

A Few Not-So-Secret Tips for an Impressive Article

Tip #1: Cite your sources whenever introducing statistics or a data table!

Imagine this: You open up Time Magazine, and in the first featured article they report that 99% of the population currently have cavities. Doesn't this seem a bit odd to you? Wouldn't you like to know the source of their statistic? Similarly, it's important for you to identify *your source* whenever you bring up numbers in your article. If in doubt, cite your source anyway in your article--it can always be changed later.

Ex: According to the 2006 household Gallup Poll, 99% of surveyed people report that they have cavities.
NOT: 99.999999% of the population hate chocolate. 70% eat apples. (Where do these #s come from?)

Tip #2: Document any references whose ideas you reworded, used, or based your article research on!

Keeping track of your research references helps you write a more articulate article, and it helps us out should we need to verify or reword things, especially if you write about esoteric facts. If in doubt, cite your source of an idea, etc. in your article--it can always be changed later.

Ex: In fact, Dr. Doe's 2005 study in the Journal of Medicine found a correlation between watching television and your intelligence; the results suggest that television makes you smarter!

NOT: A study found that television makes you smarter! (No source listed on who did the study and where was it published)

Tip #3: Specify the degree and affiliation of your interviewees when first introducing them! Write it in this format: Name of Person, Degree, and Affiliated Institution.

Specifying the interviewee's degree and the affiliation establishes their credentials as a knowledgeable source for your article and any possible biases. In essence, this person knows what he's talking about. This becomes critical when "Doctor Joe" can either be a medical doctor with a MD or a professor with a PhD (or perhaps even both).

Ex: John Doe, MD, University of California, San Francisco, believes everyone should eat candy twice a day.

Tip #4: Use correct punctuation, especially with commas and periods--put them inside quotation marks.

Correct use of punctuation equates to a cleaner and easier to read article that would surely leave a good impression on your reader. Please put commas and periods inside any quotation marks.

Ex: Dr. Jane says, "An apple a day may keep the doctor away, but that's bad news for my business."
NOT: Dr. Jane says, "An apple a day may keep the doctor away, but that's bad news for my business".

Tip #5: Keep track of all correspondence between you and your interviewee, and if possible gain permission to use a specific quote in advance before putting it into your article.

Please keep a record of what your interviewee says. Not only does this help provide proof that you actually interviewed the person, it helps us keep track of what was said in case there is any dispute about it.

Save all of your emails if you conduct your interview through this format. Print them out and BCC your emails, especially if your interviewee writes a response back to a question!

For in person interviews, provide a tape recording copy of it, which by the way you should be doing anyway to appear professional and for your own reference. Or as a last resort, please provide a typed out transcript.

Telephone interviews: Please provide a transcript. It's that simple.

Tip #6: Avoid any editorials and biases that clearly taint your article. Provide both sides of the story, literally.

You're presenting the latest developments in research and discoveries, so you should avoid a preachy attitude. Be objective and present the facts; let readers come to their own conclusions.