



CRSP

Canadian Restructured School Plan
Le Projet D'une École Canadienne Restructurée

***The Write Stuff - How Do Journalists Do It? Writing for a
Newspaper or Magazine***

CRSP is a project of the



Canadian Vocational Association
Association canadienne de la formation professionnelle

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Why study the topic?

Journalists are professional writers. Writing is their career. To be successful they must express themselves clearly and in an interesting way. To gain and keep a good reputation, they have to be fair and accurate in what they write. They must also meet deadlines without fail. Otherwise, their work is not published.

By trying your hand at the work of the journalist you can learn a lot about yourself and develop research and communication skills. You will also improve the quality and effectiveness of your writing and learn to write about a variety of subject areas, a skill you will appreciate if you go on to post-secondary studies.

This unit gives you a chance to try your skills at being a journalist.

What do I need to know before I begin?

You need to have:

- an interest in writing,
- at least average writing skills,
- enthusiasm to do research on an important subject,
- the ability to organize your work and your time,
- the ability to work with others,
- the discipline to follow schedules and deadlines,
- a basic familiarity with computers,
- the ability to use a word-processing system, and
- the ability to use a fax machine, e-mail and the Internet.

What will I know and be able to do when I have completed the guide?

You will be able to:

- Demonstrate the knowledge you have acquired about the topics you have researched.
- Write, revise and edit a text, using a word-processing program.
- Obtain and verify information using a variety of sources, including the Internet.

You will also:

- Improve your skills in interpersonal relations through dealings with strangers.
- Improve your interviewing, listening, and note-taking skills.
- Show your responsibility by:
 - meeting deadlines,
 - respecting sources,
 - reporting accurately, and
 - showing good judgment in the use of source material.

What resources are available to help me?

People

Teachers in the English department and in other areas needed in the research.

Other students working on related projects (desktop publishing, using the World Wide Web, professional editing, economics).

Experts in your community.

Basic Style Manuals

Anderson, Douglas A., and Bruce D. Itule. *News Writing and Reporting for Today's Media*. 2nd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1991.

The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1994.

Bell, James B., and Edward P.J. Corbett. *The Little English Handbook for Canadians*. 2nd ed. Toronto: Wiley, 1980.

Berner, R. Thomas. *Language Skills for Journalists*. 2nd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984.

Canada. Department of the Secretary of State. *The Canadian Style: A Guide to Writing and Editing*. Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1984.

Gelmon, Joseph N. *The Montreal Gazette Style*. Montreal: The Gazette, 1990.

McFarlane, J.A., and Warren Clements. *The Globe and Mail Stylebook*. Toronto: Globe and Mail, 1996.

Metz, William. *Newswriting: From Lead to 30*. 3rd ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1991.

Strunk, William, Jr., and E.B. White. *The Elements of Style*. 3rd ed. New York: Macmillan, 1979.

Vivian, John, and Alfred L. Lorenz. *News: Reporting and Writing*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1995.

You should also consult a good grammar text as well as a good dictionary.

The Internet

The Curmudgeon's Stylebook
<http://www.theslot.com/contents.html>

Elements of Style
<http://www.columbia.edu/acis/bartleby/strunk>

Hyper Grammar (University of Ottawa)
<http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/grammar.html>

Evaluating Internet Information
<http://sol.slcc.edu/Ir/navigator/discovery/eval.html>

Finding data on the Internet - A Journalist's Guide
<http://nilesonline.com/data/>

Investigative Journalism (Canadian resource page)
<http://www.vir.com/~sher/julian.htm>

The Internet sites of some well-known and influential newspapers from around the world.

How may I meet the expectations of the guide?

Submit a proposal for approval (maximum 3 pages) that includes the following:

- your topic and your justification for choosing it,
- the approach you will use,
- the resources available to you and the resources you will need,
- the people available to work with you.

OR

If you cannot think of a topic or if your proposal is not accepted, accept an assignment from your teacher.

When should my work be done?

Articles must be submitted within three weeks of beginning the assignment. **There will be no extension of this deadline.**

How will I demonstrate I have met the expectations?

You will write EITHER three 750-word columns OR one 2000-word feature article on an assigned subject, based on personal research and in cooperation with others.

The final piece of writing will be evaluated by a practising editor, journalist or writer outside the school. Other drafts and activities are not evaluated except insofar as they will help you to improve your final product.

Your external evaluator will use the following **rating rubric** when assessing your work.

<i>Excellent:</i>	Creative and provocative, this work is publishable with only minor changes.
<i>Good:</i>	A solid piece of research and writing; some modifications are needed, however.
<i>Accepted with modifications:</i>	Substantial changes need to be made in content and/or style.
<i>Rejected:</i>	This work is not of sufficient quality or interest.

What activities do I need to do?

Activity 1: Select Your Topic

Select one of the following topics.

1. Three articles on the theme “After High School, What?” dealing with the job search, work, university, and community college. (Each article must be 750 words long. This amounts to 3 X 750 words.)

2. A feature article on black holes or DNA for a popular magazine. (2000 words)
3. A feature article on why women are succeeding better than men. You could choose to write about women in the business world, women and their families, women and health/longevity or women in education, for example. (2000 words)
4. Three short articles on family trends, using statistical information. (Each article must be 750 words long. This amounts to 3 X 750 words.)
5. An article on the reflections of people in a senior citizens' home as they think back on their own school days. (2000 words)
6. A feature article on changes in the workplace, using statistical information. (2000 words)

Activity 2: Prepare a Plan

Before you begin your research, ask yourself the following questions. They will help you to plan your work and anticipate the task that is ahead of you.

- To which newspaper or magazine do you plan to submit your article(s)?
- Why did you pick this topic?
- How important/interesting is the topic?
- Is there anything in your background that you can use to help you work on the topic?
- What do you already know about the topic?
- What preliminary views do you have on the topic?
- What are the major issues to be studied?
- What are the major sources?
- Where can you find these sources?
- Are there any ethical issues involved (privacy, for example)?
- What is your plan for investigating the topic?
- What obstacles or problems do you foresee?
- What help will you need?
- When will the research be finished?

- When will a first draft be ready?
- Who will give you feedback on the draft?
- When will the final version be ready for submission?

Activity 3: Study Models

It is a good idea to look at samples of the type of writing you are going to create. This will tell you a lot about how the articles work, both in terms of format and content. Follow these steps:

1. Identify the magazine or newspaper to which you intend to submit your work.
2. Look through the current as well as recent back issues. Pick out three to five examples of the type of article you would like to do yourself.
3. Analyze each of the articles, answering the following questions:
 - Is the title attractive and appropriate? Can you think of other good titles for the article?
 - How many words does the article contain?
 - How many paragraphs?
 - To what kind of reader is the article directed?
 - What is the main point of the article? If you had to summarize it in one sentence, what would it be?
 - What is the content of the first two to three paragraphs?
 - What is the content of the last two to three paragraphs?
 - Write an outline of the article.
 - Is the article divided into major sections?
 - Does the article include quotations from people or other pieces of writing?
 - Does the article include examples?
 - Does the article include pictures, illustrations, charts or tables? Are they used effectively?
 - Do you notice any errors in syntax, grammar or spelling?
 - Do you find the article informative? What have you learned from reading it?
 - Are there points that you do not understand or that should have been made clearer?
 - Do you find the article interesting? What makes it interesting?

- If you were asked to make one suggestion for improving the article, what would it be?
 - Were there examples of biased reporting? That is, does the author seem to favour one side of the issue over another?
 - Were there examples of poor or inaccurate information? Slander? An invasion of privacy? The glorification of violence?
4. Make a list of what you believe to be the most important rules for writing articles like the ones you have just studied.

Here are some examples for you to consider:

- Make an outline before you start to write.
 - Write down in sentence form the one or two main points you want to make in the article.
 - Begin with a catchy statement, a question, a story or an example in order to grab the reader's attention.
 - Explain at the beginning of the article what the article will be about.
 - Keep your paragraphs short.
 - Avoid long, complicated and rambling sentences.
 - Avoid unnecessary words.
 - Make sure your spelling is accurate and consistent.
 - Make sure your last paragraph and final sentence leave the reader with the most important idea or question.
 - Check your references and quotations carefully.
 - Make sure your explanations are clear and can be easily understood.
 - Don't show off how smart you are.
 - Don't preach.
5. Go over your list of rules with a teacher, professional writer, and/or other students interested in writing.

Activity 4: Do the Research

You are now ready to research information for your article. Use the following methods, as appropriate:

- Research in the community and your immediate environment (school/office, home, neighbourhood).
- Use the Internet as a research tool.

- Consult with teachers and specialists.
- Form a team with other students in related areas.
- Conduct interviews.
- Take notes.
- Collect materials.
- Analyze written material.

Here are some questions you should be asking yourself at this stage:

1. Is there a problem respecting both the right to privacy and the need to tell the truth?
2. Are media becoming too intrusive (even nosy) in prying into people's lives?
3. How do you decide about sensitive issues? For example, should you include references to the ethnicity of a person? Quote inflammatory comments someone has made about a group or ethnic community?
4. Is investigative journalism objective? Can it be? To what extent should the journalist allow his or her beliefs and bias to influence the writing?
5. When is a statement libelous?
6. To what extent should politically correct language be used, especially related to gender? Are there limits?

Activity 5: Write a Draft

- Begin by preparing a working outline.
- Then write your first draft.
- Next, revise and edit your first draft.
- Finally, show your newly-edited version to someone and get their feedback.

Activity 6: Prepare and Submit the Final Text

Prepare the final version of your article, incorporate the feedback you received on your draft.

Submit both a hard copy and a diskette of your article to your external examiner.

Where do I go from here?

Work on the school newspaper.

Submit your ideas for articles to your local newspaper.

Consider taking courses or units in areas related to the content of the work you did here. For example, you could study economics, science writing, editorial writing, translation, or writing for advertising.

Think about career opportunities in such fields as journalism, technical writing, writing for radio and television, and writing for the Internet.

LEARNER GUIDE WRITING TEAMS

NEW BRUNSWICK SITE

Site Leaders: Dr. Neil Wortman (1996); Chris Fleming (1997).

Participating Schools:

Campobello Island Consolidated School
Carleton North Senior High School
Fundy High School
Grand Manan High School
John Caldwell School
Nackawic High School
Southern Victoria High School
St. Stephen High School
Sir James Dunn Academy
Tobique Valley High School
Woodstock High School

Learner Guide Writing Teams by Subject

1. Art

Caroline Matheson, Leader	St. Stephen High School
Susan Galbraith	Carleton North Senior High School
Wendy Johnston	Woodstock High School
Alison Milne	Nackawic Senior High School

2. Career and Life Management (CALM)

MacFarlane, Donna, Leader	Fundy High School
Pearl Bourque	Fundy High School
Barbara Colwell	Carleton North Senior High School
Paul Ingram	Fundy High School
Carol McMillan	Fundy High School
Derek O'Brien	Fundy High School
Lynn Reid	Tobique Valley High School

3. English

Robert Griffin, Leader	Grand Manan High School
Sharon Dewitt	Tolbique Valley High School
Robert Lee	Fundy High School

4. French

Don Albert, Leader	Nackawic Senior High School
Paula Baker-Johnston	Tobique Valley High School
Tom Bridgeo	Woodstock High School
Fiona Cogswell	School District Office
Nancy Heppel	Woodstock High School
Sylvie Sirois	John Caldwell School

5. Mathematics

Clifford Kilcup, Leader	Southern Victoria High School
Alan Gilmor	St. Stephen High School
Glenna Monteith	Southern Victoria High School
Donna Seymour	Nackawic Senior High School
Ivan Shaw	Carleton North Senior High School
Pat Sorenson	John Caldwell School

6. Music

Diana Bainbridge, Leader	Fundy High School
Stephanie Archer	Sir James Dunne Academy
Alison Milne	Nackawic Senior High School

7. Physical Education

Jon Brain, Leader	Southern Victoria High School
Mike Fletcher	Woodstock High School
Al McGarvie	Nackawic Senior High School
Hal Mersereau	Fundy High School
Eric Rolbichaud	Tobique Valley High School

8. Science

Anne Sénéchal, Leader	John Caldwell School
Charlene Carroll	John Caldwell School
Linda Drisdelle	Tobique Valley High School
Kathy McGuire	Nackawic Senior High School
Maura Tait	Fundy High School

9. Social Studies

Paul Nugent, Leader	Campobello Island Consolidated High School
Kenin Inch	Nackawic Senior High School
Scott Jones	Woodstock High School
Larry Parker	St. Stephen High School
Trevor Perry	Carleton North Senior High School
Keith Pierce	Campobello Island Consolidated High School
Rick Savage	Tobique Valley High School

10. Technology

Marven Goodine, Leader	Wookstock High School
Maurère Desjardins	John Caldwell School
Chris Fleming	School District Office
Brent Shaw	Carleton North Senior High School
Chris Sherwood	St. Stephen High School

HUNTING HILLS HIGH SCHOOL SITE, Red Deer, Alberta

Site Leader: Duncan Anderson

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Pat Mosychuk
Rick Ramsfield

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Jasper Junior and Senior High School, Jasper
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