.

By pursuing interviews with the most knowledgeable and credible people, you will have a healthy balance of exclusive information and stories on hand when you start writing your article. Even the most diligent student journalists occasionally conduct a useless interview by no fault of their own, but this is something that can usually be avoided through good research and careful preparation.

The best technique for ensuring that your interviews will be useful and comprehensive is to keep a list of names and contact information, which you frequently update, as you conduct your preliminary and detailed research. The names and organizations of anybody that might contribute to your article should be noted, along with their contact information if you already have it. This list should be readily accessible and updated frequently.

When you have a relatively comprehensive list of names and you are more or less finished researching, you should consider what angle and style your article will take. Some articles maintain the interest of the reader by offering the contradicting ideas and claims of different experts and eyewitnesses. Other articles try to support or negate a general concept by quoting those in agreement or disagreement. You will want plenty of different interviews, whatever the angle or style your article might take.

Different topics and styles also require different kinds of interviews. For example, if you are writing about the reaction of the general public to the outcome of a local election then you will need to talk to eyewitnesses, like politicians and citizens who saw the events unfold. On the other hand, if you are writing about the outcome of a summit of world leaders, you will need to talk to experts, like analysts and academics who closely followed the events. And if you are writing about an ongoing global development issue, you will need to speak with advocacy groups and agencies that can provide statistics as well as stories about their experiences on the ground. In most cases, you want to talk to as many different kinds of people as possible.

Regardless of your topic, it is always important to keep in mind that your articles should put a human face on the larger issue at hand.

Even if your topic focuses on issues such as a global economic downturn, you should ensure that you interview at least a few individuals suffering directly from the downturn, as well as a few experts and economists. This allows the reader to grasp the significance and real effects of the downturn and therefore draws them more deeply into the article.

In every article that is based on interviews, there must be a healthy mix of perspectives and opinions. The people being interviewed should come from a variety of backgrounds and you should have a combination of eyewitnesses, recognized experts, and opinionated advocates. The interviews should also express different ideas about the topics, so that the quotes remain interesting and are not repetitive. Conducting interviews with so many different kinds of people can be difficult but creative methods will allow you to acquire a good range of stories and facts from your contacts.

A good starting point for deciding whom to interview is to think about your own social network of friends, colleagues, mentors, and other contacts. If you already know people in your area that have witnessed or experienced something pertaining to your article, you should probably consider interviewing them. Indeed, they might be able to provide a perspective that other publications have overlooked. Sometimes the best quotes and contacts come from people you already know. However, quoting a relative looks highly unprofessional, and should be avoided. At the very least discussing the issue with a previous acquaintance can improve your knowledge of an issue. You must also be diligent in reaching beyond your existing network to acquire additional interviews.

People in positions of authority can be difficult to contact, but an established or indirect personal relationship can help you land an interview with an influential individual. Although it is important to be tactful and respectful about securing people for interviews, you should think about the important individuals that exist within your extended social network. Everybody has a story and many of the people in your own social network might be able to make a significant contribution to your article and many individuals enjoy being interviewed.

You should not assume that the experts and eyewitnesses that you

want to interview are unwilling talk to you. Although famous people seem out of reach, it is always worth the time to try to land an interview even with well-recognized figures. For example, a student journalist with *The Epoch Journal*, who had never even conducted an interview in any context, was able to get an interview with the renowned writer and thinker Noam Chomsky in 2006 by simply emailing his secretary.

An article cannot be based only on interviews with people you already know, so after you have evaluated the potential for interviewees within your own social network, you should look into organizations and institutions that pertain to the topic of your article. Many non-profits, educational groups, and think-tanks are eager to share their ideas and opinions with the public at large and will therefore probably accommodate your request for an interview. These kinds of organizations and institutions are often useful for getting quotes about policies and broad situations, although they frequently lack on-the-ground expertise. Many institutions also keep lists of informed individuals who are readily available for interviews about their area of expertise.

Similar to educational groups and institutions, you can also find experts on specific issues by searching for scholarly articles and reports in comprehensive databases on the Internet. Many articles will name recognized authorities on subjects, and the authors of the articles are also often quite knowledgeable themselves. The benefit of interviewing writers and academics is that they are typically candid about their opinions and eager to refer you to their colleagues and partners, which can help you secure further interviews.

Perhaps the most important kind of interview will be random and unanticipated discussions with people you bump into over the course of your work as a student journalist. If you are writing about an issue that is local to your area or region, you need to go to that place and talk to whomever you can. Whether these interviews are official or relaxed is irrelevant, because the people you consult will often be able to tell you things the experts – who are frequently far-removed from the issues themselves – would be utterly ignorant of.

The modern-day equivalent of visiting the scene of an issue to interview local people is approaching random people through the

Internet. The frequent and diligent use of Skype and other communications devices will enable you to contact people that you have never heard of and will probably never meet, but who nonetheless have important stories and ideas that are worth reporting.

You should not rely on the Internet to consistently produce useful or credible interviews, but you should pursue at least a few contacts on the Internet. A supplementary section in the latter part of this handbook explains how to use Skype. You should keep in mind that face-to-face interviews are usually far more informative, as you can read subtle cues in body language to improve your questions or make observations which reveal a character to the reader.

Overall, identifying the people you want to interview is necessary to ensure that you conduct an adequate number of credible and useful interviews with a variety of individuals. You should never sell yourself short and you should maintain an ambitious attitude about contacting people, but you must also be realistic about the people that you want to interview.

Assume that you will not be able to get the difficult interviews and ask yourself; can the story still be supported? If not, you should reconsider your approach to the topic. Either way, you should still make the effort to obtain interviews regardless of the profile of the interviewee, as you will be surprised at the frequency with which you succeed.

By thinking long and hard about the people you want to interview, you will eventually have a healthy balance of exclusive information and stories on hand when you start writing your article.

When you have developed the list of people that you want to interview, you should ask yourself about the balance of perspectives represented by the list and the credibility of the individuals. This list should be regarded as a working model and should be constantly updated as you learn about more knowledgeable and credible individuals. When you have identified the people you want to interview and discussed this list of individuals with your editors and advisors, you will be ready to contact your interviewees.

CONTACT YOUR INTERVIEWEES

Contacting the people that you want to interview is an art that requires an enormous amount of effort, resilience, and creativity on the part of the student journalist. Acquiring contact information is often a difficult process in itself, and is therefore explained in a supplementary section in the latter part of this handbook. There are no shortcuts to getting in touch with credible and knowledgeable experts and eyewitnesses, but a few practical techniques can be employed to help you secure interviews with a variety of people. In every case, you will have to be professional yet ambitious to convince people that they should talk to you.

Although it is a good idea to cast a wide net and contact more people than you need for your article, it is also prudent to avoid wasting time setting up interviews with people who have nothing to say. You must use your discretion to decide if somebody is really worth contacting and interviewing because some interviews will be a waste of time. As a student journalist you should always err on the side of caution and conduct a useless interview rather than risk missing an opportunity to have a conversation with a credible and knowledgeable eyewitness or expert. Sometimes, much to your surprise, an unlikely interviewee might provide a key piece of information, a fresh perspective, or a most valuable story.

In general, it is a fair assumption that for every five people you contact, you will be able to get one interview. Because this is the nature of student journalism, you must set out to contact far more people than you will actually need for your article. At the same time it is not worth the additional effort just for the sake of saying that you contacted a certain number of people. You should contact as many people as you think might be worthwhile, and if there is any uncertainty as to the helpfulness of an interview, conduct it anyway as you can always throw away the results later. A missed opportunity, on the other hand, will be a missed opportunity forever.

There are many different kinds of interviews and each type requires a different method for contacting people. In some cases you will have to use the telephone, while in many cases you will try to arrange for a

face-to-face discussion, but in others situations email will suffice for an entire interview. Sometimes you will not even bother contacting people before interviewing them, but other people will need to be contacted weeks ahead of time to make a formal appointment. This section applies to the latter, who are either recognized experts or simply individuals who make themselves known to the world at large as credible eyewitnesses and experts about the issues relating to your topic.

Before discussing the methods for contacting well-known eyewitnesses and experts, it is worth explaining how to approach local people and eyewitnesses who have been overlooked by other publications. You will need to get over your nerves and any sensitivity to awkwardness in order to ensure that the people that you interview are comfortable and at ease throughout your discussions with them. Without being redundant or rigid in your speech, you will have to develop a style for drawing information out of local people through candid conversations. Genuine interest and curiosity combined with simple good manners help to draw people out during interviews.

You will also have to use your discretion to decide how to present yourself to people you interview, but in every situation you should be friendly, professional, and exhibit great interest in hearing the stories and facts about the issues that pertain to your article. As a student journalist, you should always encourage the people you meet to speak freely by asking plenty of questions, being sympathetic to their woes, showing interest in their stories, and displaying at least some concern for their well being.

Approaching local people as a journalist can sometimes scare them away, especially if the issues that you want to raise are politically or socially sensitive. But in other cases, local people and especially politicians or officials will be more willing to confide in journalists than random individuals. There is no need to ask people if you can quote them in advance, but you should inform them about your status as a journalist. If you ask to “interview” or “quote” some people, especially eyewitnesses, in advance you may scare them. But before you end the interview, you must ask for permission to quote them. This can take a little convincing, but most people, if you’ve been respectful, will give you permission.

If somebody is reluctant to allow you to quote them, you can offer to protect their identity by using their information anonymously. If somebody wants to be quoted anonymously, you must still provide the name and occupation of the person to your editors. This protects both the identity of the individual and the integrity of the publication. A quote is always stronger if it comes from a named source and is considered more believable by a reader. As such you should always do whatever possible to convince your interviewee that they should consent to having their name assigned to quotes.

Whereas most of the techniques and methods noted here can be applied to interviews conducted with random people through Skype and other programs on the Internet, it is almost always a good idea to inform people that you interview on the Internet that you are a student journalist. By sending simple but thorough messages to dozens of people in chat rooms and requesting some of their thoughts or experiences, you can acquire an enormous amount of information and some personal stories in a relatively fast manner. Contacting people on the Internet and especially through Skype can also be an important part of developing your personal network of contacts. One of the authors of this handbook, for example, still frequently uses a contact in Syria that he originally reached through Skype for an article that he wrote in 2004.

If you do contact someone through the internet including Skype, both publications require that you speak to the person using either a traditional phone or internet phone software at least once before submitting your article. This helps to verify that the person is who they say they are. If they claim to be from Senegal, but have an Australian accent, you would only notice this discrepancy through a call.

It is important, if possible, to keep in touch with the individuals you interview after you have finished interviewing them and even after your article has gone to print. If you presented yourself as a respectful and thoughtful student journalist during the interview, many interviewees will be able to tip you off to stories at later dates and can therefore be useful to you for many years.

Apart from the random people that you approach for a conversational interview when you are investigating an issue on the ground or on the

Internet, most interviews will have to be arranged ahead of time. When you have the contact information of knowledgeable individuals on hand, it is relatively easy to set up an interview. A telephone call is the most effective way to persuade somebody to talk to you, but emails can be more efficient and more appropriate in cases where you want to develop your reputation with the potential interviewee before asking them to commit to an interview.

You should introduce yourself to potential interviewees as a journalist for your publication, such as *Dispatches International* or *The Epoch Journal*. Most people will automatically assume that you are working for a large publication and therefore will not admit that they haven't heard of your publication before. This works to your advantage because the interviewee will give you extra attention. In one instance, *The Epoch Journal* had only existed for a few months, the authors of this handbook interviewed an officer in the United States Army, who claimed that he had been reading *The Epoch Journal* for years. If the interviewee asks if you are a student, you should confirm that you are a student journalist, and seize the opportunity to explain that your publication emphasizes interviews as a means for shining light on underreported issues of global importance.

Whether you set up an interview by email or telephone, the messages that you should convey are essentially the same. You should always be professional. A typical email or telephone call requesting an interview should explain the general topic of your article. Good manners, tact and finesse are valuable when you are setting up an interview, because in a relatively short period of time you need to make the potential interviewee trust you and believe that talking to you will in some way serve their agenda as well as yours.

Several techniques are especially helpful for landing interviews with recognized experts. The tasteful use of flattery, such as telling people that their perspective is important and necessary for you to understand the issue that your article focuses on, can help convince potential interviewees that their time will be valued and useful to the production of your article. It is also particularly strategic to approach knowledgeable individuals and especially academic experts by asking for help with understanding the topic of your article. Professors are by definition teachers, and if you tell them that you are a student they are more likely to agree to an interview. For most others, the fact that

you are a student will decrease their interest in an interview, and as such you should only reveal this fact if asked directly. Telling a potential interviewee that you are a journalist working for *Dispatches International* is the safe approach. Some student journalists find that experts and eyewitnesses are more responsive to requests for interviews when they emphasize that their publications discuss important issues that have been overlooked by the so-called mainstream media.

Persistence is essential for student journalists to secure interviews with well-known experts and eyewitnesses. More often than not, the people you call or email will not initially respond to your request for an interview. And if they do respond, the potential interviewees often express some reluctance to speak with journalists. Convincing them of your sincerity can take months or even years, but eventually your efforts will be rewarded with a superb interview that endows you with exclusive information and stories that other publications will envy. The authors of this handbook, for example, worked for months and in two cases over a year to secure interviewees with radical environmentalists who were in jail and therefore unwilling to speak with the average journalist.

If someone refuses to grant you an interview, and you are unable to convince him or her to speak with you, ask them if they can refer you to a colleague who they think would be willing to speak to a student journalist. References can be tremendously helpful in obtaining good interviews, and regardless of what kind of interviewee you are talking to, you should always ask if there is someone else they recommend for an interview.

Overall, contacting people for interviews requires patience and persistence. Whether you are contacting people on the Internet, by telephone, or in person, you will always need to be outgoing and ambitious, and you should be prepared to tactfully convince potential interviewees of the importance of their ideas and stories. Too many potential interviewees fall through the cracks of student journalism and never actually share their stories, so every chance for an interview that will warrant exclusive information and personal stories should be seized.

When you are contacting potential interviewees and setting up

interviews with recognized experts and eyewitnesses, you should update your editors and advisors. They will offer an objective perspective on the integrity and balance of the interviews that you are pursuing, and they might even be able to suggest a different approach to contacting people and provide you with other contacts. Although a good student journalist never really stops pursuing interviews, there will come a point when you decide to stop contacting people and start conducting interviews.

PREPARE FOR THE INTERVIEW

Preparing for an interview is a task that requires student journalists to be part psychologist, part analyst, and part creative writer. You will need to review the research that you have compiled about the topic of your article as well as familiarize yourself with the person that you will be interviewing. Although some student journalists think that preparing for an interview is easy relative to actually conducting the interview itself, the importance of this process must not be downplayed because good interviews are only possible through good preparation.

As soon as somebody agrees to be interviewed, you should try to secure a time and place. You must be committed to making the interview happen and try to hedge any potential obstacles to conducting the interview. This means that before a phone interview for instance, you should ask for their direct phone number, ask what time zone they live in, and confirm any other arrangements to ensure that the interview occurs on time and without any hassle.

When you are setting up the interview, you should usually ask for less time than you would ideally want. For example, if you think that you have enough good questions to conduct a two-hour interview, ask for one-and-a-half hours. And if you think you need forty-five minutes to conduct the interview, ask for thirty minutes. The ideal interview length for a feature article is about thirty minutes, but this will vary wildly depending on who you are interviewing.

Almost all interviewees will allow an interview to go over the allotted time, asking for less time than you actually want means that you will be asking good questions right up until the last minute, which conveys the favorable impression to the interviewee that the interview is indeed fascinating and will be useful to your article. For example, the authors once requested an hour with a former spokesperson of a domestic terrorist organization and managed to convince the interviewee to extend the interview for a total of six hours.

Before you conduct the interview or start drafting questions, you should research the individual that you will be interviewing. You should know where they went to school, what they studied, where they live, what political or social views they maintain, and what kinds of work they do. You should especially remind yourself of the reasons for interviewing this person. Knowing the personal history of the interviewee will allow you to make small talk before you actually start the interview, which will make the interviewee feel valued and comfortable, and also ensure that your questions are strategic.

Although conjuring up good questions is at least as hard as contacting individuals in the first place, a diverse set of questions is a necessary tool for conducting good interviews. A supplementary section in the latter part of this handbook explains how to create good interview questions. Questions should never be used as a crutch, and should only be employed by you to control the conversation that you have with the interviewee. As we have mentioned previously, you will have to be knowledgeable on the topic of your article in order to craft good questions that draw exclusive information and personal stories out of the eyewitnesses and experts that you interview.

Most student journalists divide their questions into different categories based on priority and anticipated responses. The majority of your questions will need to be asked in order to get the facts straight, some questions should be put forward to get unique quotes and perspectives, and other questions are so striking that they are only meant to be asked if an opportunity presents itself. This progression from simple inquiries about facts to profound questions about implications is often used by student journalists because it allows the interviewee to get comfortable before being confronted with probing and potentially offensive questions.

As a student journalist, you should begin with easy questions aimed at eliciting quick responses and relaxing the interviewee. You should then proceed to dig with more significant questions and save painful questions about contradictory statements or bizarre ideas until the end. By progressing with your questions in this way, if your difficult question upsets the interviewee and they terminate the interview or cease cooperating with you, at least you will have already dealt with your main questions.

Different articles will require different types of quotes, which will be acquired through different kinds of questions. If you want to pry a unique story out of the person you are interviewing, your questions will have to gently but shamelessly tug at their innate desire to be heard until they tell you what you need to know. But if you want the person you are speaking with to reiterate an opinion or quote that they expressed elsewhere, you should be prepared to give some background about the nature of your inquiry before asking for their opinion.

Always keep in mind the reason you are interviewing a person. Your questions should be focused such that the information you obtain is pertinent to your article. As such if, for example, you are interviewing an expert with little field experience, you should avoid asking questions beyond the expert's direct knowledge of activities on the ground. Making the expert guess about conditions on the ground is a waste of time and only muddies the purpose of your interview.

Just as you will not write about topics that have been covered in other publications, you should not ask questions that have been asked many times before. Your duty as a student journalist is to acquire exclusive information by asking the right people as many of the right questions as you can think of. This responsibility hearkens back to the importance of conducting thorough and diligent research, so that you can recognize gaps in knowledge and thereby craft questions that will result in unique responses.

You should think carefully about the anticipated responses of the individual that you are interviewing when you are crafting interview questions so that you are able to tactfully push certain issues or overlook unnecessary answers. Every question should naturally lead into several sub-questions, which you should also make note of while

you are interviewing and thereby be prepared to ask. A helpful rule of thumb to keep in mind when crafting interview questions is that five good questions with several sub-questions per main question will fill a thirty to forty-five minute interview.

After drafting good questions for the interview, some student journalists prefer to send their questions to the interviewee ahead of time so that they can review them and prepare answers. These student journalists argue that sending questions before the interview builds trust with the interviewee, which makes them more comfortable and more willing to speak freely. But other student journalists think this habit is detrimental to the quality of the interview, because previously prepared responses can be only marginally more candid than formal press releases. If you do decide to send your questions in advance, you should always omit the particularly challenging questions you want to ask so as to avoid scaring off the interviewee. Although your editors and advisors will be able to offer you some advice, you will have to use your own discretion when deciding whether or not to send your questions to the interviewee ahead of time.

Overall, preparing for an interview mostly entails reviewing your research and crafting questions that will warrant detailed answers that are full of exclusive information. You must be prepared for almost any response that the interviewee will offer, and have many follow-up questions ready so that you can make the most of the time that they have allotted for the interview. Whatever effort you invest in preparing for the interview and crafting good questions will be fully rewarded with exclusive information and stories that will bolster the credibility and readability of your article.

When you are prepared for the interview, you should review your questions again and make sure that they focus on issues and concepts that have been largely overlooked by other publications. You should show the questions to your editors and advisors and explain to them the approach you are taking towards the interview. Upon completing the questions and scheduling the interview, you will be ready to have an informative and well-directed conversation with an expert or eyewitness about the topic of your article.

CONDUCT THE INTERVIEW

Conducting an interview is an artistic endeavor that is crucial to writing your article. If you do not mix your questions properly, you will not obtain the information needed for a valuable article. The process of interviewing can be incredibly nerve-wracking for some. Few student journalists are perfectly comfortable when conducting their first interviews, but most quickly become accustomed to the process. Even a few months without conducting an interview can cause an experienced student journalist to experience nervousness when returning to interviewing. But if you are prepared and carefully follow a couple of basic rules, you can overcome this nervousness to obtain an excellent interview.

About an hour or so before the interview is scheduled to begin, you should check your equipment and prepare yourself mentally for the interview. Find a couple of pens and some paper, and test your recorder if you are keeping an audio record of the interview. You should also make sure that you have a quiet place to conduct the interview if you are calling them, and if you are meeting somebody in person then be sure to have money to offer to buy them a coffee or some other beverage.

Taking care of the little details and logistics will allow you to have a few quiet moments before the interview to review your notes and get into a journalistic state of mind. You should practice introducing yourself, and have a plan for making small talk with the interviewee before you start asking questions. Having anticipated the responses of the person being interviewed when you crafted your questions, you should also take a moment before the interview to think about how you will transition from small talk into asking questions and responding to unanticipated responses.

When you meet the interviewee, you should introduce yourself. If the interview is being conducted over the telephone, you should also politely remind the interviewee that you had mutually agreed to conduct an interview at that time. Unless the interviewee indicates a desire to start the interview immediately, the first few minutes should be mostly polite small talk. You can ask them about their current

projects, their families, or their plans for the next weekend or holiday season. The point is to make them feel comfortable with the prospect of having a conversation with you.

When you are ready to start the interview itself, you should lay out the conditions of the interview. For example, if you are using a tape recorder you should ask them if they mind if you record the conversation, and mention that you would be happy to provide them with a copy of the tape. Some student journalists also like to offer the interviewee the opportunity to read the article for factual and quotation correctness before it goes to print at the beginning of the interview, because it makes the interviewee more relaxed and willing to speak freely.

Your first question should be preceded by some background information about the topic of your article. When the interviewee responds to your questions throughout the interview, you will have to make fast decisions about whether to pursue something that was mentioned or to simply move onto your next major question. The best quotes and stories usually come from interviews by student journalists who let the interviewee lead them to topics of great personal interest, which they naturally want to talk about.

If you want to move on to your next question but also want to return to something that the interviewee mentioned, you should make a note and at the end of the interview raise the point again in the form of an easily understood question. On the other hand, if you want to buy yourself a few moments to make a note about an unanticipated response before asking another question, you should ask a simple but seemingly important question about dates, locations, or names. Situations like these really emphasize the importance of having materials for taking notes readily available during an interview.

Tremendously important to a good interview is a willingness to veer from your initial questions. Student journalists who insist upon following their questions without following the train of thought of the interviewee and without asking important follow-up questions rarely acquire good quotations. You should remember that you can always come back to your questions, and that an interview is a type of guided conversation, rather than an interrogation. As a student journalist, you need to respond to what the interviewee says, rather than go through

your list of questions like a robot.

Everybody has their own style when interviewing experts and eyewitnesses. Some student journalists try to appear objective, rational, and curious about uncovering new information, while others openly admit their opinions about the topic that their article is focused on. Regardless of your style, every interview should focus on making the interviewee comfortable and candid, however much the actual techniques and attitudes differ between student journalists.

Without sounding perverted or appearing masochistic, you should try to play on the emotions of the interviewee as much as possible. People tend to reveal more about their situations or opinions when they are angry, frustrated, or simply excited. This is to your advantage as it may well lead to a valuable comment. If you can arouse these emotions by telling a brief personal story or comparing their response to something that another interviewee said, you will probably be inundated with a heated response. But no matter what emotions you arouse in the interviewee, you must remain calm, rational, and in control of the tone and direction of the interview.

Just as much as you should not submit to your own emotions during the interview, you should also develop immunity to awkwardness. Uncomfortable silences are a boon for student journalists because interviewees – like most people – detest awkward pauses in conversations and lurch to fill any pauses with the first thing that comes to their mind. This tendency is even evident in everyday conversation; if you are having a conversation with somebody and you let the conversation stop for a moment, the person you are speaking to will often say something they have been guarding just to fill the silence. A few awkward silences should be construed as a good opportunity – and your pen should be ready to capture the comment that eventually fills the gap.

Some student journalists use a four count rule, where they will count to five every time the interviewee stops speaking before asking another question. You should only employ this technique when you think the interviewee might actually have something else to say, because if you wait for five seconds after every factual response you will probably be regarded as slow or obtuse.

Accommodating awkward moments in interviews must be accompanied by other efforts to be conversational and thereby make the interviewee comfortable. For example, if the interviewee says something funny then you should laugh, and if they say something sad then you should express concern. Although you must avoid becoming emotional yourself during the interview, you also want to appear human so that the interviewee is more comfortable with the prospect of sharing their thoughts and stories with you.

Although you should attempt to allow the interviewee to speak his or her piece, if an interviewee is veering wildly off-topic towards an area unrelated to your article, you need to steer them to the topic you wish to discuss. There are a couple of techniques you can employ to achieve this without having to blatantly interrupt the interviewee. The easiest is simply to say that you want to go back a few moments to make sure you understood something and ask a simple question that pertains to the topic that you want to discuss. Once you have returned the interviewee to the right area of conversation, you can ask your real question and continue the interview. As a student journalist, you have to walk a careful line between allowing the interviewee to add side details which might be valuable, and allowing yourself to be taken on a ride in a direction you have no interest in.

An important point to keep in mind throughout the interview is that regardless of how friendly or personal the conversation becomes, you are speaking to the interviewee in order to get exclusive information and stories. This means that you have a responsibility to ask difficult or even upsetting questions if the response of the interviewee will contribute to your article. As we mentioned before, such tense questions are usually best left to the end of the interview. The justification for asking potentially upsetting questions is that the temporary hurt felt by the interviewee is trumped by the fact that your article will shed much-needed light on an understudied global issue of importance.

The relationship between you and the interviewee should be polite and seemingly friendly but ultimately professional. That is to say, you are not looking to make a friend or a personal contact for your own advancement in the world. Under no circumstances should you ever ask favors of interviewees beyond the scope of the article that you are writing. Generally speaking, when an interviewee becomes a friend,

your credibility is diminished.

You should never hesitate when you are unsure about an unclear statement made by the interviewee. Even if the interviewee makes the detail sound obvious, if you are unsure about the facts then you should always ask for clarification. Although you might initially find this embarrassing, the fact that you are a journalist means that most interviewees will not assume that you are an idiot for asking a simple question. If you are talking to an expert, you can always phrase the question with an apology since it is widely known that you are not an expert in the field. Interviewees are often accustomed to talking to beat reporters or others who neither have expertise nor interest in their topic of their articles, and therefore your interest puts you far ahead of normal journalists.

If you have earned the trust of the people you are interviewing, they will often be candid in their conversations and generous with their time. In order to ensure that every avenue for potential interviews is fully explored, you should ask every person you interview if they could suggest some other people that you should contact. Sometimes you will get lucky and the interviewee will introduce you to a variety of other valuable contacts. Remember to ask if you can use their name when you follow up with that contact for an interview. You will know that your research was thorough and effective if the interviewee suggests that you interview people that you either already interviewed or plan on interviewing.

After the interview, you should email or write to the interviewee and thank them for their time. Your note or email should tell them that you might be contacting them again to clarify a story or expand on a claim that they made. If you offered at the beginning of the interview to share your notes with them, you should also send those and mention that you would welcome their input. As the weeks go by and your article nears completion, you should keep the interviewee updated and informed about the progress you have made. This will make it easier in the future to contact them again if you need help finding contacts for another article.

Overall, every interview that you conduct as a student journalist should be relatively fun and enlightening, but professional and rational. The information gained through interviews will act as the

foundation of your article, so you should prepare extensively for every interview and have a solid grasp of the questions you want to ask and concepts that you want to discuss. As we have repeatedly mentioned throughout this handbook, everybody has a story and it is your job as a student journalist to draw those stories out and reproduce them in an organized manner in a credible and readable article.

When you have conducted a few interviews for your article, you should read through them with an eye to the questions that have not been answered and the issues that remain unresolved. Wherever there is a blank spot or imbalance in the exclusive information that you have gathered through interviews, you should consider contacting another potential interviewee or getting back in touch with somebody that you already interviewed. As the most important ingredient to every readable and credible article, conducting interviews is among the most difficult yet rewarding aspects of the article-writing process.

USE THE INTERVIEW

Using interviews in credible and readable documents is a privilege that many student journalists, who overlook the value of the exclusive information and stories gained through interviews, are never able to experience. Not only do quotations shed light on untouched stories, but they also add a human element to your article and therefore increase the interest of almost any reader. It is with this in mind that you will select quotations for use in your article.

Over the months and years that you work as a student journalist, you will conduct many dozens of interviews with diverse people. Keeping clear records of interviews, therefore, is an essential task that will ensure that you can recall past conversations with knowledgeable experts and eyewitnesses. Most student journalists who record interviews transcribe their entire interviews so that they have a text copy to use when they are writing their article. If only hand notes were taken they should be typed up for reference and convenient insertion into a document. You should make sure that the transcripts of your interviews are filed in such a way that you can easily make

note of the name of the interviewee, their organization, the topic of the article you were writing at the time, and the date that the interview was conducted.

Good records of past interviews are also essential for maintaining your credibility as a writer. If your notes and recordings of past interviews become jumbled and disorganized, it will be difficult for you to verify the accuracy of quotes. This is especially true in the event that somebody disputes something that you have quoted him or her as saying. Although such situations are often avoided by clearing transcripts and notes with interviewees before publishing articles, good records of past interviews are an effective last resort when your credibility is challenged.

Another essential task in regards to interviews for maintaining your credibility as a student journalist is to make note of observations and clarify quotes immediately after you finish conducting interviews. Whether you are conducting an interview by telephone or in person, you should review the quotes that you wrote down during the interview and check them for accuracy. If you recorded the interview, you should transcribe the recording as soon as possible. In most cases, your editors and advisors will ask for a copy of the transcript or your notes to keep in records of your publication.

Reviewing your notes or the recording of an interview provides you with an opportunity to delicately improve the quotes that you will use in your article. Your freedom in this respect is very limited, and you should only make small changes to quotes where they are absolutely necessary. For example, if the interviewee says something in an awkward way with phrasing that could be improved by changing a few simple words, such as replacing a plural with a singular, you can change those words without jeopardizing the integrity of the article. Under no circumstances should you change more than a few words per quote.

The need to be respectful of the original form of quotes cannot be overemphasized, and is dealt with at length in a supplementary section in the latter part of this handbook. The context of a quote should never be altered and the intended meaning of a statement should never be misconstrued when you are selecting quotes from an interview. By making only small changes when necessary and keeping

quotes as true to their original form as possible, you will establish and maintain your credibility as a student journalist.

Interviews need to be reviewed countless times before you actually start writing your article, not least of all because reviewing your notes and transcripts will allow you to learn about your own interview style. Many student journalists find it useful to listen to recordings of their past interviews, so that they can hear themselves asking questions and conversing with interviewees. This will allow you to improve your interview style over time, so that you will eventually be able to make interviewees comfortable and candid and thereby acquire exclusive information and stories.

After you have read through your notes and transcripts of all the interviews you conduct for an article, you should start thinking about how the best quotes from each interview will relate to each other within the article itself. You should make note of every quote that you think might be useful in your article, because too many excellent quotes from interviews with experts and eyewitnesses are forgotten or overlooked and therefore unused in articles by student journalists.

You should try to be aware of any controversy or discrepancy between the accounts of eyewitnesses and experts that are included in your interviews. If you conduct five interviews with five different people and they all express vastly different opinions about a similar issue, you will be able to structure your article in such a way to emphasize the lack of agreement between interviewees. Although you should not necessarily commit yourself to a structure for the article quite yet, you should try to identify particularly animated quotes from each interviewee, and especially themes that are evident between the interviews.

Reading through your notes and transcripts of interviews will also indicate where you need to approach an interviewee again to ask for a second interview. Most articles are relatively short and feature enough quotes from different interviews that a single conversation will be enough. But lengthier pieces that offer exclusive information might require several interviews with the same individual, or at least a few emails or notes with follow-up questions to ensure that facts and theories are eventually accurately represented in your article.

Identifying themes between interviewees will help you decide if you need to approach an interviewee again to ask follow-up questions. For example, if two interviews are full of animated quotes about a single issue and another interview barely mentions that issue, you should probably ask the interviewee from the latter interview if they have any further thoughts or ideas about that issue. You might even mention to the interviewee what the other people that you interviewed stated, so that you get a point of view on another perspective.

You should never hesitate, after reading through your notes and transcripts of interviews, to ask the interviewee to answer a few follow-up questions or verify a statement. Your follow-up questions should be relatively simple and to-the-point, although in some cases you might consider asking for a more detailed answer to a general question. Maintaining a good relationship with past interviewees is especially important if you need them to act as an ongoing resource for facts and follow-up questions.

Overall keeping careful track of your notes and following-up with your interviewee can assure that the quotes from an interview are most effectively utilized in your article. As a student journalist, you need to be thorough with your consultation of interviews and respectful of the context and intended meaning of quotes. By following the steps that are noted here, your article will harness the emotional and factual value of quotes that you acquire through interviews with eyewitnesses and experts from around the world.

When you have finished conducting interviews and have organized your notes and transcripts of interviews, you should send all the available information acquired through interviews to your editors. While you keep the interviewees updated about the status of your article, you should also prepare to write your article by reflecting on the major themes and concepts that defined your research and interviews.

CONCLUSION

The process of interviewing is that of a carefully orchestrated conversation. You have to keep your objectives as a student journalist in mind, while pushing the conversation in the appropriate direction by asking good questions. But you should also frequently remind yourself that you should be conversing with, and never simply interrogating the interviewee. In this way, you will be able to acquire the personal stories and other opinions that will ultimately allow you to make your article both readable and informative.

Although interviewing can be a nerve-wracking process at first for some student journalists, conducting interviews can also be absolutely exhilarating. As a student journalist conducting interviews with eyewitnesses and experts, you are essentially acquiring exclusive information that has not been reported by major media outlets or even contemplated by the general public.

With four or five good interviews, you can gain access to a world of information that is otherwise obscured by mountains of data and facts, which clutter the Internet and libraries. The abundance of interviewees in articles defines both *The Epoch Journal* and *Dispatches International* as publications that place a premium on exclusive information. By relying on the ideas and information acquired through interviews, you will be able to break away from the redundancy of mainstream media outlets and thereby offer a reader more than regurgitated facts.

In conclusion, as a student journalist you should always appreciate the necessity of interviewing eyewitnesses and experts before writing your articles. Interviewing in accordance with the recommendations and guidelines laid out in this section will ensure that you are effective as a student journalist and thereby acquire unique quotes that will allow your article to be both readable and credible.

STEP #3: WRITING

There is an art of reading, as well as an art of thinking, and an art of writing.

- Isaac D'Israeli

You have progressed to a point where the credibility of your article has been underwritten by thorough research and interviews with experts and eyewitnesses, but you still need to work to ensure that your article will be readable. Writing, as an artistic endeavor that requires skill and verbal dexterity, is an enjoyable process that can take many forms.

Whereas before you were attempting to discover available information and conduct interviews with eyewitnesses and experts, now you are attempting to carve out a story from the information and interviews that you have gathered. As a result, your story may look radically different when you start writing than it did when you settled on a topic. There is nothing wrong with writing a different story than you planned to write; indeed, if you have conducted good interviews, you will inevitably have to write a different story because the exclusive information acquired through interviews will change your perspective on your topic. Remaining rigid in your plans to write an article will prevent you from revealing worthwhile quotes and ideas to the reader.

Before writing any article, you must be very aware that plagiarism, or the act of portraying the work of somebody else as your own, is condemned and detested by every publication and every student journalist. If you plagiarize when you are working as a student journalist, you will be banned from your publication immediately and you will be blacklisted from other publications. Your university will probably be contacted and informed of your egregious behavior, your professional aspirations quashed, and legal action might be brought against you. The unpleasant issue of plagiarism is dealt with at length in a supplementary section in the latter part of this handbook.

Many student journalists overlook the rule that credible and readable articles must never be history lessons. If readers want a history lesson, they will read a history book; if readers want exclusive information about an underreported issue of global importance, they will read your article. This means that your articles should never appear to be just a history of the topic discussed in your article, and any historical background in your article should be clear, readable, and as concise as possible. You should also keep in mind that readers will not be as knowledgeable as you, and will therefore need dates, names, and events explained to them.

The best way to avoid being pedantic while simultaneously assisting readers with understanding historical context is to break up the presentation of historical information. Disperse significant historical facts throughout the article such that the reader does not have to struggle through a large block of history at once. This will allow you to inform the reader of necessary historical facts without the information appearing daunting or boring. While this technique is helpful, you still need to be stingy with your inclusion of historical background, because historical information is inherently unoriginal and therefore distracts readers from the quotes and exclusive information that you have worked hard to acquire.

You should also remember that writing is an art and you want to avoid an overly clinical or sterile tone in your article. The writing of an article is an opportunity to enjoy the English language by carefully selecting each descriptive word. Without relying on flowery language, you have to make your writing both readable and entertaining if you wish to convince a reader to invest a substantial period of time wading through your article.

You must also keep in mind that brevity is the key to writing a readable article. While the essential length of your article will be explained by your editors, it is never worthwhile for the reader to read a ten-page article that conveys the same information as a three-page article. You should never try to achieve an expected length by padding your writing with unnecessary facts or meaningless flowery descriptions. Even when you have the luxury of space, your writing should strive to be clean, concise, and crisp.

The balancing act of describing interesting aspects of your topic while

remaining concise is one of the hardest parts of writing your article. This section will detail the step-by-step process of writing an article, and dually emphasize the importance of being concise, but never overlook the fact that writing is an art. As a student journalist, you should strive to be both readable and credible in your writing, and therefore pay equal attention to the use of individual words as well as the style of the overall article.

ORGANIZE YOUR RESOURCES

Writing a credible and readable article is a balancing act that every student journalist must master, especially when the article is based on extensive research and interviews with experts and eyewitnesses. In order to write an interesting and thorough article that incorporates a combination of quotes and well-presented facts, you will have to organize your interviews and research in such a way that you can easily find information when you are writing your article.

Student journalists employ a variety of methods for organizing their resources before writing articles. Some prefer to organize quotes from interviews and other research into topics, while others like to lay the information out as if the outline were a stripped-down version of their article. Generally speaking, the best method is to reorganize your resources several times, becoming more specific and refined with each successive outline. This allows you to think about the flow and tone of your article before you actually start writing.

Your outline should always be based on quotes and statements drawn from the interviews that you conducted. Facts and other information should only be provided as context for the stories and ideas of eyewitnesses and experts. Some student journalists don't bother to include all of their research in the outlines that they put together before writing their articles, because such information is abundant in their heads. By focusing on quotes in your outline, you will ensure that your article is based on exclusive information and not simply regurgitating previously published facts.

The goal of organizing your information is to make sure that you can find facts and especially quotes when you need them. Too many excellent quotes and bits of information are forgotten among the many pages of transcripts and notes that busy student journalists have to sort through when they are writing articles. You should therefore be thoughtful and thorough when you are organizing your research and interviews, because well-organized information eases the writing of articles.

You should keep close track of your sources and references when you are organizing your information before writing your article. Without exception, every fact or quote should be clearly related to an article, website, document, book, or interview. Many student journalists make a habit of writing in a number, which corresponds to an interview or other source of information, beside each fact or quote in the early drafts of their articles. This will make it easy for you to refer back to transcripts or published materials if the credibility of your claims is disputed after your article goes to print.

Organizing your resources presents a good opportunity to rethink the angle of your article. Just as you thought about the angle of your article before deciding on which experts and eyewitnesses to interview, you should again consider the themes and issues of your research and determine a personal opinion about the many aspects of the topic of your article. In simpler terms, you should decide which ideas and facts are worth emphasizing, and which bits of information should be merely mentioned or even omitted. Although your opinion is a key factor in determining the angle of your article, you should nonetheless strive to ensure your angle is objective.

Rethinking the angle of your article should not result in an argument that will define your conclusions, but rather help you determine how your own ideas will determine the focus of your writing. If you are writing about the corruption of police in some Brazilian cities, for example, you should decide whether the bribing of a notorious police officer should be especially featured, or whether the stories of abused civilians are worth emphasizing. Both accounts could be included, but because you are collecting and distilling information, rather than regurgitating it, you will need to prioritize and thereby settle on an angle for your article.

Every quote or story that you include in your article must have a purpose within the overall article, because each account will be taking up space that could be occupied by another quote or story. With limited space, some accounts must be favored over others, and the criteria on which you base such decisions is your angle. The angle of your article is best determined at this point in the writing process because all of the information needed to write your article is on hand, but the article itself is still in its infancy.

With your research and interviews somewhat organized in front of you, you should start to recognize the themes that you will feature in your article. Themes are often easily recognized as consistencies between the ideas of different experts and eyewitnesses, although it is worth keeping in mind that such consistencies do not necessarily entail agreement. As has been noted throughout this handbook, opposing views often result in the most interesting themes in articles that are based on interviews because they allow the writer to develop a sense of controversy within the article.

After organizing your resources and settling on an angle for your article, you should look at whatever outline you have created and think about what information your article will be lacking. If you need to verify a quote or claim from an interviewee, you should contact that person again with a few simply phrased follow-up questions. If you need some more background information about the topic as a whole, you should go back to the books or websites and confirm any facts that you have already gathered.

It is especially important to keep the angle of your article in mind when you are considering any deficits of quotes from interviews or other research. If you plan on focusing on an issue that was briefly mentioned by a few people that you interviewed but that you have hardly researched, you will need to read about the context of that issue in order to include it in your article. You should always aim to have a surplus of quotes and facts in your outline, so that you can pick and choose the best information for your article.

Overall, organizing your interviews and research will allow you to consider your angle before you begin to write, and will ensure that you are able to find and use the quotes and information you need to make your article both credible and readable. You need to be patient

and thorough when you are organizing your information and research, so that the final outline is as close as possible in form to the final version of your article. The entire process, which results in a useful and well-organized summary of the quotes and facts that will be employed in your article, entails a significant amount of thought and effort spread across several revisions of the outline.

When you have more or less finished organizing your interviews and research, you should discuss your ideas about the anticipated angle of your article with your editors and advisors. They will be able to help you plan the structure and identify the themes that will make your article readable and credible. Although you will still have to consider the style of your article and perhaps even make yet another outline, having well-organized interviews and research at your disposal will ensure that the writing process is more efficient when you begin writing the preliminary draft of your article.

PLAN THE STYLE

Planning the style of your article is a reflective process that allows you to think about the attitude and perspective that you will maintain throughout your article. Not taking the time to think about the writing style in your article is like forgetting to decide on a topic. Great writers and committed student journalists actually practice different writing styles so that they are able to write a wide variety of articles and pieces for different audiences and with varying resources.

After you have created an outline with all your interviews and research but before you actually start writing, you should discuss the anticipated style of your article with your editors and advisors. You should tell them if you plan on being especially colloquial or academic at different points in the article, and you should try to give them a rough idea of how you will express your ideas or conclusion. Although your editors and advisors will not want to lecture you about personal writing style, they might be able to offer simple advice that will be helpful when you start writing.

When you are writing credible and readable articles that are based on interviews, your style should be personal and professional, and should always be consistent with other articles in the publication that you are writing for. For example, many publications feature a particularly interesting quote as the first sentence in each article, and if you write for a publication with that style featured, you should also start your article with a good quote. You should make a point of reading other articles from your publication so that you are familiar with traits like basic terminology, length, and structure that will be expected in your article.

Just as much as you read other articles from the publication that you are writing for, you should also read other books and articles from well-known writers or newspapers and think about the effectiveness of their writing style. The authors of this handbook, for example, studied the readable and credible style of Bob Woodward, who employed a conversational writing style when he wrote *All the President's Men* and other perceptive books about the government of the United States, so that they could employ a hybrid style when they were writing their own book about the history of direct action in the radical environmental movement.

Spending time examining the style of more widely published professional journalists is a worthwhile activity, but you should also think about the kinds of phrases and sentences that you naturally prefer to use in your own writing. You should think carefully about how you will use these phrases in your article and make sure that you are confident in your ability to keep your writing interesting. If there are any subjects within your topic that will be difficult to explain, you should also reflect on the expressions that you will use to clearly convey the meaning of complex concepts.

A key lesson of style is that your articles should never be history lessons. If you need to provide some historical background, it should be restricted to only a few paragraphs near the beginning of your article, but these background notes should never actually be the beginning of your article. While in general it is best to disperse historical background throughout your article, if a block of historical facts is necessary, it should be severely limited. Just as our publications strive to move beyond the regurgitation of previously published facts that define the efforts of most student journalists, our

publications are also opposed to repeating stories and facts that have been studied and published by capable historians.

Your article should be mostly quotes, with some statements and facts offered for context, as well as a hefty amount of descriptive phrases about interviewees and situations within your article. Because good quotes can tell their own story within an article, most of the text should focus on introducing and explaining quotes from the people that you have interviewed. A well-balanced article that is based on interviews is composed of approximately 35% direct quotations. With the addition of text that introduces speakers and digests quotations, well over half of your article will focus on and around quotations. By focusing on the exclusive information and stories acquired through interviews, you will produce an article that is both credible and readable.

Generally speaking, quotes from your interviews should be introduced with a simple statement about the interviewee, but you should occasionally make quotes more interesting by describing the emotional or physical situation of the speaker. A quote should never be delivered without a bit of context or simple analysis, unless it is intended to be shocking or to disrupt the flow of the other text. In the rare event that you use a quote from another publication, you must indicate the speaker as well as the publication that the quote originally appeared in. The use of quotes is explained at more length in a supplementary section in the latter part of this handbook.

Contrary to what is taught to student journalists and other writers at many academic institutions, there is absolutely nothing wrong with writing about yourself in the first person within an article that is based on interviews. As long as the statements about your experiences serve to enlighten the reader about the topic of your article, you should feel free to write about what you have witnessed during the course of researching and writing. This is especially true if you conducted in-person interviews for your article, because personal observations about the context of the interview can be both revealing and interesting.

There is a very important distinction to be made between self-serving statements about your own thoughts, ideas, and unrelated experiences, as opposed to useful observations about the interviewing and writing processes that were part of your efforts to complete your article. You

should never include personal stories that are only somewhat related to the article you are writing, because such stories detract from your credibility as a student journalist as well as the readability of your article. In the simplest terms, you should only include yourself in the article if your observations and stories are tasteful, interesting, and directly pertinent to the topic of the article.

The exception to this limitation on discussing yourself is if your article is about an event which you observed or were involved in. For example, if you live in Iran and were involved in the election protests and witnessed the police attacking protesters, you should include a more personal description of what you saw and what you think about the events that transpired. In a nutshell, you have become your own interviewee because of what you've witnessed. Just as you would ask an interviewee how they felt about what they saw and their emotions at the time, you can include your own emotions about the event covered in your article. This style should only be used rarely, and you must consult your editor before undertaking this approach.

Just as you should include yourself in your writing only if your personal observations are directly pertinent to the topic of your article, you should also include metaphors or other rhetorical devices only if they add context to quotes or research. The writing of every article should be simple and factual, with descriptions being used to keep the reader interested in the ideas and concepts being presented. Unnecessarily complicated language should be avoided, because it confuses and distracts readers from the exclusive information and profound stories that define our publications. However, do not hesitate to use a slightly more complicated word if its meaning greatly enhances your article. Both publications strive for an educated audience, and as such language does not need to be "dumbed" down.

Overall, planning the style of your article is an inconclusive process that will not usually result in brilliant conclusions or ideas but will inevitably make you a more efficient and effective student journalist. You should be patient and thorough when you are thinking about the phrasing and general tone of your writing, and you must be honest with yourself about any deficiencies in your own writing abilities or resources, so that you are prepared when you sit down to actually start writing.

When you are planning the style of your article, you should speak with your editors and advisors because this will be your final opportunity to seek their advice before you start writing your article. You should also be sure to read widely for the sake of improving your own writing, and you should without hesitation borrow stylistic techniques from other writers. Most importantly, you should also take the time to be proud of the work you have done so far and excited about the prospect of finally producing a draft of your article.

WRITE A DRAFT

Writing an article can be a strenuous process for student journalists, but also is very rewarding. You will find points where you are unable to settle upon the proper wording or the proper order of facts. But if you are patient, and work diligently, you can complete a draft that incorporates your varied sources and employs the English language effectively to lure a reader into your article. The important mindset which you must maintain is of uncompromising determination. You have to work tirelessly until you are confident that you have found the right combination of facts and quotes, as well as the most descriptive yet concise wording for your article.

There are a variety of methods for writing articles, depending on the intended style as well as personal preference. Most student journalists develop their own methods for writing articles as they gain experience and learn different techniques from their colleagues. Although the various approaches differ greatly from each other in terms of organization and appearance, every method relies on the previously discussed outline of interviews and research.

Many student journalists prefer to refine and improve the outline of interviews and research that they constructed at the beginning of the writing process, and then use that outline as the base for their article. The outline itself is often longer than the article, because of the abundance of unrefined information. When you have such a detailed outline, writing a draft becomes a process of creatively connecting the bits of information in the outline. This method is particularly suited

to inexperienced writers, because it gives them an opportunity to organize their information into easily comprehended groups before actually starting the writing process.

Some student journalists, including one of the authors of this handbook, like to write each article with a slow but steady method known as sharp-shooting, in which the writing process is completed from beginning to end in a sentence-by-sentence manner. Sometimes writers will labor for more than an hour on a paragraph or even a single sentence until it is perfect. By investing an enormous amount of time in the early stages of the writing process, student journalists who write with this method greatly reduce the amount of effort required for editing. This method is appropriate for writers who have a strong grasp of the structure and flow of their article, as well as a knack for writing clearly.

Other student journalists, including the other author of this handbook, prefer to write each article with a fast and somewhat reckless method known as shot-gunning. The writing process with this method entails a quick first draft that will never be re-read or edited, another draft based on the lessons of the first, a third draft that is far too long, and then up to a dozen successive drafts that eventually take shape as the final version of the article. Only the best phrases and ideas are extracted from each draft. This method is appropriate for writers who enjoy editing their own work but who are impatient when it comes to writing individual drafts.

Different people prefer different methods for writing articles, and most student journalists actually use a combination of the methods noted here. The greatest concern when you are writing your article, regardless of your method, is that you present good information in an interesting and effective manner. When your publication goes to print, the only thing that really matters is that you have written well with an enlightening assortment of facts and stories so that your article is both credible and readable.

All the methods for writing articles that are noted here require revision while you are writing. This means that as you finish each paragraph or page, you should read through your article from beginning to end to make sure that quotes and facts are emphasized effectively and that different ideas or themes transition smoothly from

each other. Revising is not the same as editing, because your focus is more on flow than mechanics or style. When you revise as you write, you should also try to make sure that the quotes in your article outweigh the facts in terms of emphasis and style but that both complement each other.

Too many student journalists overlook the importance of thinking about phrasing before actually writing their article. If you have a particularly strong quote from a credible eyewitness about a political demonstration, for example, you should read the quote dozens of times and think about how you might introduce and explain it. It might sound bizarre to spend so much time thinking about words, phrases, and ideas before even putting your pen to paper, but such reflection is necessary to ensure that the style of your writing is clear and comprehensive.

When you are writing drafts, you should constantly remind yourself that you should write in a clear, candid, and concise manner. Unless you are a truly gifted writer, you usually should not have fancy word play or puns, because only clear language allows you to effectively express complex ideas. Some of the most perceptive publications in the world, such as *The Economist*, maintain an exceptionally simple and concise writing style. With several interviews and dozens of pages of research for each article, you must also commit yourself to writing concisely in order to maintain the readability of your articles.

Your article may have a number of different structures depending on the topic, and so a detailed description is not included here. However, a good rule to keep in mind is that you should start with a surprising quote, and progress through the various aspects of the issue until you reach a surprising conclusion, normally another quote. Try to avoid weak jumps in your article by making sure that you are progressing through your quotations and resources carefully and in a logical manner. This might mean tracing the arc of an individual story throughout your article while providing context as the story progresses, or following a sequence of stories connected by points of similarity or difference. Whatever format you choose, remember that both publications favor a narrative form, meaning that you are telling a story, not spewing facts.

Student journalists suffer from writers' block as frequently as any other

writers. Just as you will occasionally be able to write an excellent article in only one or two sittings, there will also be periods when you are unable to write for days at a time. You should not force yourself to write lousy material at these times, but you also should not waste your time. When you don't feel like you can write, you should invest time in improving your outline, pursuing further interviews, or working on your article in another productive manner.

Sometimes the best solution to writers' block is to stare at your existing outline, as well as complete transcripts of the interviews that you conducted, until an idea comes to your mind. Looking at another piece of writing and comparing its style to your own, or the topic discussed in other articles to the topic of your article, can also help you start writing again. No matter how long you feel like you have writers' block, you should never even think about using it as an excuse for not submitting an article to your editors on time.

Overall, writing your article is a process that requires sustained effort for days at a time. You should never delay the writing process, because it will be easier when the nuances of your topic are still fresh in your mind. There are many different methods for writing articles, but you will always rely heavily on an outline of interviews and research when you are writing your articles. You should strive to keep your drafts clear and candid in terms of the writing style, in order to finally produce a credible and readable article.

When you are writing, you should frequently update your editors and advisors about your progress so that they are aware of the status of your article. If you keep them updated, they will respect your right to write as a student journalist and they will be sure to provide assistance when you need it. After finishing a few drafts, you will be ready to edit your writing, which will improve the readability and credibility of your article.

EDIT YOUR WORK

Editing your own writing is a crucial step to preparing your article for

submission. Having invested so much time and effort researching and conducting interviews, as well as making outlines and writing multiple drafts of your article, taking the time to edit and thereby improve your writing is justified. The more time that you invest in improving your article before submitting it to your editors and advisors, the better it will be when it is finally published.

Some aspiring student journalists wonder why they have to edit their own writing if editors and advisors will review their article before it is published. When you submit your article, you give the editors permission to make whatever changes they deem necessary. This means that the more you edit your article before submitting it to your editors and advisors, the more control you have over its style. If you submit an unedited article that is either poorly written or plagued by small grammatical errors, your editors will have to improve it in a manner that you might not appreciate.

You should edit your writing with a sense of pride in its credibility and readability. Too many student journalists either refuse or forget to edit their own writing, which means that editors and advisors become responsible for improving the quality of articles. Your editors and advisors are inherently less familiar with the topic of your article than yourself, and less aware of the information available from your interviews and research. Thus, your editors and advisors can only focus on improving your article in the simplest ways, rather than actually bolstering its readability and credibility.

Another reason to edit your own work is that if you submit good articles with only a few mistakes, your editors and advisors will begin to respect and trust your integrity and thoroughness as a student journalist. You might even be welcomed onto the editorial staff of your publication. Submitting poorly edited articles makes unnecessary work for your editors and advisors, who are already responsible for editing many other submissions from less capable writers. As you develop a reputation for being a diligent and thorough student journalist, your editors and advisors will recognize your efforts and give you more opportunities when you are writing articles in the future.

In its simplest form, editing your own work means reading your article dozens of times, because many mistakes are acknowledged only after

being seen on several occasions. You should make small changes whenever you see small mistakes, and big changes when you see a flaw in the structure of your article. You might need to conduct additional research for a few necessary facts, or even add a quote if there is an obvious gap in the structure of your article. You should expect to be finished editing when you can read through your entire article several times and not find a single mistake.

The initial focus of your editing should be on mechanics like grammar and spelling. You should never assume that the grammar or spelling in your article is perfect. Too many student journalists assume that they employ grammar effectively and correctly, when they actually frequently misuse punctuation and confuse tenses and other aspects of essential grammar. Just as many computers are equipped with an automatic spell-checking program, there are also a variety of guides and websites that can help you understand the proper use of grammar. A supplementary section in the latter part of this handbook explains a few of the most common mistakes made by student journalists.

When you are editing your article, you should be especially critical of your own opinions and claims. Any editorial content in your article should be reinforced with a combination of quotes and facts. If you think that you make a weak argument in your article, you should either eliminate the argument or find more convincing evidence for your claims. Never should your editors discover a fallacy, because it will tarnish your credibility and your editors will not hesitate to remove it entirely from your article.

In addition to checking the factual basis of the opinions and claims that you express in your article, you should also check names, places, dates, and other facts. Even if you are absolutely positive about a historical event or the name of the person in your article, you should find the source of your information in your list of references and consult the original document. Your editors will only have time to check some facts when they edit your article, so it is primarily your responsibility to make sure that the information that you convey is accurate.

After you have edited your article several times and think that you are almost finished editing, you should pay special attention to the opening and closing paragraphs of your article. Readers will decide if

your article is readable based on the first five paragraphs, and then they will decide if your article was credible based on the last five paragraphs. Many student journalists prefer to write both the opening and closing of their articles after they have written and even edited much of the rest of their article.

Generally speaking, your article should open with an especially interesting quote, such as a story, from somebody that you interviewed. This will pull the reader into your article and they will continue to remember the opening as they read through the other quotes and information that you reveal in the body of your article. The closing paragraphs of your article should be insightful and somewhat intellectual, such that the reader finishes the article with a base on which to form their own opinion. The best closings for articles that are based on interviews make a conjecture at the future development of the topic of the article.

When you are almost ready to submit it to your editors and advisors, you should have a friend read and edit it. Even if they are unable to correct the grammar and spelling, you should ask them to make sure that your article has logical conclusions, consistent style, and readable diction. If you have time, you should ask the same friend to read it again after you make some of the changes that they recommend. By getting an opinion from a relatively objective reader before submitting your article to your editors and advisors, you will essentially have the opportunity to accommodate valuable feedback from one of your readers.

Just as you might share your article with a few savvy friends or colleagues for a final round of editing, you should also consider sending a near-final version of your article to the people that you interviewed. Most people are interested in hearing themselves quoted, and so they will often be willing to provide a quick review. You are never obligated as a student journalist to send a draft of your article to interviewees before it is published, but the people you interviewed will correct any small mistakes or oversights in your descriptions of historical events or their work as individuals.

At the same time, you should only change your article if you agree with the correction or objection expressed by the interviewee. Sometimes an interviewee will regret what they said in your interview,

and will ask that the quote be removed. Remove the quote only if you feel that you have made a mistake in the quotation, or if it doesn't provide any positive addition to the article. Your duty as a student journalist is to put forth information on underreported issues of global significance, not to accommodate the whims of the experts and eyewitnesses that you interview for your article.

Overall, the experience of editing your articles should teach you about your writing abilities and style. You should spare no effort when you are editing your article, because the work that you put into improving your own writing will be well rewarded when your editors develop respect for you as a student journalist and your readers start looking forward to your articles. If after editing your own article, you read your work and find that it is free from errors, readable and credible, you should congratulate yourself on being a talented student journalist.

When you think have finished editing your article, you should edit it a few more times. This might sound redundant, but it is absolutely necessary. After editing your article a few more times, you should tell your editors and advisors about the steps you took to edit it prior to submission, and tell them your general opinion of the article. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, you should submit your article, taking pride in the fact that you have written and edited a credible and readable article that is based on exclusive information attained through interviews.

SUBMIT YOUR ARTICLE

Submitting your article to your editors and advisors is the final step in writing a credible and readable article that is based on exclusive information attained through interviews with experts and eyewitnesses. Although you are essentially done with the writing process, there are still a few loose ends to tie up when you are submitting your article to your editors and advisors. The act of tying up these loose ends should be personally gratifying and will provide you with an opportunity to reflect on your experiences and prepare for your next article.

When you submit your article, as we mentioned previously, you should explain your perspective on your writing to your editors and advisors. You should mention the various challenges that you faced when you were researching, interviewing, or writing the article. If there are great quotes or stories that you wanted to include in your article but had to omit, you should explain why they were not included in your article. Informing your editors and advisors in this way will allow them to understand your writing, and might help them when they are editing your article.

An article should be submitted only when you have a title that is consistent either with the instructions of your editors and advisors or with the titles of other articles from your publication. As we have mentioned previously in this handbook, each article must include quotes from at least five interviews with knowledgeable experts and individuals. Your article, bibliography, brief autobiography, and the summary of your writing experience should all be in Microsoft Word or .doc, format so that your editors and advisors can make necessary changes with ease. If you have to submit your article in a different computer format, you should tell your editors and advisors beforehand.

You should write a summary of your writing for your editors and advisors when you submit your article. The summary should be about five sentences including which people you interviewed, and an overview of the article as well as a teaser which will entice readers. You should also provide a brief autobiography that explains where you are studying as a student, why you are interested in journalism, and what other experiences you have had as a student journalist. Your summary and autobiography will be posted on the website of your publication and eventually printed alongside your article.

A bibliography and list of documents that you consulted when you were researching should be included when you submit your article to your editors and advisors. The bibliography does not need to be in a standard format, but should contain enough information such that your editors and advisors can locate all of the sources that you used. You should not have any citations within your article, but you should have your own records that note where each fact in your article was drawn from - probably in the outline that you created before you

started writing - that would allow you to quickly defend the credibility of your information if it is ever brought into question.

In addition to a bibliography, you should include transcripts of the interviews that you conducted. These will be used by your editors and advisors if they feel the need to add quotes or other information, and will be kept on file with your publication for future reference. It is especially important for your publication to have transcripts of the interviews that you conducted in the event that readers or the interviewees themselves call the integrity of quotes from your article into question.

Image acquisition is usually a part of production, but you can help your editors and advisors when you are submitting your article by telling them about any images that you think accurately reflect the content of your article. All images used for your publication must be pictures that you shot, copyleft, or are in the public domain. The public domain refers to images that are free to the public, frequently because of their source. For example, all images produced by the United States government are in the public domain as they are paid for by taxpayers. Copyleft refers to permission granted by those who own the rights to the image for others to use the image. The easiest way to find copyleft images is to go to www.creativecommons.org or Wikipedia, which both have large collections of copyleft images. If you find images which you think would be good for your article, you should send your editor a link and a brief description to the images.

When you submit your article and the other documents mentioned in this section to your editors and advisors, you should be prepared to sign off almost completely on your article. This means that you will be obligated to accept any changes or modifications made to your article by your editors. While you will be entitled to an explanation from your editors and advisors for any major changes made to your article, you will not have the opportunity to demand that certain changes be undone.

The fact that you have to accept the changes made to your article by your editors and advisors further justifies the need for the thorough self-editing mentioned throughout this handbook. It is a truism that editors would prefer to receive articles that require no editing rather than articles that need to be reworked from beginning to end, so

bickering with editors about changes to your article will only serve to irritate them. You should edit your own article thoroughly before submitting it, and try to cooperate with editors when they make changes that they deem necessary.

Overall, submitting your article to your editors and advisors is the final step in writing a credible and readable article. You should savor the moment and be proud of your accomplishment as a student journalist. A worthwhile focus for your efforts immediately after submitting your article is to make a few notes in this handbook about the lessons that you learned while you were writing your article, such that you will be more efficient and productive when you assume the task of writing credible and readable articles that are based on interviews with eyewitnesses and experts.

When you have submitted your article, you should continue to communicate with your editors and advisors in case they have concerns or questions when they are editing your article. You should also contact the people that you interviewed and tell them that your article will be published on the website as well as in the next issue of your publication. Without any delay, you should then prepare yourself for another article by reading the news and identifying issues of global importance that have been underreported by other publications and media outlets.

CONCLUSION

Once you have written your article, the process of publication is not complete, but your job as a student journalist has essentially ended. You should be enormously proud of having completed an article for your publication, so you should take a moment to enjoy what you have accomplished. While you are celebrating, you should keep in mind that you are always a student journalist. Your next story idea might make itself apparent to you before you even start seeking another topic, and therefore you must always keep your eyes open.

The process of writing is difficult, but after writing an article you will

have found your own voice, as well as your own manner of producing a story, so that you can continue to improve as time goes on. Everyone is frustrated by mistakes in his or her article when it goes to print, but remember that most omissions or mistakes that you and your editors notice will never be noticed by the reader. To them, you have written a good piece of student journalism.

In conclusion, as a student journalist you should be proud of the articles that you have written but always alert to new topics for articles in your community and the places that you visit. You should never stop networking with potential contacts and never stop asking questions about potential stories. Researching, interviewing, and writing in accordance with the recommendations and guidelines laid out in this section and others will ensure that you are effective as a student journalist when you write credible and readable articles about underreported issues of global importance that are based on interviews with experts and eyewitnesses.

CONCLUSION

Journalism is about telling the right story, the right way. Finding these stories and telling them are both difficult tasks, but student journalists are able to effectively harness their limited resources and acquire the material needed to produce credible and readable articles. Indeed, the impressive ability of young writers to obtain globally significant information is undeniable. By writing in the style advocated in this handbook, energetic, dedicated, and talented student journalists will be able to inform the world of issues that have been overlooked by larger and more established media outlets.

The three steps for writing credible and readable articles noted in this handbook are necessary to achieve a style that informs audiences around the world about understudied issues of global importance. Often more effectively than professionals, student journalists can acquire stories and other exclusive information from interviews with experts and eyewitnesses. The inclusion of the most meaningful aspects of these conversations with knowledgeable people from around the world are what make *Dispatches International* and *The Epoch Journal* worth reading.

Articles produced in the style advocated in this handbook are difficult to write. This is especially true of lengthy articles that rely on stories and other exclusive information obtained through interviews. An immense amount of effort must be invested in selecting a topic and drawing worthwhile information from knowledgeable individuals, and even more time must be spent organizing information and putting words to paper during the writing process.

Student journalists must balance many tasks when they are researching, interviewing, and writing credible and readable articles in accordance with the style advocated in this handbook. By following the three steps noted here and working diligently to inform the world of important but understudied issues, their earnest efforts will result in articles that are appreciated by readers and respected by colleagues.

PART II:

BRIEFS, GUIDES, & SUPPLEMENTS

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is the most repulsive topic in the field of student journalism.

You absolutely must understand the meaning of plagiarism as ignorance will never be an acceptable excuse for plagiarizing the work of another author. This means that you are expected to be aware of the nuances of plagiarism such that you can consistently avoid even appearing to have plagiarized for the duration of your career as a student journalist. If you have any questions about plagiarism or the consequences of being caught plagiarizing, you should immediately conduct your own research and contact your editors and advisors.

Plagiarism is consistently understood to be the presentation of the work of another author as your own. If the articles that you write as a student journalist reproduce even just a few phrases from another source without explicitly stating the origin of the material, you can be legitimately accused of plagiarism. The best defense against plagiarism is to keep a good record of the documents that you consult when you are writing articles as a student journalist, and to clearly explain to your editors and readers where your information and quotes are derived from.

A single act of plagiarism can ruin both your publication and your career. If you are found to have plagiarized in any form to even the most minuscule degree, you will instantly be blacklisted from your publication. If your editors are confident that you plagiarized, you will be presumed guilty and you might not even be provided with the opportunity to explain yourself. Your publication will be forced to print an apology to its readers and will consider informing administrators and educators at your school or university of your act. The act of plagiarism will never be expunged from your record, so any hopes you might have had for a professional career in journalism will probably be crushed.

Student journalists should be especially aware of the legal risks they run if they plagiarize. Depending on the source of the plagiarized

material, the owner of that material may decide to take legal action if you are found to have plagiarized. If the owner of the material that was plagiarized decides to seek damages, the total cost to you in terms of legal fees and other compensation could be prohibitive. Most countries have ratified international copyright agreements, so you would probably face legal action regardless of your country of residence.

Despite the consequences of stealing phrases and material from other authors, respectable publications too frequently are forced to confront their journalists and writers about plagiarism. For example, *Dispatches International* caught several students who plagiarized in their applications to attend the 2009 conference at the Limberlost Forest & Wildlife Reserve, which was being organized by the International Partnerships Foundation. These applications were immediately rejected and the students themselves were banned from all future programs by *Dispatches International* or the International Partnerships Foundation.

Plagiarism, on the whole, is avoidable and therefore absolutely unforgivable and detestable in the field of student journalism. As an unethical and unprofessional act, there will never be a degree of tolerance for plagiarism in any of its forms. If you are confused about the meaning of plagiarism, it is your responsibility to become educated and learn how to avoid plagiarizing. You should consult your editors and advisors if you are worried or concerned about the consequences of plagiarizing during your career as a student journalist.

LEGAL PITFALLS

As a student journalist, you will rarely encounter the negative side of issues that pertain to the law when you write articles because of your status as youth in the midst of your educational career. In most cases, you can easily avoid the major legal pitfalls that plague other writers by taking pride in your professionalism and maintaining high ethical standards. There are still a few essential legal issues that you should be aware of in case you do fall into a situation where you are accused of a legal transgression.

The most frequent and onerous legal issue faced by student journalists is defamation, which can be defined as libel when it is written and slander when it is spoken. The standard definition of defamation used by most student journalists is the act of harming the reputation of an individual or entity by intentionally asserting that a falsity is a fact. You can best avoid the entire issue of defamation by only making claims that can be backed up with verifiable facts.

While the laws specific to defamation vary from country to country, the basics of defamation remain the same. In most places, a journalist is liable for defamation if they make a claim about a person – or in some countries, an organization or business – that they know is false and detrimental to the reputation of the other person or entity. In some countries it makes no difference whether the journalist is aware or unaware that the claim they are making is false. The similarity between these cases is that being reckless with untrue information that harms the reputation of another person is probably going to lead to you facing defamation charges.

The point that you must be aware of is that you cannot print anything as fact that you are either uncomfortable with or know to be untrue. You should be very careful with every fact that you write about that brings into question the integrity of an individual, business, or organization. Although these entities must prove that they suffered in a material way in order for you to be found guilty of defamation, you should always be thorough in your research and careful in your writing. This does not mean that you should not be critical as a

writer, because if your claims have a provable factual basis then you are protected from defamation charges.

Officials will occasionally threaten journalists with defamation charges even when the claims in question are backed by verifiable facts. The goal of the official in making such threats is to intimidate the journalist and prevent them from publishing embarrassing but true information. This happened to one of the authors of this handbook when he was writing an article about censorship for his school's newspaper. If you are accused of defamation or threatened with defamation charges, you should immediately consult your editor, who will assist you in conferring with the offended official, legal counsel, or press freedom groups that your publication belongs to.

In summary, as long as you tell the truth, you cannot be found guilty of defamation. Just as you must always check your facts and verify your sources to protect your own credibility as a student journalist, you should always be careful when you are writing about issues that might impact the reputation of individuals, businesses, or organizations. By maintaining high ethical standards and being careful with the claims that you make and in your verification of facts, you will protect yourself from legal pitfalls like defamation charges.

COMMON MISTAKES

Student journalists from around the world often make the same mistakes, regardless of their linguistic fluency or experience as writers of credible and readable articles. Even a couple of simple mistakes can erode the readability and credibility of a publication. As we have mentioned at many points throughout this handbook, before submitting an article to the editors at their publication, student journalists should edit their own work and catch as many mechanical and stylistic mistakes as possible.

As a student journalist, you must familiarize yourself with the correct usage of grammar and the proper application of style. Many books and guides, some of which are noted at the end of this handbook, are available in print copies and online for you to consult when you are writing and editing articles. Throughout the writing process, and especially when you are editing your own work, you should be particularly wary of the following grammatical and stylistic mistakes that are commonly made by student journalists.

Run-on sentences, sentence fragments, and other incorrect or simply awkward phrases should be eliminated or corrected before you submit your article to your editors. The best way to identify awkward phrases is to read your article aloud, preferably to a friend or colleague, and make note of any sentences that sound unnatural or clumsy. A common method for correcting awkward phrases is to eliminate the sentence altogether and reproduce its meaning as a clause of a previous or subsequent sentence.

Paragraphs are frequently poorly structured and left at awkward lengths by student journalists. There is no definitive right or wrong length for a paragraph, because some good paragraphs are only three sentences whereas other good paragraphs are ten sentences. But every good paragraph makes a point about an issue that the reader is able to relate to the previous and subsequent paragraphs. Most good paragraphs also have an obvious introductory sentence that facilitates the flow of the passage and identifies the issue to be discussed, as well as a concluding sentence that summarizes the main points of the

discussion or hints at the issue to be discussed in the next paragraph.

Commas are both overused and underused by many student journalists. Too many commas will make a sentence choppy and painful to read, while too few commas will make it confusing and obscure in meaning. There are many books and guides available that deal with the proper use of commas at great length, which you should refer to if you are unsure about whether or not to use a comma. A good rule of thumb to keep in mind is that commas should be used where you would normally pause in spoken discourse, or where you are separating examples or ideas from each other.

Student journalists frequently misplace quotation marks, despite the fact that interviews are the foundation of credible and readable articles. Quotation marks should always immediately precede the first word of the quote, and quotation marks should only come after the punctuation that ends the quote. For example: The authors of the *Handbook for Student Journalists* recently stated, "Use quotation marks wisely, or your editors will throw a fit." It is worth noting that some publications, like *The Economist*, have strange - and technically incorrect - methods for placing quotation marks around quotes.

Student journalists who write articles that are based on interviews also frequently misuse speaker tags. When you are quoting somebody that you interviewed yourself, you should always use the present tense when you introduce the quote, but you should use the past tense when you are quoting a speech or an interview that was conducted by another journalist. Being accurate in your use of speaker tags is important because just as much as you should make it evident to readers that you conducted interviews, you also must be candid about the fact that you are quoting an interview that was conducted by another person.

Subject-verb disagreement is another mistake that student journalists frequently make, at the expense of making their quotes less sharp and effective. If you are writing about two people doing something together, the verb must be plural, but the verb must be singular if you are writing about one person doing something alone. The best way to ensure that your subjects and verbs agree with each other is to read your article aloud and listen for the proper conjugation of verbs.

Abbreviations are too frequently inconsistent within articles. If you are using an abbreviation, you should put the abbreviation in parentheses after the first use of the full name of the entity that will be described by the abbreviation. Then you should always use the same abbreviation to describe that entity. For example: “The United States of America (U.S.) is south of Canada. Mexico, in turn, is south of the U.S.” If you are unsure about which abbreviation to use for a country or organization, you should either look it up on the Internet or consult your editors and advisors.

While clarity is a virtue that all student journalists strive for, too many articles are clogged with vague sentences and words that confuse and bore readers. You should never use a vague word when a more descriptive word can be used. For example: “The people in the group were all wearing the same shoes,” is vague, whereas, “The radicals at the riot were all wearing black boots with red laces.” By eliminating vague phrases and words wherever possible, your article will become more informative and therefore more interesting for your readers.

Allowing mistakes to endure within articles is the most common and most frustrating mistake made by student journalists around the world. Despite the fact that it only takes a few hours to correct the vast majority of grammatical and stylistic mistakes in a given article, many student journalists neglect to edit their own work. Most publications will refuse to accept articles that are full of mechanical and stylistic errors, simply because their editors can more effectively spend their time on properly edited and better written articles from other writers.

As a student journalist, you should commit to correcting the common mistakes mentioned here as well as many others in every article you write. The fewer errors that are in your article when you submit your work to your editors, the more respect you will earn within your publication. But above all, and without fail at any point throughout your career as a student journalist, you must commit to actually editing your own work before submitting your article to editors.

EDITING

Apart from the student journalists themselves, editors are the most important members of any publication. By editing articles to ensure that each submission is presentable and consistent in style, editors safeguard the credibility of their publication. Furthermore, they also coordinate the efforts of writers and help them hone their journalistic skills with each successive article. As the keystone members of every publication, good editors are excellent researchers, talented interviewers, skilled writers, and exceptionally knowledgeable about mechanics, rhetoric, and style.

The position of an editor within a publication is a hybrid of journalist and manager. In addition to being capable as writers of credible and readable articles that are based on interviews with eyewitnesses and experts, editors also need to be natural leaders and good communicators. They must be able to determine the style of their publication, enforce standards of good student journalism, and solve the professional issues their fellow student journalists encounter.

If you are an editor, you have a responsibility to be thorough in your editing methods and respectful of the work done by your fellow student journalists. While your position as an editor endows upon you the responsibility of determining the ultimate form of every article, you must be committed to editing in a diligent manner that helps your colleagues grow and learn as student journalists.

Although you will be responsible for overseeing the efforts of your fellow students journalists throughout the writing process, your work as an editor truly begins when you receive the final version of an article from a colleague. Before editing or reading the article, you should ask the writer if they have any ideas or concerns about their submission. Your immediate goal after receiving an article should be to answer the questions of your colleague and thereby facilitate their development as a student journalist.

After answering the questions and addressing the concerns expressed by the writers of the article that you received, you should read the

article several times with the intention of evaluating its style and structure. As you read through it, you should also correct any mechanical errors and rewrite any blatantly awkward phrases. If you are spending more time correcting minor errors like spelling and grammar than reading and evaluating the structure of the article, you should chastise the writer for being sloppy and insist that they edit it themselves before resubmitting their article.

Your primary concern as an editor, having dealt with most of the mechanical errors, is ensuring that the article is readable and sensible in terms of its style and structure. You should try to identify the major themes of the article by reading it from beginning to end, with the intention of streamlining the transition between themes and other concepts. Whenever you identify a section that is rough or clumsy in the way it flows from a previous section, you should not hesitate to insert or remove quotes or other information as needed.

Editorial content and other opinionated writing should be respected and preserved within the article, unless the material is crude or poorly presented and therefore likely to arouse suspicion about the credibility of the publication. Although you should never alter the angle of the article or insert altogether new opinions, as an editor you have every right to contemplate the worthiness of editorial content and remove it if necessary. If you are slashing relatively large sections because of their editorial content, you should inform the writer and seek – but not necessarily gain – their approval before making such changes.

Copy-editing is not the most enjoyable task, but is an important responsibility entrusted to editors. It requires patience because you have to read every article closely to ensure that phrasing, mechanics, and grammar are flawless. If you find a mistake in an article, you need to read through every article to make sure that the mistake is not repeated. This tedious process can take many hours, but will be worth it when the publication goes to print. When you are copy-editing, you will be finished only when you are able to read through every article at least three times in a row without finding a single error.

There is a simple rule among editors around the world regarding the verification of facts and claims that appear in articles. If there is even a shadow of a doubt about the truth or accuracy of a claim, you have the responsibility as an editor to verify the claim. This applies to

places, statistics, dates, the spelling of names, and any other menial or prominent fact that might appear in an article. If there are too many suspicious claims or facts in a single article for you to check them all, demand that the writer send you a referenced version of their article. Patience and diligence are also necessary when you are verifying the facts and claims in articles, because being thorough as an editor is always more important than being swift.

When you are finished editing and copy-editing, you should re-edit every article a few more times. A single error, no matter how simple, has the potential to offend a reader and tarnish the credibility of a publication. Therefore, the importance of thorough editing, whether for correct mechanics or stylistic integrity, cannot be stressed enough.

If you find major problems within an article, such as inappropriate quantities of editorial content or poorly developed themes, you should gently but confidently approach the writer. Your goal should be to both intimidate and endear the student journalist who wrote the article, such that they admit their mistake and readily commit to becoming more educated in order to avoid such problems in the future. More dire problems, such as suspected plagiarism, require you to approach the writer in a more aggressive manner so that they realize the gravity of the situation.

Editors must understand that just as much as their jobs are about solving problems with articles, they are also responsible for leading and mentoring their colleagues. As an editor, you should always be respectful of your fellow student journalists, especially when you are editing their work. You should also take every opportunity to coach your less experienced colleagues and help them improve their skills. If you can balance the responsibilities of both editing and people management, you will be an effective leader within your publication.

By the time you are asked to be an editor for your publication, you will be an experienced student journalist who is talented at producing readable and credible articles. Your work as an editor will be a combination of applying the knowledge and skills that you gained as a student journalist, and managing and leading the other writers at your publication. As a keystone member of your publication, your contribution as an editor will be recognized by your colleagues and rewarded by future opportunities in the field of student journalism.

ACQUIRING CONTACT INFORMATION

If you know the name of a person you wish to interview, but do not have their contact information, there are a few techniques that you can use to acquire an email address, telephone number, and even mailing address. These techniques, which are employed by many savvy student journalists around the world, should only be used professionally and for the sake of securing interviews with eyewitnesses and experts who will contribute to the overall credibility and readability of your article.

The simplest method for acquiring contact information is to do a Google search of somebody's name, to see if their information is posted on a website. The obvious location for contact information would be on the company or organization website where they work. Many professionals have small biographies on the websites of their organizations with email addresses at the end. If you find out the organization of the person from your initial Google search but could not find their email address, you should call their company and request to be transferred to the person you want to interview.

When you are using Google, you should also search the name of the person with words and symbols that entail contact information. For example, if you wanted to contact a man named John Doe, you should search: John Doe bio, John Doe contact, John Doe @, John Doe contact @, etc. It is also worth scrolling through several pages of results before giving up on Google, since their contact information might be hidden away on an obscure website that does not receive much traffic. You should also be persistent and keep searching after you find an email address or telephone number, since some addresses or numbers are out of date and therefore useless for securing interviews.

Many experts who have written for academic or trade journals, or are members of professional networks, will have posted their email addresses as part of posting an article or comment. Most universities have a web page containing the contact information of almost all of their faculty members, such that if you are attempting to reach an academic you should be able to find his or her information posted on the Internet.

Another strategy to employ if your Google search does not turn up any hits is to begin calling groups who have worked with the person that you want to contact to see if they will give you their contact information. In general, most groups are hesitant to help if the person is not on staff, but will offer to pass along an email from you to the person that you want to contact if you are persistent. You will have better luck with this if you present yourself as friendly and amicable, rather than stern and cold.

If neither of these approaches works, you can attempt to guess the person's email address if you have a sample to begin with from their company or organization. Many groups will not post contact information for its officers, but will offer contact information for a public relations worker or a human resources manager. If you can't find a public relations page on a website, try to find where they place information about hiring as there will surely be at least one email address listed. Once you have a sample you can guess the email address of the person you wish to contact by following the format.

For example, if you found a sample email address of rthompson@time.com, which you knew was for Roger Thompson, and you wished to get Mike O'hooligan's email address, you should try emailing mohooligan@time.com. One of the authors of this handbook used this technique to contact somebody who proved to be a key interview for a radio piece that he was working on about improvised explosive devices in Iraq. If you use this technique you should always phrase your email as if you know the person's email address, and not admit that you are guessing their contact information. The person that you are trying to contact will assume that if you have found their email address, then you clearly know the right people.

Lastly, you can attempt to find the contact information for the person you want to contact using a phone directory on the Internet, such as www.whitepages.com. These are less commonly available outside of the United States, Canada, and Europe, but can be helpful. Unfortunately, since many people have identical names, you are likely to find multiple results. If the results are not too numerous you can begin calling the numbers until you find the right person, or compare the information to other facts you know about the person.

Finding the contact information of people around the world can be a difficult task with great payback if you are successful in acquiring an email address or telephone number. Many of these contacts will result in useful and interesting interviews. As we have mentioned throughout this handbook, by contacting eyewitnesses and experts about underreported topics of global importance, your article will improve greatly in credibility and readability.

ONLINE SOURCE CREDIBILITY

While much of the information available for use in articles is credible, many sources are questionable and not reliable enough for diligent student journalists. The accessibility of the Internet has been both a blessing and a curse to student journalists, insofar as a plethora of information is constantly available but there is no vetting process for creating websites to ensure that the information is reliable or accurate. Before drawing information from a printed source or document on the Internet, you should make sure that you can be confident in the credibility of the source.

Wikipedia is perhaps the most abused source on the Internet. As an excellent source of background information on essentially any topic, Wikipedia is useful to many student journalists who are trying to develop a general understanding of an important global issue. But Wikipedia should never, under any circumstances, be used as a source for articles because it is not verified or checked by any recognized editorial body. As a result, Wikipedia is essentially a mix of facts, disputed statements, and blatantly incorrect claims. If you are researching for an article and find an interesting fact on Wikipedia, you must confirm the fact with other more credible sources before incorporating it as a facet of your research.

Perhaps the most reliable source of background information on the Internet is the *MSN Encarta Encyclopedia* and the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, which have both been written by teams of experts over the course of many years. Facts that appear in these publications should be regarded as true and more reliable than almost any other source, although any truly surprising claims should be verified with another encyclopedia before being included in your article. These sources, however reliable for facts, should never be quoted in any article that you write over the course of your career as a student journalist.

Articles found on the websites of major publications can also generally be accepted as reliable sources for facts and other information. This is especially true of the major publications of record, so to speak, such as *The New York Times* and *The Economist*, as well as wires from Reuters

and Associated Press. As a weekly magazine with hordes of fact-checkers, *The Economist* is especially known for being consistently factually reliable.

If you need to verify information that is not available on any of the sources that have been noted, you should try to construct a de facto consensus by visiting the websites of many news organizations. If nearly every website agrees with a piece of information, you may assume that it is correct. If your original information came from Wikipedia, check the citation at the bottom of the page to see if it comes from a well-known site that has been verified by experts. Any indication that the fact is disputed by other websites should be noted and disclosed to your readers if the fact is used in your article.

Another basic standard for determining the credibility of information on the Internet is the quality of websites. Professional websites are very expensive to build and maintain. If a website looks professional and has been recently updated, there is a better chance that the information is reliable as it is unlikely that any group, other than a biased advocacy group, would spend a lot of money to intentionally post false information on the web. The quality of websites is not a perfect litmus test for the reliability of information, but it is a useful rule to help guide you in the right direction.

Your gut feeling should also be considered when you are determining the credibility of a source on the Internet. If you read a claim that says 1 billion people in Africa drink coffee, your gut should tell you that 1 billion people is a surprisingly large number. A little research would show that there are only 939,000,000 people in Africa meaning that for the claim to be true, about 106% of Africans would have to drink coffee. The point here is that when you stumble upon a surprisingly or simply unbelievable statistic or claim, it probably is not true and should therefore be verified against other sources and facts.

With all this said about the credibility of sources on the Internet, you should not avoid relying on libraries and books. While the Internet is tremendously helpful, there is still a great deal of information which has yet to be digitized and therefore only exists on the dusty shelves of libraries. While books are not foolproof, the cost of publication means that few books make entirely faulty claims relative to the Internet.

Overall, as a student journalist you should always err on the side of caution and try to verify any surprising or questionable facts that you stumble across when you are researching for your articles. Even if you verify a fact and are still uncomfortable with its presence in your article, you should either state in your article the disputable nature of the information or omit the fact altogether. By being diligent and honest in your acquisition and presentation of information and facts, your articles will be held aloft as credible examples of student journalism.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Almost any article that is based on interviews with eyewitnesses and experts is better than an article that consists primarily of regurgitated facts and other previously published information. As a student journalist, you want to make sure that you have good interviews to work with when you are writing your articles. In order to get interesting and perceptive responses from the eyewitnesses and experts that you interview, you need to have a solid understanding of the topic of your article and an arsenal of good interview questions that will encourage your interviewees to speak candidly and freely about their experiences and ideas.

Good interview questions are broad and detailed, yet specific and open-ended. Your interviewee should have no alternative for a short answer and they should certainly never be able to respond to a question with a single word, such as yes or no. Bad questions, on the other hand, are general and closed-ended, and allow the interviewee to provide a short response. You should keep in mind the strategic value of using simple questions that require simple responses to put the interviewee at ease as you get ready ask them a good question that will entail a lengthy and candid response.

The best questions are often created by bringing together several simple questions that could be responded to with curt answers. These sorts of questions will force your interviewee to respond in a manner that addresses several issues at once. Even if the interviewee does not cover all of the issues that pertain to your question, the response will cover at least a few. You should therefore be able to anticipate some aspects of their response, so that you are prepared to either ask several simple questions to get the background information that they neglected to provide or to follow up with another comprehensive question.

For example, if you were interviewing a politician about police brutality, you should not ask, "Do the police in this city care if they hurt protesters?" The politician will give you a standard response along the lines of, "The police are busy and overworked but their

primary concern is always the welfare of the citizens.” A better question would put the politician in an uncomfortable position where they have to provide a lengthy answer, such as, “How is your office confronting the problem of police brutality in this city?” This is a better question because the politician is forced to either give a lengthy answer to separate his office from the existing police brutality, or deny the fact that police brutality is occurring at all.

Another example is drawn from an interview that the authors of this handbook conducted with a radical environmentalist who was convicted of arson. The authors received a flat and uninteresting response when they asked, “Did you feel depressed when you were sentenced to twenty years in prison?” But the interviewee was willing to provide a lengthy and thoughtful response when the authors asked, “Has your attitude towards radical environmentalism changed now that you have spent time in jail?” Although the second question does not necessarily guarantee an answer to the first, it does ensure a more complex and therefore better response from the interviewee.

Good interview questions should be asked in a variety of ways, because sometimes an interviewee will feign ignorance or provide a coy answer. If you are not satisfied with an interviewee’s response to a question, you should simply ask the question again in a different way. If the interviewee is still reluctant to provide a full answer to the question, you should move on to another question and then ask the original again in yet another way. After being asked the same question a few times, most interviewees will either chastise you for pestering them – something that always results in a few interesting quotes – or provide you with the detailed answer that you were seeking.

Interview questions require thought and effort on the part of the student journalist, because only good questions will allow you to conduct a good interview. By having a small arsenal of both complex and simple questions at your disposal throughout an interview, you will be able to draw personal stories and other statements from the interviewee. Acquiring these statements will suffice as the material that you need to write a credible and readable article that is based on interviews and focuses on underreported issues of global importance.

NOTES VS. RECORDERS

Keeping a record of an interview is essential when you are writing articles in the style that is promoted throughout this handbook. Without either audio or written records of interviews, you will not have reliable quotes to use in your article. But if you do have accurate and well-organized records of your interviews, you will be able to reference statements made by interviewees months and even years after the interview was conducted.

There is much debate over the different methods for keeping records of interviews, and every student journalist has to find their own best method for taking notes during an interview. Traditionally, this was achieved with a narrow writing pad and a good pen or pencil, which allows a swift hand to quickly write notes on all corners of the smaller pages. Nowadays, many journalists rely upon a tape or digital recorder to keep a record of each interview. Opinions vary widely on the merits of the two forms of keeping records of interviews, although both of the authors of this handbook prefer using a tape recorder.

Some student journalists prefer to take notes because they are forced to concentrate closely on the statements of the interviewee, and because taking notes allows you to look busy (as opposed to bored) when the interviewee is speaking. Other student journalists prefer recorders because it allows them to concentrate on the little details of the interview, like the physical movement or audible changes in discourse. A major difference between the two camps is that notes allow a little more freedom in refining quotes when you are writing articles, whereas having an audio record of the interview means that you have to be very conservative in terms of how much you correct quotes.

Taking notes during an interview is incredibly trying, especially if you are not a naturally fast writer. If you do like to take notes by hand, you should make sure you have extra pens on hand and a ton of paper. You should also write selectively and try to develop your own form of shorthand note taking, so that you do not have to write every word said by the interviewee. Since you probably know what quotes

you want for your article, you should only write down statements that pertain to the topic of your article or are generally interesting.

If you prefer to use a tape or a digital recorder during an interview, you should still take notes of any particularly good quotes in case your recorder fails. Your notes should especially focus on the physical appearance and body language of the interviewee. To prevent common failures with recorders, you should bring extra batteries and, if you're using a tape recorder, bring extra audiotape. Both authors have had recorders die during interviews due to exhausted batteries, but they fortunately both had notepads and pens to record the rest of the interviews.

Whether you prefer notes or recorders, you will have much work to do immediately after the interview has ended. If you used a recorder, you will need to transcribe your entire interview by listening to the recording and typing the words. While this process is tedious, it will allow you to find quotes more easily and therefore employ your quotes more effectively, and it will also allow you to keep an accessible file of the interview for later reference. You should also write down any final thoughts, especially about the location of the interview and other physical details, before you forget such details.

If you took notes instead of using a recorder, it is crucial to sit immediately after the interview and review your notes. You should write down any details or additional quotes that you recall when you are reflecting on the interview. This is probably the only time that you can significantly – but respectfully and with the stoic integrity – modify quotes to better represent the intended message of the interviewee. When you think that you have more or less perfected your written record of the interview, you should type up your notes so that you have easy access to your quotations when you begin writing.

On the whole, the authors of this handbook generally prefer using recorders because they allow interviews to be smooth and prevent the loss of potentially crucial statements, but both have used notes extensively over the course of their careers as student journalists. The debate over notes and recorders is ongoing, but it really boils down to a matter of personal choice.

SKYPE INTERVIEWS

Student journalists who are unable to afford travel to distant provinces or countries but nonetheless want to interview eyewitnesses of international events frequently use Skype. As a free program available for download, Skype offers directories of individuals in almost every country, whom you can email, call, or otherwise reach out to and thereby find interviewees for your article. The proper use of Skype allows student journalists to conduct interviews with individuals around the world without ever actually leaving their desks.

While Skype is a vital tool for enhancing a story, especially when travel to your target area is impossible, it is never better than interviews done in person. In every case, you should pursue face-to-face interviews so that you can also take note of details like body language, which will enhance your understanding of the interviewee and provide additional material for your article. Depending on your article, the editors at your publication may be able to provide some funds to support your travel to a given area in order to secure in-person interviews with eyewitnesses, rather than relying on Skype.

Skype can be downloaded at no charge from www.skype.com. After you have installed the software, you will be directed to create a Skype account. In general, you should select a user name that has your name in it, as it enhances your credibility with other Skype users. For example, the Skype names of the authors of this handbook are `mcecilcockwell` and `Zach.Biggs`. You should avoid unprofessional or silly user names, such as `MonkeyMan`, `FatCat`, or `QtPiE`.

Once you have created an account and signed into Skype you will have a contact management window pop up. At this point you probably will not have any contacts listed, other than a help program designed to test your microphone. Most laptops have a built in microphone, while desktop computers normally do not. If you do not have a microphone, you can purchase them for relatively little money at an electronics store. In addition, to avoid feedback from the speakers on your computer, it is generally a good idea to plug in headphones or at least turn off any radio, television, or music players

in the room while you are conducting an interview.

When you are fully connected to Skype, you should create a profile for your account. If you click on “File” and select “Edit Profile” you will be taken to an editing screen. For the most part you can choose which details you wish to include, but in the “About Me” section you should always include your email address and a sentence or two identifying yourself as a student journalist working for a particular publication. A helpful option is to include all the languages you speak in the “Language” section so that users know whether they can contact you.

Having finished with your profile, you should begin finding contacts that pertain to your article. In the contacts window select “Tools” and click on “Search for Skype Users.” A box will come up listing various criteria for the users that you wish to find. Select a country, state and city as need be, as well as the language in which you want to communicate. Another option to consider is checking the tab that searches for people in “Skype Me Mode,” which means that the people who are referenced have specifically noted that they are willing to talk to anyone.

You can also choose to put yourself in “Skype Me Mode” by clicking on the green check on the bottom left corner of the contacts window and selecting “Skype Me.” It is generally a good idea to use “Skype Me Mode,” as there will be numerous individuals in the selected country and selecting “Skype Me Mode” ensures that you will find a smaller group of people who are willing to talk. Once you have filled in your criteria, you should hit “Find.” If no contacts appear, uncheck the “Skype Me” option, and search again. With “Skype Me” turned off you will also receive some results for users who are not currently online.

At this stage, you should select a name from the search results, and click “Add Skype Contact.” A new box will pop up asking you to include a message. You should write 2-3 sentences that mention basic information about your article and explain why you are contacting the Skype user. A sample message would be: “Good day, I am a journalist with the *The Epoch Journal* and I was hoping you would be willing to talk to me about the voting irregularities in your country. I want to find out what Iranians think of the current developments.”

You should return to your search window, which should still be open

and follow the same process with as many other individuals as you can. Normally 1 in 10 Skype users will respond to your message, so you should try to contact large numbers of people. Each person that you contacted will now appear in your contacts window with a question mark. Once they have accepted you as a contact, the question mark will change into either a green check or a gray X depending on whether the contact is online.

Since you don't know this person, it is usually a good idea to begin with a brief chat about who you are, as though you were conducting an interview by telephone. Begin by introducing yourself and broach the topic of your article. At this stage, if you want to speak with them via Skype, you should ask if you may call the person. If they respond yes, call the person by right clicking on their name in the contacts window and selecting "Start Call." Conduct your interview as you would normally. Make sure you find out as much information about the person as possible including real name, occupation, and residence.

Sometimes your call will not work because of a faulty Internet connection. In this situation, you should attempt to conduct a basic interview using the chat function. While it is acceptable to include quotations from a chat, you must actually speak to the individual in order to include the quotation in your article. Neither *The Epoch* nor *Dispatches* will accept quotations from a contact you have never spoken to. You can also download the free program Skype Call Recorder that records Skype calls, which is available at voipcallrecording.com/Skype_Call_Recorder.

Skype should be treated as a means for what are essentially telephone interviews conducted over the Internet. You should use Skype as frequently as necessary to contact individuals in faraway places who you would not otherwise be able to interview. With that said, you should always strive to secure in-person interviews when you are writing credible and readable articles.

REFINING QUOTES

Quotations are the foundation for articles that are based on interviews with eyewitnesses and experts. But transcripts and notes from interviews that you conduct rarely contain perfect quotes, and you will often be tempted to improve quotes by rewording them or adding extra phrases. As a student journalist, you must preserve the integrity of statements as they were said by the person that you interviewed, but also find enough good quotes to write an interesting article. This balancing act requires that you strive equally towards readability and credibility, preferably with a natural inclination towards the latter.

When you are reading through your transcripts and notes from interviews, you should feel free to make minor changes to quotes. This requires a bit of creativity and a lot of ethical integrity. The changes that you make should never alter the context or implicit meaning of quotes, or increase the controversial nature of a statement. You should make sure that key words within the quote are retained, so that your changes only clarify what you know the interviewee was trying to say. If you are ever left wondering if you made too many changes to a quote, you probably did.

Consider a case where you want to clear up a statement in your notes from an eyewitness, who said, "Them soldiers come around the corner stop looking around then running back real scared but not wanting fight to die." You could legitimately change the quote to something that would read, "The soldiers came around the corner, stopped, looked around, then ran back really scared not wanting to fight or die." But it would be unethical and unprofessional for you to change the quote to something that read, "The soldiers, who looked terrified, peeked around the corner but then retreated immediately because they were afraid to fight and be killed." While this latter example has greater detail that might interest the reader, it is made-up detail and therefore not a legitimate addition to your story.

You'll notice that nearly all of the alterations in the legitimate example are verb tense alterations. Many non-native English speakers will make mistakes with verb tenses, and it is generally considered

acceptable to correct these mistakes. Some authors however, prefer to leave some of these mistakes in place to provide the reader with a more authentic “voice” of the interviewee. In general these mistakes can be left only if they will not confuse the reader.

When you are cleaning up quotes, you should try to maintain some of the characteristics from the person you interviewed. This entails tactfully using punctuation to reflect how the person spoke, as well as introducing the quote in a strategic way to reveal their diction to the reader. Describing the way that the person spoke is often easier than using punctuation within the quote to reflect an accent or manner of speaking. Both require a great degree of integrity on your part as a writer, because even small and mutually acceptable changes to a quote can have broad implications that only surface after your article is published.

If the interviewee speaks with a regional accent, you should try to capture their manner of speaking with punctuation. An excited man from Texas, for example, might be quoted as saying, “If he needs a talkin’ to, well dangit, I’ll give him a talkin’ to that he ain’t gonna forget about soon!” This makes the quote more interesting, and helps develop the character of the speaker. If the interviewee stutters or speaks in nervous bursts of words, you should try to express that in the way quotes are presented. For example: “Well, let’s see, you know, let’s see before we talk,” John Doe nervously stammers before he turns his head and mumbles, “before we talk, yeah, let’s just see before you come over here.”

You can work with a bit more freedom when it comes to reorganizing quotes. While you should be very careful and considerate when you change the words and phrases being used by interviewees, you can be relatively rough in terms of mixing together sentences from the beginning of the interview with sentences from the end of the interview. Just like everything else in the interview, putting together sentences from different parts of an interview should only be done if mixing the statements together has no impact whatsoever on their apparent meaning or subtle implications.

The rule of thumb to remember when you are cleaning up quotes is that you should only make changes that help you describe the interviewee, or that help clarify the intended message of the

interviewee. You should never change quotes simply to make them more sensational or shocking. You should refine quotes so that they are both readable and credible, while respecting the integrity of the original statements made by the eyewitnesses and experts that you interviewed for your article.

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Journalists from around the world occasionally suffer for their efforts to enlighten the public about economic development, war and violence, as well as political corruption and oppression. Over the last few decades, hundreds have been killed and imprisoned for exposing scandals or expressing controversial opinions through their writing. A number of noteworthy documents and international agreements, which every student journalist should be aware of, exist to protect the rights of journalists around the world.

Although student journalists are rarely involved in the oppression of press freedom, it is important that you are familiar with the major issues regarding the freedom of the press and that you are fully aware of your right to write. If at any point throughout your career as a student you find yourself being oppressed or threatened, you should immediately contact your editors and advisors, and perhaps even seek help from press freedom groups like Reporters Without Borders or the Canadian Journalists for Freedom of Expression.

The most significant document regarding press freedom is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted in 1948 by the General Assembly of the United Nations. Article 19 of the document asserts, "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

Another document that ensures press freedom, which was adopted in 1966 and has been signed or ratified by virtually every country around the world, is the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Not surprisingly, this document mimics the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in many of its claims. Article 19 of the Covenant explains, "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice."

The Interamerican Convention on Human Rights was adopted in 1969 and has been signed or ratified by most of the countries in North and South America. The Convention claims, "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought and expression. The right of expression may not be restricted by indirect methods or means, such as the abuse of government or private controls over newsprint, radio broadcasting frequencies, or equipment used in the dissemination of information, or by any other means tending to impede the communication and circulation of ideas and opinions."

Finally, the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights, which was adopted in 1981 and has been signed by most countries in Africa, enforces many of the same principles that are laid out in earlier conventions and covenants from around the world. The Charter reads, "Every individual shall have the right to receive information. Every individual shall have the right to express and disseminate his opinions within the law."

Over the last few decades, many other regional treaties have been ratified for the sake of ensuring the freedom of the press, but no global document exists to protect journalists and other writers, apart from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Many countries protect journalists as long as they observe national and local laws, but some groups and cultures are notorious for oppressing both freelance writers and large media entities. As a student journalist, you will probably be sheltered from much of the abuse thrust upon reports and writers around the world, but you should nonetheless be knowledgeable and educated about the freedom of the press.

CONCLUSION

Student journalists are among the most important writers in the world. They are tuned into current affairs, work out of sheer passion, and maintain perspective on issues that professionals are occasionally unable to objectively observe. Student journalists can achieve access – the most important part of any journalist’s toolbox – on a global scale with virtually no resources.

The authors have based this handbook on their own experiences as student journalists. They do not claim to be an authority in any context on the matters discussed here, but as seasoned writers they believe that somebody must step forward to advocate this new and much-needed style of student journalism. Producing *The Epoch Journal*, writing this handbook, and launching *Dispatches International* have been their major contributions to the field of student journalism. Any suggestions or ideas would be welcomed by both authors and should promptly be forwarded to them.

This handbook advocates a style that is unique in the field of student journalism, a style that does not rely on regurgitated facts and requires that student journalists go to great lengths to secure interviews with experts and eyewitnesses from around the world. Clear and informative writing merely conveys the message of the quotes drawn from these articles. These interviews provide closure to readers around the world on global occurrences at a local scale and are the basis of every article in *Dispatches International* and *The Epoch Journal*.

The steps for writing credible and readable articles, as well as the guidelines included in the latter half of this handbook, are regarded as necessary by the authors. Everything else about the need for the style advocated in this handbook has already been stated. All that is left to suggest now is: go forth and write!