

Profile story

For this assignment, you will be required to write a personality profile about a person you do not know. This may be a person on campus or in the community, but the story must highlight what makes the person newsworthy and why you are writing about them.

You must talk to the person you're profiling and at least one person who knows that person. Both people must be quoted in the story. The person you're profiling must be interviewed in person; telephone, email and other interview methods are not allowed when interviewing the subject of the profile. The other interview may be conducted by any method. You cannot interview other students in COMM 200 for this assignment.

You must provide contact information for both people – email and phone number – after your end mark (30 or ###). You will not receive credit for the assignment until your instructor can verify that (1) interviews were conducted and (2) the subject of the profile was not known to you prior to the start of this assignment.

This story will be due in hard copy at the END of class on May 9. A rewrite option will NOT be extended. First drafts are not required but can be submitted in hard copy any time prior to April 25. Rough drafts may be submitted after this date, but grading turnaround time may keep you from fully implementing any suggested changes.

Formal approval of profile subjects by the instructor is not required.

This assignment will be worth twice as much to your final grade as a normal writing assignment.

A few pointers and hints to keep in mind for personality profiles:

1. Initial contact: Make contact with your subject early. Explain your project to them. Explain how long you anticipate the interview taking (it may be best to have them set aside an hour, even if you don't anticipate the interview taking that long). Remind your subject you may need to follow up with them in case you have further questions. Let them know the story will only be shared with students in this class and the instructor (about 20 people total). Explain the need to interview someone who knows them; they could help you with this. This person may be interviewed before or after you interview the person you're profiling. Let them know you should meet them somewhere quiet (a coffee shop or library may work).

You can also watch the subject in their work environment and interview them there if that meets the theme you're pursuing.

2. During the interview: Everyone has a story to tell; often, it's a matter of asking the right questions or enough questions. The profile should not be a rehash of the 5Ws and H of the person's life. This is not a biography. Profiles should reveal attitudes, habits, mannerisms. Use your interview time to search for these.

3. After the interview: Read notes carefully after interview to determine focus. Ask yourself what the angle is, what the overarching theme is. Don't feel bad following up with your sources if you need more depth or some clarification. It's better to be annoying than to be factually incorrect or unclear.

4. Writing the story: Don't use a hard news lead. Use a soft news lead, preferably an anecdotal lead. After the anecdote, write a "nut graf" that summarizes the reason for writing the story. Entertain and inform. Remember to develop a "kicker" ending. This is not an inverted pyramid; stories should not fall flat at the end.

5. Editor expectations: Shoot for a profile of about two pages, double spaced (a half-page on either side of this is acceptable). This is not much room; make sure you exercise concise writing. It may help you to think of the story as a brief vignette. Make each word count. Show, don't tell.

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