



10 Feature Stories

Notes

1. Klinkenberg, Marty. 2016. “Survivor, Trailblazer, Leader, Hero.” *The Globe and Mail*, December 23. Updated November 12, 2017. Accessed June 15, 2018, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/sports/hockey/fred-sasakamoose/article33409416/>
2. “Edmonton Man Keeps Unopened Christmas Gift from Girl Who Dumped Him 47 Years Ago.” 2017. Canadian Press, December 24. Accessed June 15, 2018, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/edmonton-man-keeps-unopened-christmas-gift-from-girl-who-dumped-him-47-years-ago-1.4464205>
3. Giovannetti, Justin. 2017. “Poutine on the Side: A Father and Son Rediscover Each Other on a Québécois Culinary Journey.” *Globe and Mail*, December 29. Accessed June 15, 2018, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/poutine-on-the-side-a-father-and-son-rediscover-each-other-on-a-quebecois-culinaryjourney/article37455104/?click=sf_globeffb
4. Loewen, Claire. 2017. “For Montreal’s Muslim Communities Eid al-Fitr Is a Chance to Reflect.” *Montreal Gazette*, June 26. Accessed June 15, 2018, <http://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/for-montreals-muslim-communities-eid-al-fitr-is-a-chance-to-reflect>
5. Robertson, Grant, and Karen Howlett. 2016. “How a Little Known Patent Sparked an Opioid Crisis.” *Globe and Mail*, December 30. Updated November 17, 2017. Accessed June 15, 2018, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/investigations/oxycotin/article33448409/>
6. Lowrie, Morgan. 2017. “Montreal Marks Anniversary of 1989 École Polytechnique Shootings.” Canadian Press, December 6. Accessed June 15, 2018, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/montreal-marks-anniversary-of-1989-ecole-polytechnique-shootings/article37221014/>

7. Elliott, Bob. 2017. "Memories of Johnny Bower Still Warm Hearts of Those Touched by Late Leafs Goalie." cbc Sports. February 2. Accessed June 15, 2018, <https://www.cbc.ca/sports/hockey/nhl/johnny-bower-memories-warm-hearts-bob-elliott-1.4517474>

Exercise 1: Feature Stories

Generating Ideas and Selecting a Topic

1. Canada's national statistical agency, Statistics Canada, has a helpful website to ignite the imagination on story ideas. The department provides economic, social, and census data. Its special-topics areas, studies, and media releases offer history and statistics on many subjects. Get to the home page here: www.statcan.gc.ca. Develop as many stories ideas as you can from latest data releases.
2. The concept of "universal needs" can help reporters choose a topic. Everyone is interested in the needs all human beings have in common and the ways of satisfying these needs. Universal needs are food, clothing, shelter, love, health, approval, belonging, self-esteem, job satisfaction, and entertainment. The following exercise demonstrates how students can use universal needs to find a story idea: Write the universal needs (food, clothing, shelter, love, health, etc.) across the top of a piece of paper. Down the left side, list some current topics in the news or pressing social issues (concerns of the elderly or students or parents, health care, unemployment, and teen suicide). Draw lines to form a grid. Fill in the spaces in the grid with "hybrid" story ideas created by combining the two topics, such as free medical clinics for students (combining the topics of students and health) or suicide rate among the homeless (combining the topics of self-esteem and unemployment).
3. Listen and observe to find a feature topic. Ride a city bus to the end of the line, or sit in the student union or in a cafeteria. Watch what people do, and listen to what people are talking about. Make a list of potential feature topics.
4. Survey students to get a story idea. Stand in the lobby of the student union or administration building or other popular places on campus, and ask students about their major concerns. If several students have a similar response, you might find that you have a good feature topic and angle. Qualify or narrow your questions to get informative responses. Do you want students to let you know what they think about Canada's policies on climate change, student accommodation on campus, dating practices among teenagers, national politics, or alternative medicine?
5. Read blogs and discussion groups on a news website, citizen journalism website, or other interactive places online. What are the issues people are discussing? What seems to be uppermost on their minds?
6. Google the top 10 searches for the day or week. These topics list subjects that are interesting to people and can provide the seeds of ideas for feature stories.

7. Pair up with another student. Set a timer and write for 10 minutes, completely free and uncensored, about one or more of the following personal topics: pet peeves, things I avoid writing about, things I am curious about, favourite places in my hometown, a specific holiday, my biggest problem as a child (or teenager). Take turns reading your papers aloud to your partner. Discuss how you could conduct research and interviews to make a story from one of the ideas you generated.
8. This time when you pair up with a student, list school experiences, such as advice to first-year students, what you wish you'd known when you first came to your school, good experiences, bad experiences, medical facilities, making friends, and living arrangements. Which ones would generate the most interest for a school newspaper? How would you conduct research, and whom would you interview? What type of research is needed for context?
9. Observe your surroundings as you walk to class. Make a list of 10 potential story ideas, such as dangerous traffic circles, bicycle safety, students who talk on cell phones while walking to class, or places to eat on campus.
10. The Poynter Institute offers this top 10 quick tips to develop story ideas. Develop a list of story ideas using these tips. <https://www.poynter.org/news/10-ways-generate-story-ideas>

Exercise 2: Feature Stories

Ideas for Campus Features

Here are 20 ideas for feature stories that you can write on your campus. Interview some students affected by the issues as well as authoritative sources.

1. Tuition is increasing nationally. What is the situation on your campus? How are students paying for their education?
2. Do more students today than 10 years ago work to support themselves? What are the numbers of students who work full- or part-time? Do they work on campus or elsewhere? How hard is it to find a job on campus?
3. Is the number of international students increasing on your campus? Compare your local statistics to national levels. Why do international students attend undergraduate or graduate programs in Canada instead of elsewhere?
4. What does your campus do to assimilate international students into the student body? Are international students comfortable pursuing a degree on your campus and in your city?
5. Campuses have counselling centres. Who frequents them the most often—undergraduate, master's, or doctoral students? What are the most common reasons that students visit counselling centres?

6. Students often experience stress while completing a college or university education. Is there a different type of stress associated with undergraduate, master's, or doctoral students?
7. Does your campus have an ombudsman? What are the most frequent problems he or she hears?
8. Many colleges and universities have study-abroad programs in which faculty members take students to another country to study a topic for credit in a particular class. What are the most popular programs? Why are they so popular? Are there programs in warring countries, and if so, what safety provisions are made? You should get some quotations from students who have participated in these programs.
9. Plagiarism and fabrication seem to be increasing on campuses nationally. What is the situation on your campus? Compare it to national figures. What are the punishments for cheating?
10. Think about a national issue or trend, and make a local comparison, using the people on your campus.
11. What are the best part-time jobs for students on your campus? Who earns the most money and enjoys the best hours and benefits? (Students who earn tips—bartenders, baggage handlers, servers in restaurants—often earn hundreds of dollars during weekend shifts.)
12. Write about your institution's use of part-time faculty members. Are part-timers well paid? What are the advantages and disadvantages of employing them? Why do they teach, and compared to your full-time faculty members, how qualified are they?
13. To obtain more practical experience, many students complete internships, and some students must do so. Typically, many interns are not paid. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of internships.
14. Write about the problems and perceptions of physically challenged students. You might look specifically at the problems of students who are blind or use wheelchairs.
15. If some buildings on your campus are named after individuals, write about several of these individuals, explaining who they were and why they were honoured.
16. What, if any, are the advantages to being an athlete (or an honours student) at your institution? Do athletes have to meet the same entrance requirements as other students? Do they enjoy special housing, food, or financial aid? Do they have special tutors or registration times?
17. How easy is it for the students on your campus to obtain credit cards, how many overspend, and where do they find help?
18. Interview people who come to your campus to interview and hire graduating seniors. What do they look for? What common mistakes should job seekers avoid? What advice would they give students interviewing for jobs?
19. Write about student loans and the ability of students to repay the loans after graduation.
20. Interview the oldest student or faculty member on your campus. What was schooling, fashion, work, or etiquette like when that person was growing up? Choose one topic for an in-depth story.