



GOAL: Read A Newspaper

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Overview

Even if you don't have much time to read, you can enjoy newspapers. Newspaper publishers do their best to make their papers appealing and easy to read. Why? Because it makes good business sense. We readers, after all, are busy people with limited time. We also are the ones who buy the newspaper and the products and services advertised in a newspaper's pages.

When you invest time and effort in learning how to read a newspaper, you can significantly improve your reading skills, vocabulary, general and community knowledge, as well as improve communications with family, coworkers, and friends. Reading a newspaper is fun, and it provides immediate benefits to readers.

What are some of the reasons people read newspapers?

- to be informed citizens about local, national and world news and events
- to contribute something informative to a conversation
- for specific reasons, such as finding a job or hiring a service
- for personal enrichment and fun!

There are two main ways newspapers are published: print (newsstand copy) and electronic (e-newspapers). Most large print newspapers like the *Los Angeles Times* or the *San Francisco Chronicle* also have an electronic version that you can read at the computer.

Getting Started

Here are a few open-ended questions to discuss as you begin working on this goal. Possible answers are given in parentheses, but there are no wrong answers:

- Why do you think people read newspapers? (To keep up with current events; for local news, entertainment, sports, analysis of opinion; to find a job; to purchase or sell items.)
- What part of the newspaper would you find most interesting? (This is an opportunity to discuss what you enjoy most—current events, sports, classifieds, entertainment, comics, opinion, etc.)
- What do you think is a “newsworthy” story? (U.S. and international economies; global warming; information about current wars; national and local political activities; a major accident; elections; reports on celebrities’ lives; human interest stories.)
- How is reading a newspaper different from watching the news on TV? (Newspapers give more in-depth coverage and detail than TV news; it’s possible to reread stories at your convenience and wherever you want versus adhering to a set schedule and location.)
- What is different about listening to news on the radio or reading it in the newspaper? (Radio only involves listening and is time-limited in its coverage of news stories; newspapers involve vision and touch and go more in-depth into stories.)
- What do you think “the media” means? (Refers to newspapers, magazines, radio, television and these same entities on the internet, and including all those who report for these media.)

About Newspapers. Nearly every story in a newspaper follows the same basic format. No matter the story, it will follow the “five W’s and How” of reporting to give readers immediate and comprehensive answers about events:

When did it take place?

Where did it take place?

What happened?

Who was involved?

Why did it happen?

How did it happen?

Sections of the Newspaper. Whether it’s a small community paper or a large regional paper, most newspapers have a variety of subject sections in addition to hard-hitting news that appeal to various groups of readers: business, entertainment, sports, travel, etc. Each section is typically designated by a letter: For example, “A” for the news of highest importance; “B” for local or community news, “C” for sports, “D” for travel, etc.

Books & Materials

Newspapers in Print. For the tutoring session, it would be great to have two print newspapers for the sake of demonstration. If possible bring a regional (or national) newspaper and a local paper. Use each one in its entirety, meaning don't bring in clipped out items at this point. Review specific articles and items for points of discussion and instruction prior to beginning the tutoring session.

You can borrow current newspapers at your library. If today's papers are not available, go to the Periodicals Department of your library and request past editions of the papers you choose. It would be ideal (though not necessary) to find two newspapers that cover the same news story to show the differences in how each story is reported.

Online Newspapers. Whether or not you are interested in only one newspaper delivery system (print or electronic), it is important to cover both in your tutoring session. A print copy is easier to use for show-and-tell, but an electronic edition may also be appealing for its vibrant images and short articles.

Maps. For news stories, find the dateline city/country on a paper map or electronic map on the computer. Have available copies of local, state, U.S. and world maps. If your library doesn't have the maps you need, your literacy center may be able to purchase U.S. and world maps from an office supply store or bookstore. If you're an American Automobile Association member, you can obtain some state and local maps free from most California State Automobile Association offices. The maps can be used for many learning activities.

Newspapers in Education (NIE). NIE newspapers are targeted to classroom education, however the stories, activities, quizzes, interactive lessons and games are interesting, educational and lots of fun for individual learners as well. Talk to your Literacy Services Staff about subscribing to NIE. They can contact the Education Coordinator or Education Services Department of your local or regional newspaper for NIE information. Or, use any search engine (such as Google)

Newspapers in Education

NIE provides lesson plans in every newspaper category and topic. The following ideas are for the week of April 26, 2009 and will give you an idea of what's available. You can use these ideas with the newspaper of your choice:

Pulitzers. Last week, the most coveted awards in journalism, the Pulitzer Prizes, were given out to a small selection of newspapers and reporters. The New York Times won the most awards, at five. Think about newspaper awards you might like to give out. Come up with a few different categories. Some ideas might be Best Photo, Best Headline or Best Cartoon. Then look through the newspaper this week and choose a story for each category. Discuss which stories you picked, and why.

Volunteer. Last week President Obama signed a national service bill that will give more money to volunteer programs, such as AmeriCorps. Volunteers for AmeriCorps do things like clean parks, build homes, operate after-school programs, tutor children and adults and help communities that have been hit by natural disasters. If you were going to volunteer, what would you do? Find an article in the newspaper about a problem going on in your community. Brainstorm ways you could help out. Write a few sentences about what the problem is, where it's happening, and how you would pitch in to correct it.

to see if your newspaper offers this service by typing in: “newspapers in education [newspaper name].” If your paper has NIE, it should come up on the search page. You can also access many free sample lessons and activities from various NIE papers throughout the country by going to www.nieonline.com and clicking on one of the newspapers listed (click on their logo).

News for You. Published by New Readers Press. www.newreaderspress.com. *News for You* is a high-interest weekly educational newspaper, specifically written for adult new readers. It provides current events, news, features, lessons, quizzes, puzzles and interactive learning activities. Again, talk to your Literacy Services Staff to see if they can subscribe to this service. *News for You* also offers some fun sample lessons and activities on the website that will get you started and give you a good idea of what to expect from your subscription.

Key Vocabulary

Index — The Index at the front page of a newspaper stands on its own. It tells readers where to find specific sections or subjects of popular interest. Listings and key vocabulary may include the following:

- **Lottery**—Current winning numbers and ticket results for various state lottery games.
- **Weather**—Local temperatures and weather patterns, air quality and pollen forecast; times for sun rise, sun set; comparative weather recordings for same dates in the past; national, international next-day forecasts and local forecast for the week ahead.
- **Horoscopes**—Entertaining “predictions” of a person’s daily activities or upcoming events based on the month and day the individual was born.
- **Crossword**—Puzzle in an across/down pattern of numbered squares based on clues, definitions or related words provided in the paper.
- **Stocks**—Listings of mutual funds and publicly traded companies with each one’s individual share price and most recent change in share pricing.
- **Opinion & Perspective**—Reader letters, opinion columns and editorial-board opinions on topics of interest and current events. These pages typically list the owner(s) of the newspaper as well as staff names and positions. Elected public officials are also listed.
- **Movies & TV**—Listings of what’s playing, when and where (theater or TV station)
- **Obituaries**—Local deaths for public record. This section may also include births, marriages and divorces.
- **Classified**—Lists services offered and needed; items for sale; job listings; home rentals; property, homes and vehicles for sale.

Editorial — This is the journalists’ side of the newspaper where reporters, writers and editors rule. Key vocabulary for this side of the newspaper includes the following:

- **News**—Any topic, event or “happening” that is considered newsworthy. Keeps readers up to date on current events. Written to inform and educate.
- **Features**—Lifestyle subjects, such as home, food/cooking, entertaining, gardening, travel, and human interest. Typically written to entertain and educate.

- **Sports**—All things athletic, from school sports and events to professional games and playoffs. Lists upcoming games and gives event results. Stories about individual athletes, team and individual statistics, and game schedules. Keeps readers current and informed of upcoming events, as well as team and individual statistics.
- **Opinion/Perspective/Editorial**— Personal opinions and subjective writing on timely subjects contributed by editors, columnists and readers. This section is noted for its political cartoons.

Advertising — This is the sales and publisher’s side of the newspaper. Advertisers pay for space to run ads about their products and services. Advertising money is the lifeblood of a newspaper. Key vocabulary for this side of the newspaper includes the following:

- **Classified**—This is the section you look to when you need something, such as a job, a service, a home to rent, or an item (or puppy?) to purchase. For a small fee, you can also sell items in this section.
- **Display ads**—Advertisers buy newspaper space for ads to sell a product or service. The mid-week papers usually run large shopper ads with coupons.
- **Ad inserts**—These are separate print sheets slipped into the newspaper. Often include many coupons to clip and use for discounts.
- **Advertorial**—If “Advertorial” or “Paid for by...” appears anywhere in a page or along the margins, it’s a paid advertisement often made to look like a real story. Generally, it’s selling a product, service, “way of life,” or a political candidate.
- **Subject-specific advertising**—These are typically stand-alone or pullout sections, such as those for real estate and automobiles.

Other Newspaper Vocabulary – In addition to the words above, here are a few other important terms and words to know:

- **Dateline**—Tells where the story happened and is listed at the very beginning of a news story
- **Editors**—Those who ensure the quality and accuracy of stories, write headlines and captions, and decide on which stories to run and where in the newspaper.
- **Reporters or Journalists**—Those who “tell” the story—whether they report and relay it to an editor or write it for publication—based on assignment and research of an event.
- **Subscription**—A pay-to-read service typically charged each year. For print newspapers, this also covers delivery. For e-newspapers, subscription gives full access to all elements of the online newspaper.

Reading Practice

How to Preview/Scan a Story. News and feature stories are the most accessible stories to read. You can scan a story in little time and get a sense of what the story is about and whether or not you want to read the entire thing. As you scan an article (try to choose one that includes all of the elements that follow), discuss what you think the story is about each step of the way.

- **Headline.** A headline typically appears in bold type at the top of a story. Headlines “represent” sentences, but they are a kind of shorthand that leaves out many words. Headlines give broad hints about story content. Read some headlines and then describe what you think the story might be about.
- **Dateline.** (Have your maps handy!) At the very beginning of each story, the dateline gives the location source of the story—city, state abbreviation (if necessary) and, if international, the country. Newspapers follow an exact style when reporting a dateline. There’s no fudging on this! Check the map for the story location.
- **Lead** (say “leed”). Generally, the first paragraph or two of a news story provides a summary of the entire story. Scan the lead for the five W’s (and How).
- **Photos, Graphics and Captions.** Newspapers can tell entire stories just through images and captions. A photo, chart or other graphic can also support the headline by telling the reader what the story is about. Sometimes photos stand alone with a headline and “story” caption. These are generally human interest images. Several people may appear in a photo. The caption lets reader know who’s who in the photo with directional (left to right, top to bottom) indicators in the caption. Use an image like this to practice finding who’s who in the image.

After scanning the story, read it thoroughly. Then discuss if the story is what you thought it would be from the headline, photo, captions, etc. How is it the same? How is it different? How much more did you learn from reading the entire story? Were any of your predictions correct?

Writing Practice

How to Think and Write Like a Reporter. Reporters use a type of “shorthand” while writing interviews and reporting for the news in order to capture notes and quotes as quickly as possible. They use a narrow, top spiral-bound reporter’s notebook. Posing as a reporter, interview each other about your favorite section of the newspaper, writing down in your own “shorthand” and in a reporter’s journal what was said. (Two to three sentences should be enough.) The “reporter” should then read aloud what has been written. Then practice turning the notes into full sentences on paper.

Photos & Captions. From old newspapers, cut out photographs (keep the captions separate) and glue them on paper, allowing enough room between each of them for captions. Make up captions (especially funny ones, if appropriate to the photo) that tell a story about each photo. Read through the real captions and then match them with the pictures.

Write a Headline. Cut out stories from old newspapers then cut off the headlines and set aside. Read the first few paragraphs (the lead) from the newspaper stories and write a headlines to fit them. Remember, the headline should summarize the story in just a few short words! You can also create headlines (in writing or orally) about events that have happened to you recently.

Games & Activities

Where's Waldo? A puppy named Waldo has roamed away from his home, your next door neighbor's backyard. He was last seen at the edge of a park near your home. Using a street map of your neighborhood, highlight on the map the streets you would walk or drive to get to the park to rescue the puppy and return it to your neighbor. Report the facts (orally) in a news story entitled: "[Your name here]'s Rescue Mission."

Name that -toon! From cartoons clipped from old newspapers, cut off the bubble captions (if possible without ruining the cartoon, or place correction tape over them) and come up with a short caption for each. The funnier, the more ridiculous, the better! You can give the caption orally or in written form.

I'm Rich! Interview your tutor about an imaginary event and then report the story back from your notes. Your story should answer most of the five W's (and How) of reporting. For example, for the story "I'm Rich!," pretend you've found a \$100 bill on the street. Describe who, what when, where, why and how. The other person takes notes and then reports back orally. Reverse roles and your tutor becomes the reporter with a different story.

Real-World Practice

The Fine Print. A newspaper is a wonderful instructional tool. It is helpful to understand how newspapers operate and how they are run. Most newspapers assign a staff member to work with educational groups. Talk to your Literacy Services Staff about bringing that person to the library for a short talk with tutors and learners about the benefits of print news. Prepare a few special-interest questions ahead of the meeting.

On Tour. Again, talk to your Literacy Services Staff about a possible field trip to the local newspaper. Ask the education contact of your local newspaper to visually show you (on a live tour or drawn on a board) the editorial "flow" of how a story comes to life, from a reporter's submission to final edit. If the newspaper has its own press, ask for a tour when the press is running.

Homework

The Facts, Dear Learner. Just the Facts. Here's your assignment: pretend you are a reporter and write a news story about an everyday activity or event in the community, at the store, in the neighborhood or at home. Use a journal or notebook to record just the facts without coloring them with your opinion. As a reporter on assignment (just like Lois Lane or Clark Kent), get to the "bottom of the story" by getting as much information as possible on what happened. Try to cover the five W's and How of reporting. Back at the tutoring session report the story orally relating the simple facts that have been recorded. Begin writing the story out, filling in the gaps and any missing facts.

Milestones

- **Initial Effort** – You are able to answer some questions about newspapers like: Why are readers important to newspaper publishers? What are the reasons people read newspapers? What are the five “W’s” of newspaper reporting and writing?
- **Making Progress** – You are able to locate the index and find each subject in the paper. You can choose and read a story that reflects a particular section of the paper. After reading the story you can give a brief summary of what you’ve read.
- **Accomplished** – You now can do the following things when reading a newspaper: you can figure out the five W’s from a selected news story; you can find the dateline in the story and then locate the city/state/country in the dateline on a map; using the index you can retrieve specific information such as:
 - when a movie is playing and in what theatre
 - the Dennis the Menace comic strip
 - jobs available in a specific field
 - a car or truck for sale
 - who won the recent local high school game
 - the temperature on a certain day
 - the weather forecast for the week



Tip: Even though newspapers may be the closest the public gets to objective reporting, stories and even entire newspapers may have a “slant” or built-in bias or may make judgments that may influence readers. For example, The Wall Street Journal is said to have a more conservative slant while the New York Times is said to have a more liberal one. An informed reader gives each story in each paper a critical read, analyzing it for slant, loaded words (words that color simple facts) and hidden opinions.

Contributors' Biographies

Sharon Beverly. Sharon is a tutor with the Merced County Library's adult literacy program. She is retired from the Merced Union High school district, where she taught all levels of English as well as Advanced Placement. Sharon received her original teaching credential in Oregon. Traveling with her husband while he was in the military, she tutored and taught in many places throughout the U.S. Sharon has been an active member of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) for more than 20 years, and especially enjoys her two book discussion groups.

Pamela Cornelison. Pam is the literacy program coordinator for the Merced County Library and has a background in journalism, writing and editing for magazine, newspaper and book publishers. Her career prior to working at the library and on her Master's in Library and Information Science includes writing, editing and managing books for publishing companies such as Sunset Books, Menlo Park, Calif., and Southern Living/Oxmoor House, Birmingham, Ala. She also has been a marketing communications manager for high-tech companies in the Silicon Valley. Pamela has volunteered more than 600 hours in the community as a master gardener for the U.C. Cooperative Extension Office.

Sheila E. Quall. Sheila is a tutor with the Merced County Library's adult literacy program. She is a retired resource specialist for Merced City School District, where she taught special education for 20 years. Prior to that time she taught cooking, sewing, and life skills to developmentally delayed adults at Kingsview Work Experience facility. Her first teaching positions were as a first grade teacher in Santa Barbara and in Lafayette, Calif. Every two years, Sheila and her husband, in association with their church, other churches and laypeople, travel to Africa with doctors, nurses and others to provide medical assistance to people in remote villages of Kenya, Tanzania and Zanzibar.

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