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# Elkhart County 4-H MEDIA CLUB MANUAL



## Focus of Elkhart County 4-H Media Club

The focus of the Elkhart County 4-H Media Club is to teach 4-H members about journalism and how to become better communicators through critical thinking, objective writing and storytelling. Club members also learn concepts and ideas for illustrating the information they are communicating.



The main activity of this club and a practicum for the skills the members are being taught is the publication of five daily issues of the *Clover Chronicles* during the Elkhart County 4-H Fair. Club members sell all advertising and do all writing, photos and electronic layout for this publication.

As is typical of 4-H and as result of this project, some of members of the 4-H Media Club may decide a career in journalism is one they want to pursue. Others will take the life skills they learn and apply them in other careers as better communicators.

The 4-H Media Club does not charge its members a fee or dues to be in the club. The money generated by selling ads for the *Clover Chronicles* pays for publishing the newspaper during the fair and for selected club activities. It also pays for supplies, software and the computer and camera equipment used by the club for this project. Software used includes Apache OpenOffice Write for word processing, Adobe InDesign and Photoshop for page layout and photo corrections/enhancements (but not photo manipulation).

Because keyboarding is such an important skill to develop to enhance the member's story-telling skills for this project, the club also employs the use of the free services offered by typing.com. The club has an account set up and each club member receives an user name and password.

## Media Club Requirements

The Elkhart County 4-H Media Club is open to any 4-H member in grades 3-12. Club meetings are monthly. Meeting topics include interviewing and writing techniques (who, what, when, where, why and how), photojournalism, advertising design and sales, and electronic layout of publications.

The major club activity (project) is to publish the *Clover Chronicles*. The *Clover Chronicles* is published five days of the Elkhart County Fair each year (Monday through Friday). Four-H Media Club members plan to be available at the fair during the day to cover events as assigned by the member's assignment schedule, editorial team and/or club leaders. Writing and publication layout is finished in the evening which usually require some late evenings.

An editorial team is selected for each day. The team's responsibility is to edit submitted articles and decide which will be included in the daily paper and create the layout for that day's issue. The editors-of-the-day team must be available all day and are required to stay in the evening until their edition of the *Clover Chronicles* is finished.

## Project Completion Requirements:

*Requirements must be met each year of 4-H Media Club participation.*

1. **Advertising:** Each 4-H Media Club member must sell and collect the money for at least two ads by the specified club deadlines in order to qualify for a 4-H Media Club ID badge and 4-H fair pass.
2. **News Articles:** Each 4-H Media Club member is required to write articles during fair week, as assigned. Articles will be due by the designated *Clover Chronicle* deadline.
3. **Record Sheets:** 4-H Media Club members will complete a record sheet reporting their media club activities at the conclusion of their club year. Record sheets are due on the last Friday of the fair.
4. **Senior Article:** Members in their last year of 4-H eligibility are required to write an article about his/her experiences during their 4-H career. This must be turned in by the assigned deadline for inclusion in an edition of the *Clover Chronicles*.
5. **Editors of the Day Teams:** All club members will serve on an editors-of-the-day team.
6. **Fair and Assignment Schedules:** By the specified deadline, all club members will turn in their general schedule for when they are NOT available for Media Club assignments during the fair and a schedule of fair events they are interested in covering as a *Clover Chronicles* assignment. Extensions of the deadline for turning in these schedules are rare and, if granted, are due upon arrival at the meeting.
7. **Club ID Badge:** Each club member will be getting a club identification badge used to identify them as members of the 4-H Media Club and as professional media covering news during the fair. The badge is earned by club members through selling advertising for the *Clover Chronicles*.

## Writing is Important

Why is writing important? The ability to organize details and ideas and then communicate those ideas clearly and concisely is a good foundation and an essential job skill for life. The ability to think critically, write objectively and do storytelling is vital for any career.

## What is News?

News is a report of an event. It is a story about the activities of people and events that occurred or will occur. Examples include:

1. Hard news (urgent, highly objective, mainly events)
2. Soft news (trends, things of interest, fashion)
3. Investigative story (the story behind the story)
4. Feature story (the report of a person, event or some quality of that person/event that the writer's audience would find of interest)
5. Human interest (personality or event profiles)
6. Opinion (columns, letter to editor, etc., written from a subjective viewpoint)
7. Backgrounders (detailed information and/or history about people or events)
8. Side bars (very short pieces of information related to the main story)

News stories generally should include:

- As many names as possible with care taken to spell each name correctly.
- News should contain importance and proximity (closeness) to its readers.

## The News Story

News stories typically are told three times: once in the headline, once in the lead and in the body of the story itself. In the lead and body, facts are arranged in order of importance with the most important facts presented first and the least important details last. This style of writing is known as the *inverted pyramid* style.

The *inverted pyramid* offers two advantages in news writing: it allows the reader to grasp the news immediately and enables the editors to fit stories easily into the publication's layout. If the story is too long, it may be shortened by deleting one or more paragraphs from the end of the story while still informing the reader of the basic facts of the event.

Newspaper paragraphs are shorter than those used in books. In writing news stories, there is no requirement that paragraphs be of a certain length or contain a certain number of sentences. Single-sentence paragraphs are permissible and sometimes are needed to clearly convey story information. Information presented in shorter paragraphs also makes it easier for the reader to quickly follow the information flow of the story.

News stories should have continuity with sentences and paragraphs flowing easily and smoothly. The writing should be clear and short, avoiding irrelevant detail. A reporter will also relate the story in third person, identifying persons and titles.

A reporter is responsible for sticking to the facts, known as *objective reporting*. Some events require the use of factual descriptions to help make a meaning clear. This is called interpretation – supplying background information. This is different than *editorializing* in which a reporter adds their own personal opinion or bias to the story by selectively presenting facts.

# The Interview

Interviews are best described as a conversation between two people with one of them taking notes about the conversation. This could be a telephone conversation or a one-on-one conversation or a group conversation also known as a press conference where more than one reporter is participating in the conversation and asking questions of the individual(s) being interviewed.

For interviews, there are rules to follow:

1. Be courteous.
2. You have a duty to be factually accurate.
3. Double check the spelling of the name and title of the person being interviewed.
4. Don't assume you know about the topic.
5. Know about the person you are to interview.
6. Avoid questions that offer a yes or no response.
7. Relax during the interview; it's a conversation.
8. Go prepared with a list of questions. Remember there are no dumb questions.

Arrive early or on time for the interview. Dress professionally and be polite. Take something to write your notes on (paper or reporter's notebook). Take several pens and a pencil. Don't bring beverages to the interview.

Introduce yourself and give the name of the news organization you are representing. Devote your attention to the person you are interviewing. Take notes throughout the interview but also make eye contact with the person being interviewed! When taking notes, you should capture the essence of the conversation and jot down "good quotes" for accuracy. Be accurate but do not worry about capturing everything in your notes word for word.

Don't be afraid to ask follow-up questions for clarification or to repeat a statement the individual has made. Be open and listen to responses – don't be so focused on your questions that you miss something interesting that could be related to the story. Also feel free to ask if there is anything important to the story that was not discussed in the interview and if there are other people you should talk to about this topic.

Do not rely on a recording device even if you are working for broadcast media. Recording devices can only be used with the permission of the person you are interviewing. If you are allowed to use one, make sure you know how to use it and that it is in good working condition. Murphy's Law says about the time you rely on the recording device, it will let you down!



## Writing the story

Begin writing the story for the event or interview as soon as possible. Start by sorting through your notes looking for the most striking ideas/facts. The story will be presented in the order of descending importance in inverted pyramid style. Exclude your

questions and personal references. Use as many quotes as possible, but paraphrasing is acceptable without quotation marks. If paraphrasing, do not distort the meaning.

The lead, or first paragraph, is short. A typical lead is called a summary lead – the whole story in miniature. The remainder of the story is called the body, consisting of details. The lead answers: Who, What, When, Where, Why and/or How.



Leads should not be overburdened with clichés. Be alert for repetitive phrases.

## Proofreading

Once the article is completed, it is a reporter's duty to go back over the article for grammar, spelling and factual errors. Proofreading is an essential task that many writers do not take seriously. Reread the article, out loud if possible, to make sure that it flows well and that it makes sense as a whole. Use the spell checker and a dictionary.

Reading your article aloud from beginning to end may make you realize that it is less coherent or not as thorough as you had thought, and you may even have to do some last minute research to bolster a weak point. Hearing a sentence may make its faults clearer than when they appear on the page. You may discover that you have left out information or had forgotten to delete unwanted text.

A typo is no less an error than a spelling mistake. Use spell check but be aware that this will only pick up non-words. Spell checker will not catch errors where a different word was used although it not the word the writer intended.

Your article is not a trivial matter; you wish to show the reader that you are thorough and organized. A series of typos suggests that you are careless, and does not reflect well upon your work.

## Advertising

The cost of publishing the *Clover Chronicles* is supported through the selling of advertising for the *Chronicles* prior to the fair. Each member will sell at least two ads in support of the publication.

**Ads can be for publication for 1, 2, 3, 4 or all 5 days of the *Clover Chronicles*. The cost of the ad will vary according to how many days it runs in the *Chronicles* and the size of the ad. Those costs are detailed in the advertising contracts used by the Media Club.**

**Four-H Media Club members should start by approaching businesses and/or persons they are acquainted with who may be willing to support 4-H program through advertising in the *Clover Chronicles*.**

**Members should call (not email) the prospective advertiser and make an appointment to present the opportunity to advertise in the *Clover Chronicles*.**

**Prepare for the appointment in the same way as you would for a news interview: Arrive early or on time for the appointment.** Dress professionally and be polite. Take a copy of the advertising contract and some copies of the *Clover Chronicles* to show the prospective advertiser. Practice your basic sales presentation explaining the basics of the *Clover Chronicles* (use the 5 Ws of writing) and offer advertising as a possible resource or tool for the business. Don't bring beverages to the appointment.

Four-H Media Club members will return a signed contract to the Media Club by the specified advertising deadlines. The contract provides details of the ad cost structure and how ad materials are to be provided for publication. The 4-H'er selling the ad is responsible for helping to collect payment on the ad contract and may accept a check payable to the 4-H Media Club if the advertiser wishes to pay when they sign the contract. No cash should be accepted by the 4-H'er.

There are three deadlines for advertising:

- Renewal of special position ads that ran the prior year in the *Clover Chronicles*. Renewal of the ad commitment by the advertiser by this deadline holds the special position for that advertiser for the current year's issues. A special position not renewed by the deadline by an advertiser opens that position to another advertiser on a first available basis.
- Early contact of advertisers by Media Club members deadline.
- Final deadline at which all payments and receipt of ad materials are due. Ads or payments received after that date will be charged a late fee.

The 4-H Media Club leaders retain the right to refuse advertising copy that is viewed as objectionable and not reflecting the values of the 4-H program.

## Practice Assignments

### Assignment #1:

**Write a 250-word news report on a meeting or event you are attending at 4-H club, school, church or in the community. Remember to use the 5 Ws of writing (who, what, when, where, why and sometimes how) in doing the news report.**

### Assignment #2:

**Interview a classmate, friend or family member about an event they participated in or something they experienced. Then write a 250-word news story based on that interview. Use the 5 Ws of writing in putting your speech together.**

### Assignment #3:

**Make a list of businesses to approach to sell an ad for the *Clover Chronicles*. Write a 250-word advertising sales speech for use in selling the ad to a business. Use the 5 Ws of writing in putting your speech together.**

**Assignment #4:**

**Write a 250-word news report on a meeting or event you are attending at 4-H club, school, church or in the community. Do it using the inverted pyramid style of writing. Remember to use the 5 Ws of writing (who, what, when, where, why and sometimes how) in doing the news report.**

**Assignment #5:**

**Take a photograph of a possible news event using a digital camera, phone or tablet. Write a photo caption for the picture. Use as many of the 5 Ws of writing (who, what, when, where, why and sometimes how) as you can in doing the photo caption.**

**Assignment #6:**

**Take a photograph of a possible news event using a digital camera, phone or tablet. Write a photo caption for the picture. Also write a 250-word news story for the event to accompany the photo and caption. Use the 5 Ws of writing (who, what, when, where, why and sometimes how) and the inverted pyramid style for the story.**

# Journalist's Creed

I believe in the profession of journalism.

I believe that the public journal is a public trust; that all connected with it are, to the full measure of their responsibility, trustees for the public; that acceptance of a lesser service than the public service is betrayal of this trust.

I believe that clear thinking and clear statement, accuracy, and fairness, are fundamental to good journalism.

I believe that a journalist should write only what he holds in his heart to be true.

I believe that suppression of the news, for any consideration other than the welfare of society, is indefensible.

I believe that no one should write as a journalist what he would not say as a gentleman; that bribery by one's own pocketbook is as much to be avoided as bribery by the pocketbook of another; that individual responsibility may not be escaped by pleading another's instructions or another's dividends.



I believe that advertising, news and editorial columns should alike serve the best interests of readers; that a single standard of helpful truth and cleanness should prevail for all; that the supreme test of good journalism is the measure of its public service.

I believe that the journalism which succeeds best -- and best deserves success -- fears God and honors man; is stoutly independent, unmoved by pride of opinion or greed of power, constructive, tolerant but never careless, self-controlled, patient, always respectful of its readers but always unafraid, is quickly indignant at injustice; is unswayed by the appeal of privilege or the clamor of the mob; seeks to give every man a chance, and, as far as law and honest wage and recognition of human brotherhood can make it so, an equal chance; is profoundly patriotic while sincerely promoting international good will and cementing world-comradeship; is a journalism of humanity, of and for today's world.

-- By Walter Williams, Dean, School of Journalism, University of Missouri, 1908-1935

## Glossary of Newspaper Terms

- o Advertisement - a message printed in the newspaper in space paid for by the advertiser.
- o Banner - a headline in large type running across the entire width of the page.
- o Byline - the name of the writer of the article, usually appearing above the news of feature story.
- o Caption - title or explanatory note above a picture.
- o Cutline - information below a picture which describes it.
- o Dateline - line that tells where the story originated.
- o Edition - in a single day, a newspaper may publish several editions, each one going to a different part of its circulation area.
- o Editorial - an article stating an opinion of a newspaper editorial board, usually written in essay form.
- o Editorial Cartoon - cartoon which expresses opinions; appears on the editorial page.
- o Feature - a story in which the interest lies in some factor other than news value.
- o Filler - copy with little news value; used to fill space.
- o Flag - a stylized signature of a newspaper which appears at the top of page one.
- o Headline - display type placed over a story summarizing the story for the reader.



- o Index - table of contents of each paper, usually placed on page one.
- o Issue - all the editions of a newspaper published for a single day.
- o Journalism - process of collection, writing, editing, and publishing news.
- o Jump - the continuation of an article from one page to another.
- o Kicker - a short, catchy word or phrase over a major headline.
- o Lead - the first few sentences of opening paragraphs of a news story containing the answers to who, what, where, when, why and how.
- o Mass Media - any of various methods of transmitting news to a large number of people (e.g. radio, television, newspaper).
- o Masthead - the matter printed in every issue of a newspaper stating the title, ownership, management, rates, etc.
- o Newsprint - a grade of paper made of wood pulp used for printing newspapers.
- o News Services - news gathering agencies such as Associated Press (AP). They gather and distribute news to subscribing newspapers.
- o Obit - an obituary; a story of a deceased person's life.

- o Review - an account of an artistic event such as a play or concert which offers a critical evaluation by the writer.
- o Sidebar - a short story related to a major story and run nearby.
- o Typo - short for typographical error.



# Media Club Record Sheet

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Years in 4-H \_\_\_\_\_ Years in Media Club \_\_\_\_\_ Time spent \_\_\_\_\_

How many ads did you sell? \_\_\_\_\_ To whom? \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the articles you wrote to complete this project:

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Describe what you learned while you were working on this project:

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What skills did you learn that may help you in your future career?

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I have reviewed this record and believe it to be complete:

Signature of Leader \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_