

B COM (PROG)

SEM IV

English language

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TOPIC: FEATURE ARTICLE

A feature article is a type of non-fiction writing that offers an in-depth analysis of a topic or issue. It can be seen in contrast to other kinds of writing such as news reports, or a story. In some ways, a feature article is similar to a long essay, the difference being that it is usually written from a journalistic point of view. A feature article is detailed and descriptive. Also there is more room to present a point of view. Of course, the views presented have to be backed up by facts. It is not merely informative but entertaining too. Feature articles require extensive research and therefore time to write, so it is usual to find feature articles mostly in magazines and journals than in a daily newspaper.

FORMAT:

The format followed while writing a feature article is similar to that of writing an essay.

The feature begins with an introduction. The introduction outlines the main argument or premise of the article. It may also familiarise the readers with the topic and various already prevalent points of view regarding the topic. The tone and style of the article is also set in the very beginning. The middle section of the article is the body of the article. In this section, the argument is further developed and expanded in a logical and coherent manner. Facts and figures and other points of view may be introduced in the body to support the argument being made. Opinions of others, especially experts, can be incorporated to substantiate the argument, or offer an alternate view. Depending on the topic, diagrams, photographs, graphs and so on may be used to bolster the argument. The last part of the feature is of course the conclusion in which the points made by the writer are summarised to establish the central point of view.

HOW TO WRITE A FEATURE ARTICLE.

1. Choose a topic. This is obviously the first and the most critical step towards writing a feature article. Below is given a list of a few types of feature articles that are generally written. The topic needs to be chosen keeping in mind your knowledge of the topic, its topicality, its relevance, its impact and reach. Also, depending on the magazine, newspaper or journal one chooses to write a feature article for; that choice may organically lead to the topic as every publication has its own area of interest.
2. Research. This is key to writing a good article. In fact, even to arrive at the topic may require some research as one needs to be aware about the possible areas one can write about, the work that has already been done, and therefore the possible areas still left for exploration and examination. The more exhaustive one's research is, the better the quality and expanse of the article would be. Research is also critical to get one's facts correct.
3. Draft a query letter or proposal. If you are employed at a media house, you can pitch your idea for an article to the editor or the features editor and either get a go-ahead or get one after making suggested changes. However, if you are planning to approach a magazine or a journal, then you need to draft a query letter or proposal through which you put forth your idea for the article, outlining your basic argument, and what you hope to establish in its conclusion.
4. Further research. Once your idea has been given acceptance, more research should be done in order to acquire as much knowledge about the topic in order to arrive your own conclusions, or even to arrive at further areas of research. This may include not just consulting previously published material, reading books, but also interviewing specialists and consulting those who are experts in the area you are researching.
5. Draft. Once your research is done, and you feel that you have a good understanding of the topic, write down a first draft. Just put down the ideas as they come. Do not worry about the cohesiveness of your argument or the language or anything else at this point.
6. Write. Read the draft, reorganise what you have written in order to put through an argument, make little notes in your draft about anything that needs to be added or be done away with. Start writing. Use simple language. Keep the sentences short. The style of writing would be formal but it can also be conversational.

7. Revise. Make sure the final draft is as error-proof as possible. Check for grammatical errors and spelling mistakes. If a magazine or a journal has guidelines about format in terms of font size, font to be used, line spacing and so on; those need to be adhered to.

## COMMON TYPES OF FEATURE ARTICLES

1. Human interest feature. Certain topics are of interest to humanity at large. These may be related to poverty, the environment, or any topic which is approached from the point of view of the impact that issue has on humanity at large. Such stories also often look at the downtrodden and the marginalised of society and issues that pertains to them, issues which are usually neglected.
2. Personality feature Such a feature is focused on a personality but unlike an interview, provides a more in-depth and broader perspective on a personality. It may also often on the personality from a point of view or a lens that they aren't usually looked through.
3. News feature. The topic of such a feature maybe topical or one currently in news, but a news feature gives a more extensive view on the topic which may not be possible to do in a news item or report.
4. Investigative. These are articles whose aim is to unearth stories or facts that are hidden from the public eye. These are articles in which a writer almost adopts the role of a detective and sometimes even goes undercover in order to bring to light facts and stories that need to see the light of the day. These stories usually involve stories of injustices which the writer seeks to right by shedding light on them.
5. The how-to-feature. These feature articles offer guidelines about how to achieve a certain something. It could be an article telling you how to invest for post-retirement, or how to plan a back-packing holiday with friends, or how to arrive at a career choice.