

Longform Article Genre How-To Guide

Generated in class on 5/29 & updated thereafter

Sources:

- Extensively researched: lots of citations, citations of "authoritative" accounts on the topics being referenced (i.e. citing the actual study, not another news article summarizing it; referencing published interview, not another article excerpting from the interview; using a high-quality or widely read article on a topic, rather than a questionable or non-authoritative account of a widely-covered topic/event)
- Can include "primary research," often in the form of interviews or analysis performed by the writer
- Cite sources via hyperlink -- locate hyperlink in specific words/phrase where source is being referenced (usually no longer than ~4 words)
- No separate reference list (i.e. no Words Cited, Bibliography, etc section)

Content/"Argument"

- Goal is to understand a complex topic or issue, informed by extensive research. Writer's contribution is to synthesize information in order to help readers understand the topic or issue in a new way.
- Conclusion can be ambiguous: complex issues often don't have single answers or clear solutions, so rather than arguing into a solitary thesis, longform articles often operate by introducing an issue, explaining its complicating factors and the relationships between them, and giving readers some direction (even if it's multiple directions) about how to think about and act in light of their presentation of the situation

Style & Tone:

- Language typically informal, conversational, speaking directly to reader
- Tolerance for asides, direct address of reader, speculation (although usually marked as such)
- Frequently use the first person to locate author in the article (although this isn't required)
- When people are featured (as interviewees, case studies, etc) human interest is highlighted by talking about their characteristics, backgrounds, etc in order to make the information they add to the story resonate with readers
- Although ideas should be complex and interesting and thinking should be sophisticated, language should be accessible and direct: watch use of jargon and sentence length/structure. Recall that online readers usually skim (at least some of) what they read, so write in a way that allows your meaning to come through to a hurried reader.

Design:

- Uses media enrichment: *relevant* embedded images and/or videos are expected by online readers. **Image resources:**
 - Flickr Creative Commons: <https://www.flickr.com/creativecommons/>
 - Pexels Public Domain Images: <https://www.pexels.com/public-domain-images/>
- Use of "[pull quotes](#)," highlighted with formatting such as bolding, size, italics, color, alignment, etc → invitation to experiment with text formatting (*italics/bolding/underlining/color/size/highlighting/etc*) for emphasis, or with text arrangement (*alignment/borders/background colors/etc*) **as long as this is done consistently and for deliberate effect throughout**
- Section headings optional: some longform articles use them, other don't

Title:

- Titles serve as the pitch that draws in readers -- they need to be carefully constructed
- Often serves as a thesis statement for the thesis-less longform article: your point in a nutshell
- Pithy, catchy phrasing: words matter a lot here
- Conceptually should appeal to as broad audience by referencing an issue with broad relevance, as well as previewing what slant the article will take on this issue (*especially* if it's a familiar topic that's been discussed widely)
- Formats & tips (partial, not exhaustive, list):
 - Catchy phrase: topical information
 - Controversial/surprising claim (sometimes formatted as 2 SUPER SHORT sentences)
 - "[9 tips for writing stronger headlines](#)" from the [Poynter Institute](#)