

Simple Steps to a Better Yearbook

GRAPHICS

Less is Better

Pick one and stick with it. Each graphic on a page should be worth \$1 million. If yours is not worth that much, do not use it. Whatever graphic you use on the cover should be repeated throughout the book in some shape or form. It can be a great binding element, tying the different sections together.

FULL BOOK LINKS

Adding Unity

These are graphic elements that are repeated throughout the book in some shape or fashion. They could be a string of quotes across the top of a page, a package of quotes and mug shots, a cutout and a quote. You can repeat the exact same design on some pages, or modify the design a little, but not too much because you want it to be a unifying element.

ELEMENTS TO AVOID

KISS

Keep it Simple, Silly is the rule of thumb. Graphic overload is a problem. Avoid it. Avoid overuse of spot colors or too many different colors. No more than three (3) fonts per page. Consider selecting one font family and use its many variations. Avoid trapped text or trapped white space.

RAIL

Readability

To help the design of your pages, add a three (3) pica vertical rail on each spread. It helps lighten up the page and increases readability.

EYELINE

Connectivity

Another graphic element that helps in design is an eyeline – a horizontal line on each spread that stretches from left to right all the way across the spread. It guides the readers and connects the two pages.

CAPTIONS

Two points to consider

When writing captions, make sure the caption is close to the photo it goes with. Be very careful about gang captions and gang photos. They can get confusing. Make sure the connection between photo and caption is crystal clear.

TITLE/DIVISION/CLOSING PAGES

Dynamite

Make the title, division and closing pages dynamic. Come up with a concept early in the year and put your top people to work on it. Great photos are the key. If your staff comes back with anything less than magnificent pictures, send them out again. Keep doing it until they get it right and ALL of you are happy. Everyone looks at these pages. It is worth the effort. Reward your staffers with food, gift certificates, etc.

WORDS ARE IMPORTANT

Style Sheet

Find an AP or CSPA style sheet you like and post it in the yearbook room. Put it in the staff manual and make it part of the grading system. The staff needs to memorize these.

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TENSES

Follow These

Write **BODY** copy in past tense

For **CAPTIONS**, the first line is in present tense. The rest of the caption should be in past tense.

When the book is read 10 or 15 years from now, the copy will make sense if it is written in past tense.

Some **QUOTES** may be more appropriate in present tense. Let it make sense. "I want to be a doctor."

HEADLINES are in present tense

SUBHEADS are also in present tense.

Always use the word **SAID** as attribution – never anything else. Follow the rule of subject/verb,

and to be safe put the attribution at the end of the quote. So make each of your quotes are like this:

"I had a hard time figuring out where my classes were the first week," Ruby Solis (11) said.

NO, NOS

Do not do these

- 1.) Do not use passive voice. To fix this, put a person or thing as the subject of the sentence and use active verbs.
- 2.) Do not use the words "students", "most", "very", "several", "many", "thing", etc. Be specific.
- 3.) Do not editorialize. Do not say the team had a "great year" when it really did not. Do not say a student "tried his hardest" when you do not actually know if he/she did. If you want to say the team had a great year, get someone on the team to say it in a quote and use the quote.
- 4.) Do not use "this year" or "2013", "high school", or the name of your school, etc. Try to delete any reference to year or the school's name because, after all, you are not talking about your rival school, or 2014, etc.

PARAGRAPHS

Make sure you have them

Write in paragraphs; it helps with readability. Each quote should be a separate paragraph. If paragraphs are too long, follow the simple rule of counting words – no paragraph should be longer than 35 words. Be consistent. Whatever style we choose, we all need to stick with it and make sure everyone is using the same style.

CAPTIONS

Variety is the key

Captions are not just a description of what is happening in the photo and a way to name people in the photo. Captions are mini-stories that should be interesting and well written. And like all writing, variety is the key. So when writing captions, vary the lead.

NEVER start a caption with the person's name pictured in the photo. Lead into the caption with a quick, clear description – something interesting taking place or some information that you found out about the action pictured.

Do not simply describe what is in the photo – everyone can see the person is making a poster. Write about something else. If you don't know what to write about, go find the person in the photo and ask them more about what they were doing. While you are there talking to them, get a quote from them. Include quotes in every caption. Make sure the quotes have substance. Trite and meaningless quotes are unnecessary. Toss them out.

The first sentence of the caption should be in **PRESENT TENSE**.

The rest of the caption – including the quote – should be in **PAST TENSE**, unless there is a good reason. (See above)

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HEADLINES

Tied to dominant photo

Headlines are written in **PRESENT** tense. Do not use a period at the end. As far as capitalization, we should follow the normal rules – proper nouns are capitalized, all other words are lower case.

When you sit down to write the main headline, look at the dominant photo on the page and tie the headline to that photo. They must also be tied to the page topic.

NO LABEL HEADLINES If the page is about debate, do not title the page Debate. Likewise for sports, clubs, academics, etc.

SUBHEADS

Complete Sentences

Subheads are written in **PRESENT** tense.

Make a complete sentence with a subject and a verb. Do not use a period at the end. As far as capitalization, we should follow the normal rules – proper nouns are capitalized, all other words are lower case.

QUOTES

Face to Face

The best way to get good quotes so you can write a great article is to talk to people. We have quote forms that are handy for beginners and when we are short on time, but the best way to get quotes is to talk to people face to face. Nothing beats an interview for good quotes, because when you're interviewing someone you get to ask follow-up questions, and you get to talk about things they bring up in the interview that you had no idea about. For example, a football player could tell you he was put in the game after so-and-so was injured and it is the first time he played that position, or he was really nervous, or really excited or could not wait to have his chance to get in the game.

NO EDITORIALIZING Use your skills to get the interviewee to state their opinion and add it as a quote. That way, you can avoid expressing your own opinion. The article you write should be almost entirely quotes from people you talk to, and the parts you write – the lead paragraph, the transition paragraphs – should not contain any editorializing. So watch out for adjectives and adverbs. Generally, adjectives and adverbs are unnecessary. (e.g.: John said happily). Fancy adjectives and adverbs are also usually unnecessary unless directly said by a student. Instead of writing, "the team had a wonderful season" in the article, try to include a quote from a team member saying: "We had a wonderful season," Rachel Evans (10) said.

BE YEAR SPECIFIC. If you write a story – or if you are editing a story – and you cannot specifically tell it is about this year, rewrite it. Get quotes that pertain to specific games, specific plays, specific players. Try to get quotes about new things happening – perhaps a new offense the coach instituted, new teams in the district, a new coach, etc.

DO NOT FABRICATE ANY QUOTES OR ANY PORTION OF A QUOTE

ELEMENTS TO BE CAREFUL OF

Punctuation – Check comma and quotation rules and enforce them strictly. Nothing looks worse in an article than misplaced periods. These rules may contradict English class rules but are important to use correctly in journalism.

Abbreviations – The first rule of thumb is to avoid abbreviations. If you need to use one, check your style sheet. If it is not on the style sheet, check with your editor and/or adviser. Make sure the staff has a copy of the style sheet to easily correct their errors.

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ELEMENTS TO BE CAREFUL OF, CONTINUED

Numbers – The numbers 1 through 9 are spelled out – one, two, three, four, etc. After that, all numbers after 10 are Arabic numerals. There are exceptions. A person’s age is always an Arabic numeral. If a student is a freshman, our style is to use the number “nine” in parentheses after their name. (e.g.: John Swenson (9) said.). References to money usually use Arabic numerals. Check style sheet if you have a specific question.

Contractions – Do not use contractions. Period. That is a hard and fast rule, but there is one exception. If you have a quote and a person uses a contraction, you can use it because that is how we talk. But you should never use a contraction in your article, in your headlines or in captions.

Apostrophes – Possessives and years are tricky. Check the style sheet for possessives, but the general rule is to add an apostrophe and an “s” to a person’s name – even if the name ends in “s”. As for years, you do not add an apostrophe if you are referring to the 1960s, for example.

Widows & Orphans – What are widows? Widows are a single word at the end of a sentence that appears on one line by itself. A lot of time that single word is the word “said” because most of your quotes end with the word “said”. To correct any widows, after the story is formatted on the page try editing the paragraph. More often than not, you can find a word to remove that will bring the widow up onto the line above it. The other way to fix a widow is to add a few more words. You can also rework the sentence structure. See Bury the Attribution, below. What is an orphan? An orphan is a widow that appears at the top of the next column. Orphans are the worst. You fix an orphan in the same manner as a widow. Do not let a spread go to print with a widow or an orphan.

GIVING CREDIT

Names are important. The first time a person is mentioned, use their full name and grade. Any time thereafter, just use the last name only. This, of course, applies to one unit of text, such as when a person’s name is used twice in the same story or twice in the same caption. If the person’s name appears in the story and in a caption, follow the rule and use their entire name and grade on first reference, and then just their last name on second reference.

Spelling names correctly is **EVEN MORE** important. To ensure all names are spelled correctly, double check **EACH AND EVERY** name using the Student Locator. This goes for students, faculty and staff. For adults, use Coach, or Mr., or Mrs. or Ms. the first time. Just use the last name after that. If you do not know if a female teacher is married or not, ask her.

Bury the Attribution

Do not end a paragraph or a caption with the word “said”. Cut the quote in its natural stopping point or, ideally, between two sentences. For example: “For band we had to sell as much chocolate as possible,” Erica Johnson (12) said. “I sold four boxes but some band members sold 10 or 12 boxes.”

Person’s Name

Do not start a caption or a paragraph with a person’s name.

The Obvious

In captions, do not state the obvious of what is in the picture. “Do I look stupid to you?”

Provide significant and interesting information. The 5Ws and H are not always necessary but are a good benchmark. A quote can add voice to a picture.

Make sure the readers know which caption belongs to which picture.

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Common Mistakes

Every day = noun. Everyday = adjective. (if you are having trouble with that, use daily.)

There is a location. "Put the painting over there."

Their is a pronoun. "Their goal is to have a perfect season."

They're is a contraction for they are. "They're one of the toughest teams in the district."

Through vs threw

Affect vs effect Affect is a verb. Effect is a noun. Effect is the result or consequence.

Spelling of receive definitely, sophomores, embarrassing

PHOTOGRAPHY

Choosing Photos

DO NOT settle. If a photo is not a top quality picture, do not use it. You will (you should) hate yourself later for using a so-so or worse, a bad photo. To remedy the situation, 1.) Look at the all the original photos (all original photos are stored on the drive) to see if there is a better photo. 2.) See if it is possible to salvage a photo with proper cropping. Sometimes new staffers do not recognize a photo that is usable with proper cropping. 3.) If possible, take additional photos. That is an option if you are working on the football spread and there are more games, or if you are working on the English spread, etc. It may not be possible if you are working on the theatre spread and the theatre production is over.

Dominant Photos

The dominant photo should be the best of the best. It should embody everything the spread is about. It should be approximately two or two and a half times larger than the next largest photo on the page. There should be room somewhere on the dominant photo for the caption. That caption must have a quote from the person featured in the photo.

Cropping

Close cropping is essential. Proper cropping is essential. Make sure to crop out as much wasted space as possible – even if it means changing your layout because the "horizontal" photo you chose turns into a square photo when properly cropped. Crop out the debris and junk and partial body parts. Do not cut out the depth of field and the essential elements. Learn proper cropping at the waist and shoulders. Try to avoid cropping at the knees and cutting of bits of limbs such as hands and feet because it does not look natural.

Pictures on the spread

Vary the sizes of all photos on the spread. You should have a big dominant (papa bear), a smaller photo yet still significantly bigger (momma bear), and many varying smaller photos (baby bears).

Have a variety in both vertical and horizontal photos.

Make sure there is a variety in the number of people in the photos. In other words, make sure each photo does not have one person in it, or just two people in each photo, or three people. Have a photo with two people, one with three, another with four, another with a small group. Multiple people increase coverage. Vary the size of the heads in different photos. It adds interest. Mug shots must be vertical because people are vertical.

Flipping

DO NOT flip photos. Let me repeat this: Do not flip photos. Rearrange the spread if necessary

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Facing off the page

Make sure people in the photo are not “looking off the page.” This causes the reader to lose focus on the page and turn to the next one. If you love the photo, then rearrange the spread if necessary, or put the photo somewhere else. Again, do not flip the photo.

Photo Credits

Give proper credit to every photo. No kidding. It encourages the photographers because their work is recognized. Where would we be without photographers? Photo credits should be ALL CAPS, six point san serif type either at the bottom right or bottom left. Choose a spot and stick with it.

Eyes

You should be able to see the eyes in the person pictured in the photo. If you cannot see them, the photo is worth very little. The eyes are the gateway to the soul.

Angles

Varying the angle is important, so keep that in mind when you are taking photos. Get up on a chair for a bird’s eye view. Get down on the ground for a worm’s eye view. Always use the Rule of Thirds when you can. Use leading lines to draw the reader into a photo. Use repetition or patterns. An occasional silhouette is also interesting. The combination of all these tips and techniques makes for interesting photos and a more pleasing photo layout.

But when you are up there on a chair, keep in mind that you should avoid the backs and tops of heads. They are not very pretty unless you are using them for a special, desired effect.

Candids

ALWAYS use candid photos. Do not use posed shots. Posed shots are nice for vacations but not for yearbooks. Oftentimes we use set up shots in the yearbook, but when you set up a shot coach your subjects on what you want and need in the photo, and tell them not to look at the camera.

No mugging

The yearbook staff should stop taking these photos and soon the student body will stop mugging. There are two tips to avoid getting these types of photos. The first is to hang around for a while, if possible, and the students will soon grow tired of your presence and stop mugging. The second is to take a few mugging photos, and then tell the students that you (the photographer) needs to get a couple of photos where they are not mugging. So again, coach your subjects and have them look at what they are doing, or point to a clock on the wall behind you, for example, and have them look at that. The end result is you will have the fun, goofy mugging photos, and a couple of photos that are either actual candids (after you have hung around for a while) or look like they are candids (because you have done your job and set up a photo that looks like a candid.)

Club Photos

They are a necessary part of yearbooks. We have to have them in the book, but from a photographic standpoint there is nothing interesting about a group photo with row after row of students just standing there. Club photos go in the index section and list the names in the caption. Use Front Row, Second Row, Third Row, etc. The last row is the Back Row. Do not say “left to right” – it is understood. Crop the photos tightly and properly above the heads of the last row and at the waists of the front row. Feel free to crop out the backgrounds behind the heads on the last row. It is much less distracting. If the index/club photo section is designed well, we should not have any complaints.

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PRODUCTION NOTES

Meet All Deadlines

Think of deadlines with the fall holidays – we'll have a deadline around Halloween, another right around Thanksgiving and another right before Christmas break. Each of those deadlines is approximately 56 pages. The first deadline is really long because new staffers are still learning what's required and how to do it. Everyone is expected to "get it" by then – and be working on their spreads for the coming deadlines.

We should have **50 percent** of our book done by Christmas! (That means about 150 pages.)

After we get back from Christmas break, there's a deadline at the end of January, another in mid- to late-February and the final, absolute no ifs ands or buts deadline right before we leave for Spring Break. Absolutely everything has to be turned in to the publisher before we leave for Spring Break – otherwise we don't get our book on time.

Check for conformity

Check each of your spreads before you hand it in to the editors. There's a checklist to help with this. Do not just run down the checklist marking the boxes – makes sure you have actually done each and every thing on the list.

The big things to check for are to run spell check (Control + I) names spelled correctly, no widows or orphans, and the folio and page numbers are correct.

Links

What are links? Links is a term used by Adobe InDesign to designate photos, scans or other external artwork that appears on your page. Those photos, for example, are JPEGs stored in a separate folder. They are placed on your spread in InDesign and then linked to the page. InDesign tells you when you the links are broken or missing. So check all links. If, when you open up your spread, you get an error message about links, the computer is telling you that some links are broken. That means one of four things: 1.) The photo was trashed. 2.) The photo was moved. 3.) The photo was renamed. 4.) The photo is stored somewhere other than on the server, such as on the last computer you were working on. So, do not move photos after they have been linked to a page. Likewise, do not rename photos after they have been linked to a page. And store all photos on the server, that way they'll be available no matter what computer you use.

Folders on the server

We will show all new staffers – and returning staffers as well – the folder system on the school server. We need to use the folders properly and not create duplicate folders or new folders that no one else knows about. We will have a folder for spreads using the page numbering as the folder name, a main folder for photos and inside we will have folders for cheerleaders, band, football, volleyball, English, Foreign Languages, etc. We will have another main folder for staff, and inside there will be a folder for each staff member. The staff member folders are just for stories you are working on and other odds and ends. Do not store any photos in these. There will be a folder for photo backup, because each week every photo on every camera is backed up so we have a copy of everything. There will be several other folders at the start of the year, and many more added throughout the year.

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BOOK & AD SALES

Each staffer is responsible for – but not required to – sell books and advertising. Books are our fundraiser, so before you start thinking of ways to make money like washing cars, selling lollipops or chocolate, sell yearbooks. If we sell all our books we will pay our printing bill and make money.

Books start off at \$65 this year and after the first of the year the price goes up to \$70.

All book in-school sales must be accompanied by an order form. We use the order forms to keep track of sales.

We accept partial payments – a lay-a-way plan for books. Typically someone pays \$20 each payment. If they start making payments in October, they pay the \$65 price regardless of when they make their final payment. They do not get their book until they have paid in full. At school we accept cash, personal checks, money orders and cashier's checks.

If someone says the book is too expensive, or asks why it costs so much – you can tell them it is a custom made, 304 page, full color, hard cover book.

We are not going to order as many books this year as last year. Encourage everyone to buy the book early.

Staffers are required to carry yearbook order forms with them at all times to hand out to students.

And remember, you can tell students to go to www.balfour.com and order books online with a credit card.

Advertising is for sale for seniors and underclassmen – and local businesses too. Talk it up to your senior friends, teammates, booster clubs. Remind students that they can purchase an ad with their friends.