

1930

## EC1604 Revised 1930 Telling News of Club Work

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Revised  
1930

Nebraska  
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK  
IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS  
U. of N. Agr. College & U. S. Dept. of Agr. Cooperating  
W. H. Brokaw, Director, Lincoln

Extension  
Circular  
1604-30

#### TELLING NEWS OF CLUB WORK

"Looky, Ma! See! That's what I wrote!" Can't you picture yourself the minute you notice your first club story in print in the paper where hundreds or maybe thousands of people will read it.

As news reporter of your club you have an opportunity, not a job. It is an opportunity to help your editor and your community as well as your club. People believe what they see in print. "I see by the paper - " is a common expression you have heard lots of times. Let's give folks a chance to see by the papers all about this 4-H club work in which we are so interested.

#### Other Reporters Have Done It

Twice as many Nebraska boys and girls will belong to 4-H clubs in 1930 as in 1928. It is the interest in club work that is growing. Boys and girls are not mushrooms, they have not doubled in number in the two years.

Club activities have attracted attention. News reporters have written the news of these activities. Editors have recognized the interest and importance of the items as community and state news. Nothing is left for the reader to do but read and believe that club work is great stuff for the kids.

There may still be a few neighborhoods left where folks have never heard of club work, but I doubt it. There are, however, hundreds of neighborhoods in which clubs have never been organized. Over 100,000 boys and girls in Nebraska do not belong.

#### Plenty to Do Yet

Which is another way of saying there is plenty for the newspapers and the reporters to do in 1930 and for years afterward. All the eligible boys and girls will never belong to clubs, but the proportion is only one out of ten now.

Besides reaching out and spreading the good of club work to new communities, news writing and news stories can do a lot of good right at home. Folks who read all about it in the paper will think the club is doing things worth while to get its name in the paper. Club members will think they have a real reporter when they see the news in print.

How to write the news stories and how to get them to the editor will be discussed in the rest of this circular. Ways of improving stories will be taken up in other circulars this summer.

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### Why Newspapers Are Like They Are

Let us consider newspapers as billboards, hung out once a day, week, or month for people to read. Editors have figured out that people will read quickly and easily if the paper contains headlines to attract the eye. Editors know that people do not finish reading a news story that does not interest them, so they want their stories written with the important and interesting facts first. In short, newspapers are prepared for busy people to read in a hurry. Facts are arranged in the story, and stories in the paper according to the amount of interest they hold for the greatest number of people.

The best text book to study on news writing is the better class of newspapers themselves. As you read over other reporters' stories and other news items, keep in mind that few perfect stories are ever written, and it is possible to "Make the Best Better" in our 1930 4-H club news writing.

### The Old, Old Story

When you read club news, one thing will probably strike you as monotonous. It is the cut and dried form, "The Busy Bees sewing club met at the home of Susy Brown last Friday and ten were present." Editors are beginning to kick about it. Readers must be tired of it.

### Aims of 1930

The aim of every news reporter in 1930, therefore, should be to break away from the old rubber-stamp form of starting the story and add some youth and originality to it. Meetings are held to do things. What was done is of more interest and importance than the fact that the club met.

Youth and originality can best be added to the news stories by relating little incidents that are unusual, including names of individuals and telling what they did, and by using concrete examples rather than abstract general statements and opinions.

To practice what I have just been preaching, here is an example:

"THE JOLLY WORKERS CLUB WOULD RATHER WORK THAN EAT. THE GIRLS WILL SERVE NO REFRESHMENTS AT MEETINGS THIS YEAR. THEY HATE TO TAKE THE TIME FROM THEIR REGULAR CLUB LESSONS.

"HELEN ADAMS AND FERN WALKER DEMONSTRATED HOW TO MAKE GOOD JELLY AT THE MEETING WITH MRS. F. R. ADAMS, THE LOCAL LEADER, APRIL 25. THEY DID NOT HAVE TIME TO FINISH THE JELLY, BUT MEASURED OUT EQUAL PARTS OF JUICE AND SUGAR, COOKED IT, AND TOLD HOW TO TEST IT. THEY ILLUSTRATED GOOD AND POOR JELLY WITH SAMPLES OF PERFECT JELLY, JELLY LIKE RUBBER, AND SOME LIKE SYRUP. NEITHER WOULD ADMIT WHO MADE THE RUBBER AND WHO MADE THE SYRUP.

"SEVEN OF THE EIGHT MEMBERS WERE PRESENT. MARGARET STEARN, VICE-PRESIDENT, HAD CHARGE OF THE BUSINESS MEETING."



### Features of a Good Story

The example above starts out with a statement which interests everyone. It is different and unusual. Everyone likes to eat, and most people would rather eat than work.

Two names of girls are mentioned in the second paragraph. What they did and a little bit about how they went at it are included. Again, human interest is brot out in the latter part. Lots of women have bawled over rubber jell and syrup. Lots of men have tried to eat it.

The third paragraph is a matter of record about the attendance and the business meeting. This might have been the first time Margaret ever had charge of a business meeting. It was quite an event to her, and she should appreciate mention of her part in the meeting.

### Here's a Poor One

Contrast the example above with the one below:

"THE JOLLY WORKERS CLUB MET AT THE HOME OF MRS. F. R. ADAMS, THE LOCAL LEADER, ON APRIL 25. SEVEN MEMBERS WERE PRESENT. THERE ARE EIGHT IN THE CLUB. MARGARET STEARN, THE VICE-PRESIDENT, TOOK CHARGE OF THE MEETING, THE PRESIDENT BEING ABSENT. ROLL WAS CALLED AND BUSINESS TAKEN UP. THERE WAS NO NEW BUSINESS EXCEPT THAT WE DECIDED NOT TO SERVE REFRESHMENTS THIS YEAR BECAUSE IT TAKES SO MUCH TIME OUT OF THE STUDY OF THE CLUB LESSON.

"TWO OF THE GIRLS DEMONSTRATED THE MAKING OF JELLY. THEY DID NOT HAVE TIME TO FINISH, BUT THEY SHOWED AND TOLD HOW JELLY IS MADE. THE OTHER GIRLS SHOULD HAVE NO TROUBLE WITH IT NOW.

"ALL THE OTHER PHASES OF THE LESSON WERE STUDIED BY THE GIRLS AND THE LOCAL LEADER ASSIGNED THE DEMONSTRATION FOR THE NEXT MEETING. AT A LATE HOUR WE DEPARTED AFTER A VERY PROFITABLE AND ENJOYABLE AFTERNOON."

### What's the Matter With It.

This second story starts with the usual first sentence. It wastes words and includes some unimportant facts. It follows the clock by stating what happened first, next, and last. The sentence about roll call lacks force because it is written in passive voice. The next sentence includes a first person pronoun instead of third person as required in good news writing.

The names of the girls who demonstrated are not mentioned, and the statements about what they did are too general to be useful to readers. The sentence about the other girls not having trouble with jelly is editorial in nature. The last paragraph adds very little to the story, it contains another first person pronoun, and a statement of opinion regarding the profitable and enjoyable afternoon.



These are among the more common mistakes in news stories. Study over these two news stories until you can see the differences. You may see hundreds of stories like the second one in the newspapers this year and next, but our aim is to make as many of the stories like the first one as possible.

We do not mean that you should use the first story as a model, and try to write each of your stories like it this year. It is only an example to illustrate the principles of news writing.

### How To Get The "Dope"

Now that we have considered what it is we want in our stories, let us figure out a way to get the "dope" for the story. In the past we have suggested that boys and girls take notes at the meetings so they can have all the facts before them when they write the story. The idea of taking notes is fine in theory, but few reporters can do it in actual practice. There are other things in the meeting to think about. While a beginning reporter is laboring with notes about one little motion, the rest of the club may put over something of importance which the reporter will miss entirely.

At the start then, we believe it is better to trust your memory during the meeting but to jot down the notes after the meeting and with the help of the local leader and secretary. Get the facts from the secretary about the business meeting, and write down the names of boys and girls or adults who took special part in the program of the meeting. Be certain that you have the first names or initials of everyone, and that you have the names correctly spelled. Add a few comments or notes of your own that will help you remember what happened. If someone summarized a discussion in a clever way, try to copy down that summary. If some happy thought comes into your head, like the one about the girls who would rather work than eat, jot it down also.

### Favorite Recipe

Just before you close your notebook, ask yourself if you have the answers to these questions, - Who is this about? What did they plan or do? When did the event take place? Where was it? How did it happen or how was it done? Why did it happen or why was it done? If you have all these things down, you have the ingredients for a news story.

Mixing up this batch of facts into a news story is the next step. It should be done soon afterward. If you are a cooking club girl, you would not think of getting the flour and lard and salt and other things out on the kitchen table in the morning before you went to school, and then baking the biscuits that night when you came home.

### Write Headline First

About the best way I know of to start a news story is to think out about six words, or less, that would make a headline. For instance, "Would Rather Work Than Eat" would make a good headline over the story we have been discussing. After

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that headline is written, all you need to do to start your story is to fill in the subject of the sentence, and possibly tack the When and Where on the end.

Then add another sentence or two to the first paragraph to relate other facts or back up the first statement. The second paragraph should be about another phase of the meeting, or a further development of the first sentences. A third paragraph may be added to include the less interesting and important facts. Few stories should be more than three paragraphs long. In a later circular we will discuss length of news and the difference between community news, county news, and state and national news.

Leave your headline on the story if you wish. Some editors will not like it because they want to write their own, but some of them will see the news value of your story in your headline. If some of them do want to change the heading, that is their privilege.

#### Show It To The Family

Now that the story is written, show it to your parents, leader, or other members of the club. Ask them to help you make it better, but if they begin to make an old fashioned, rubber-stamp story out of it, show them your news writing lesson and tell them where they are wrong.

Rewrite the story once or twice. This circular has been rewritten several times, and should have some more revision, I know. Practice makes perfect, and it takes that and patience to do anything well.

#### Take It To The Editor

When the story is finished to the best of your ability, take it or send it to your editor. Take it to a local editor if you can. Tell him your name, visit with him a little if he has the time. Tell him about your club, and how you are trying to give him real news from out in your community. Don't ask him to run it to help the club, tell him you are glad to help him get the news ready for his paper.

Notice how he uses the story but don't be disappointed if he sticks it out of sight. Try another one for him, and try to make it so good he can't pass it up. We know it is gratifying to see stories well treated in the paper, but the fellow who gets the most out of this news writing will be the chap who must make his stories good to get them into print.

Fortunately, the paragraph above will apply to only a limited number of cases. Most of the editors of Nebraska have been friendly and cooperative in their attitude toward all 4-H club news that is written as real community news.

#### A Few Rules

Write plainly, on one side of the paper. Use sheets not larger than 8½ x 11 inches, white or yellow paper. Leave the top one-third of the first page blank excepting for your own name and address in the upper corner. Number the second and following pages at the top and draw a circle around the number. Put your name at the top of each sheet.

(Prepared by Elton Lux, Extension Editor)