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EC61-519 Writing Home Extension News

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E.C. 61-519

Writing

HOME EXTENSION

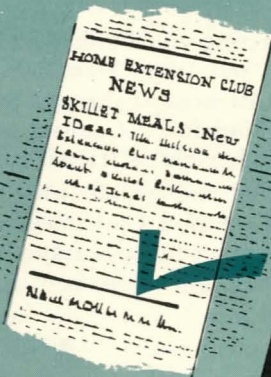
NEWS



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Writing Home Extension News

by Elizabeth Fitzgerald and Dick Fleming
Assistant Extension Editors



So you are a Home Extension Club Publicity Chairman. It's up to you to let the public know of your club's activities and projects. Much has been done to improve Nebraska's homes and communities through this well-rounded phase of the Extension program.

Every Home Extension Club member has a right to be proud of her club's achievements and activities. It is your job to let others know what your club is doing. This can be done through stories and pictures in newspapers as well as on radio and television.

By electing you Publicity Chairman, members of your club believe you can tell "The Home Extension Story." One important way of telling this story is through stories in newspapers. Many people will be watching for the stories you write—members of your club, members of other clubs, friends, relatives and your newspaper editor.

Many of the people who will read your stories were not at the Home Extension Club meeting and do not know much about your club. That's why it is important for you to report the news clearly and briefly. This bulletin will help you do just that.

WHAT TO REPORT

Most all Home Extension Club activities are newsworthy. There is a wealth of good story material right in your own club and community.

One of the secrets of good reporting is recognizing news. What is news? It has been defined as information that is timely and of interest to many people.

Club meetings make news. It is possible to write an account of almost every meeting in a way that will interest editors and readers.



Here are some typical Home Extension Club activities that are newsworthy:

Demonstration and Discussion Lessons.

Guest speakers at club meetings.

Community service projects.

Handicraft and recreation meetings.

Special projects.

Reading and citizenship projects.

Booths at county fairs and at other public events.

Music and choruses.

Christmas parties.

Feature stories on members' accomplishments resulting from Home Extension work.

Fun nights.

County spring teas.

National Home Demonstration Week.

Style shows.

Tours and trips.

Recognition programs.

Home Economics Student Recruitment.

Special events attended by club members (Recognition meetings, State Council meetings, Feeders Day, Homemakers Day, etc.)

Year's program.

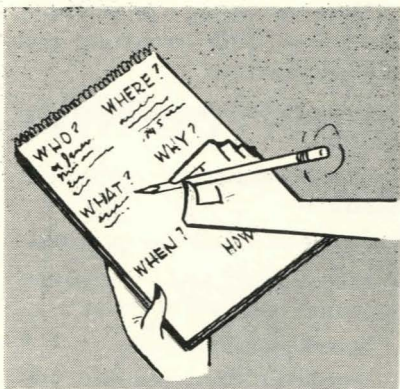
Family picnics and parties.

Guest Day.

Demonstrations.

Exhibits (county fair, store windows, etc.)





GATHERING THE NEWS

Taking notes probably is one of the most important phases of accurately reporting timely, interesting items. Without good notes it will be impossible to write a good news story.

Good notes are not difficult to take. Just jot down the things that interest you most at the meeting. It's important to get plenty of details and be accurate.

Your notes should answer the five W's and the H.

WHO—is the name of a person, organization or group of persons.

In your case it is the name of the Home Extension Club and the members who take part.

WHAT—is the meeting, program, election, lesson, etc.

WHEN—is the time. Be exact as to time and date. Not last Tuesday, but Tuesday, Oct. 3 at 2:30 p.m.

WHERE—is the place. It might be the Park, Odd Fellows Hall, Grange Hall or the home of Mrs. John Doe, Route 3, Abilene.

WHY—is the reason. The meeting was held to elect officers, to conduct a lesson, to learn how to do something.

HOW—did it happen. How was something done. How does one prepare a well-balanced meal?

When the meeting is over, scan your notes to see if you have any questions. Are all the names spelled correctly? Do you have the correct wording for important decisions reached at the meeting? Right after the meeting is the best time to gather such facts. It may be difficult after the members and officers have gone home.



WRITING THE NEWS STORY

Newswriting can be the easiest kind of writing. It pays dividends, too, in letting the public know about the worthwhile projects your club is carrying out. Your Extension club is an educational group with a purpose—not just a social gathering.

If you have taken a good set of notes at the meeting, it should be easy to write the story. It's best to do it immediately upon returning from the meeting as you may remember the little details that will help improve your story. Then your story will be ready in time for the newspaper editor.

How do you write a news story: Here are four steps to follow:

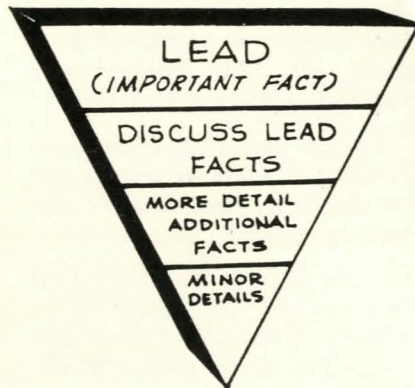
1. Use the most important or interesting fact for the opening paragraph or "lead." This catches the readers' attention and makes them want to read further. Here are some examples:

GOOD LEADS

The mechanism and efficient operation of an automobile were explained to the Homemakers Extension Club Thursday, May 21. The program was presented by the hostess, Mrs. Jack Jones and her husband.

Thirteen members of the Hope Extension Club had a skillet supper when they met at the home of Mrs. Sam Walters Thursday, February 25.

2. Use the next most important fact in the second paragraph and succeeding paragraphs until you have covered the main points. This is known as the **inverted pyramid** style of writing. By following this procedure the most important facts are placed at the beginning of the story and the least important facts at the end.



3. Include the five W's and H.

- a. **WHO**—presided or spoke?
- b. **WHAT**—happened that will be of interest to others?
- c. **WHEN**—did the meeting take place in terms of the exact time?
- d. **WHERE**—did the meeting take place?
- e. **WHY**—did the president call a special meeting?
- f. **HOW**—did it happen?

4. When you have covered the main points, **STOP**. No news story has a real conclusion, it just stops!

Here's what we mean by news style in writing. The story at left is copied just as it was written. The same story has been rewritten in news style at the right.

A TYPICAL STORY

The Hillsdale Home Extension Club met Feb. 23 at the home of Mrs. Harry Slyter with Mrs. Ben Attebery co-hostess. A dessert luncheon was served to the 19 members present.

The president, Mrs. Raymond Miller, presided at the business meeting. Mrs. Loren Long led the group in singing "The Star Spangled Banner," which was followed by the flag salute and collect.

Mrs. Mike Kippenberger and Mrs. George Smith were introduced as new members. Mrs. John Jones was welcomed as a guest. Mrs. Joe Stafford was made an honorary member.

Pennies for Friendship were gathered. Donations were made for the Heart fund and the diabetic camp fund.

Seven members attended Homemakers Day July 10 at Abilene. Reports on safety and citizenship were given by the leaders.

The lesson on "skillet meals" was presented by Mrs. Mary Jones and Mrs. Loren Long.

The next meeting will be at the home of Mrs. John Thomas on Aug. 15. Mrs. John Doe will be co-hostess.

REWRITTEN

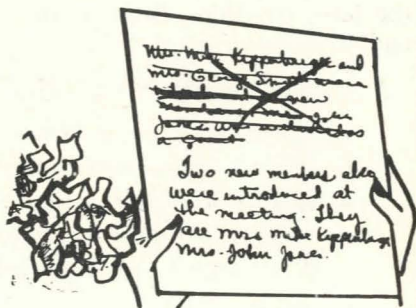
Mrs. Joe Stafford was made an honorary member of the Hillsdale Home Extension Club at the regular meeting July 15 in the home of Mrs. Henry Slyter, with Mrs. Ben Attebery co-hostess.

Two new members also were introduced at the meeting. They are Mrs. Mike Kippenberger and Mrs. George Smith. Mrs. John Jones was introduced as a guest.

The program included a demonstration on "skillet meals" by Mrs. Mary Jones and Mrs. Loren Long. Reports on safety and citizenship were given by the leaders.

Collections were taken among the 19 members present for Pennies for Friendship, the Heart Fund and the Diabetic Camp Fund.

The next meeting will be held Aug. 15 at the home of Mrs. John Thomas.



What makes the difference?

—The typical story sounds more like the secretaries minutes. Most important features of the meeting should be in the first paragraph: such as lesson, new members, etc.

—Someone always presides at a business meeting. This should go in minutes—not in a news story.

—Due to lack of information about the lesson the honorary member was chosen to go into the lead when the story was rewritten. In most cases the lesson will be of most interest.

—The person leading the singing is not newsworthy.

—No addresses were given in the typical story.

—TAKE GOOD NOTES. It's difficult to make a cake without ingredients.

What if there were no new members, no elections, or anything you actually consider newsworthy except the lesson? After all, the lesson does distinguish your Home Extension Club from the many other clubs in the community. Why not pass along some of the "meat" from this educational program to readers who are not members. For example:

Hillsdale Home Extension Club members learned of many types of foods that can be prepared in an electric skillet at the July 15 meeting. The meeting was held in the home of Mrs. Harry Styler, Abilene, with Mrs. Ben Attebery of Carlton as co-hostess.

During the lesson, "Cooking in Your Skillet," the homemakers were reminded of the many uses of this piece of equipment. Because electric skillets have controlled heat, they are easy to use and do not require constant watching.

Mrs. Mary Jones and Mrs. Loren Long, both of Carlton, demonstrated skillet cookies,

custards and warming buns as possible uses along with the usual main dish items such as meats and vegetables.

Members were told to avoid over-heating and to prevent foods from sticking. Soaking the skillet immediately after using is one of the first steps to easy cleaning.

Collections were taken among the 19 members present for Pennies for Friendship, the Heart Fund and the Diabetic Camp Fund.

The next meeting will be held at 2 p.m., August 15, at the home of Mrs. John Thomas of Hillsdale.

KEYS TO GOOD NEWS STORIES

Accuracy, Brevity and Clarity are the keys to good newswriting. By following these simple but important words, you will gain the confidence of your editor and your readers. They are basic to a good news story.

Accuracy—Is every name, figure, date and fact correct? Avoid taking ordinary sounding names for granted . . . Mrs. John Smith actually may be spelled Mr. Jon Schmidt.

Brevity—Did you use short words, short sentences (averaging not over 17 words), and short paragraphs? Your story should be long enough to tell the story, but unnecessary details should be eliminated. All sentences and paragraphs do not need to be the same length, but should be varied in construction and length. This will make the story more interesting to read.

Clarity—If you cannot understand the story when you read it, how can the editor or reader understand it? Use simple, positive words that have real meaning. Avoid unnecessary adjectives.

PREPARING NEWS COPY

Once the news story is written, you can help the editor and boost the chances of getting your story into print by following a few simple points. It's best to get tips on preparing copy from your local editor before writing your first story.

Here are some points that will apply:

1. If possible, typewrite and double space all stories. Hand-written copy is hard for editors and printers to read. If you must hand write items, print all names in distinct capital letters and write neatly. This makes it easier for the editor to read and for the printer to set type. Make extra carbon copies.

2. Use standard 8½ by 11 type-writer paper unless the editor tells you otherwise. Avoid using small, fancy note paper. Place your club's name, your name, and your telephone number in the upper left hand corner of each page. If there is a question,



The Slappy
Kiddies
Gymnasium
with B.B. Tupper
and L. B. Tupper

Mrs. John Steward was named as business manager
of the Slappy Kiddies Gymnasium. She is the wife of
meeting July 16 is the home of Mrs. Henry Steward.
Mrs. John Steward is a housewife.

Two new members - - -

The program included "Kiddie World"
& demonstration was given by
Mrs. Steward. Business session followed.

-MORE-

Next meeting will be held at
home of Mrs. John Thomas.

-30-

The program included a
demonstration demonstration

the editor will know who to call. Begin writing the story several inches down the paper. This space will leave room for the editor to write a headline and any other instructions to the printer.

3. Avoid writing on both sides of the paper. When the story will not go on one page, write "MORE" at the bottom and go on to another page. Make sure the name of your club is at the top of the second page. Place number 30 at the end of each story. This signifies "The End" in news stories. An editor needs to know this to make sure he has all the story.

4. If you make a mistake, cross it out and go on. Erasing may leave the word blurred so the editor or printer may make a mistake.



WORKING WITH EDITORS

It's always a good idea to get acquainted with your local editors. We say editors because many communities have newspapers as well as radio and television stations.

Newspaper editors are most interested in your regular Home Extension Club stories. When your club conducts a special activity, news-

papers as well as radio and television stations may be interested. It is important to contact all three when your club plans a special event.

While visiting the local newspaper editor, find out who handles Home Extension Club news. It's a good idea to find out when the newspaper needs your story.

The local editor also can give you some tips on writing Home Extension Club stories. In general, the editor is looking for news items that are timely and of interest to many people. It is possible to write an account of almost any meeting that will interest many readers.

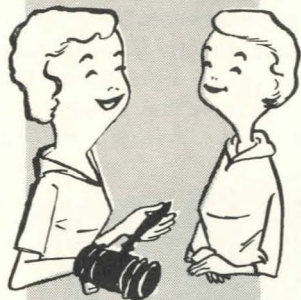
Here are some points to remember:

This Is News

1. Where and when the meeting was or will be held.
2. Names of newly-elected officers.
3. Projects planned, or progress reports of projects underway.
4. Coming events.
5. How many were present. Names of special guests. Names of those who had a special part in the meeting.
6. What the program included.
7. Name of the club, and that it is a Home Extension Club.
8. Interesting items from meetings or programs attended by members.

This Is Not News

1. Who called the meeting to order or read the minutes.
2. What was served for lunch (unless it is part of the program).
3. Proposals not acted upon.
4. Names of women who made motions.
5. Names of all those present. (You might ask your editor if he wants them or not).
6. Games that were played.
7. Any statement of your opinion.
8. How roll call was answered.



CHECKLIST FOR WRITING

1. Is the story still news? It will be if you write it up soon after the meeting.
2. Do you think the story would be of interest to people in addition to members of your club?
3. Is the story written in news style? Have you followed the writing tips mentioned in this bulletin. That is, starting out the story with the most important fact about the meeting. Have you included important details and eliminated others?
4. Have you practiced Accuracy, Brevity and Clarity?
5. Is it easy to read? Did you double space if typewritten? Did you print names of people if handwritten?



TABOOS IN REPORTING

1. Do not write rumors. Do not use statements in your story when there is a question as to accuracy or truth.
2. Leave out your opinion. Some readers may not agree with you. Such word combinations as delicious refreshments, charming hostess, or interesting meeting are termed "editorializing." This is done only on the editorial page of a newspaper.
3. Do not argue with the editor if he does not print your story. Instead, ask him why the story was not used. Perhaps you can do something that will ensure your getting stories in the newspaper.
4. Do not send news stories to the wrong person. Address the material to the editor in person. When you have an important story, deliver it in person.
5. Do not be late. If you go rushing to the newspaper office on the day of publication, chances are your story will not be printed. In most cases, Home Extension Club news should be in the newspaper office several days prior to publication.

Accurate

Brief

Clear

