# Welcome To IDS General Assignments!

## Your handy guide to all things GA

If you're reading this, congratulations! You've made it past the gauntlet of orientations and copy tests! What lies ahead are *three* stories written with your lovely GA Editors and *four* stories with an equally lovely desk editor. While you're out in the field reporting for our daily student newspaper, refer to this guide to become the best reporter you can be.

**You're a reporter now.**
Your checklist for interviewing sources and news gathering.

1. Have a list of questions prepared before heading into an interview.

2. If interviewing a public figure, look them up before the interview. If you're writing a story about a club on campus, make sure you know what the club is about and what its members stand for. Always do your research ahead of time.

3. Fact check. Ask for spelling and clarification of first and last name, year in school, title, etc.

4. Listen to the person you're interview and ask clarifying questions. Make your interviews conversations.

5. Word your questions to be unassuming and unleading. Don't ask, "What was your favorite part about the play?" Instead ask, "Did you have a favorite part about the play?"

6. Do not interview your friends as a source! Do not interview anyone by email, and if at all possible, avoid over-the-phone interviews. Interviews in person are *always* the best.

7. You should always at least <u>two</u> human sources in a story (press releases, articles, website bios, etc. DO NOT COUNT).

8. Don't be afraid to edit yourself. If you know you're asking a poorly worded question, stop yourself. "Let me put it another way."

9. Pause. Don't talk so much. The best quotes come out of silence.

10. Your last question should always be, "Is there anything else you think readers should know about?"

11. Thank your subject for their time, and shoot them a thank you email or phone call after you've written the story.

12. Deadlines, deadlines, deadlines. Stick to 'em. The newspaper revolves around deadlines, and if we all keep to them, everything will run smoothly.

**So you think you know copy?**
Learn these useful styleguide rules.
For way more, check out idsnews.com/styleguide.

In a direct quote, use **SAID**, not says.
*"I never liked that guy," Smith said. "He never shared his toys in preschool."*

**Single space** your articles
*Do not double space at the end of sentences. Leave only one space between sentences.*

No **Oxford commas** (don't use a last comma in a series).
*He placed bread, cheese, oil and butter on the table.*

Events are listed in order of **time, date, place.**
*The next meeting is at 9 p.m. Monday at the Indiana Memorial Union.*

Generally, spell out **numerals** one through nine. Don't start a sentence with a non-spelled out numeral.
*Seven cars were found in the lot. Firefighters saved 13 cats from a tree.*

For any **age**, use numerals. Hyphenate if used as a noun or compound adjective.
*The 8-year-old went to the game. Bobby is 12 years old.*

Know the style for **time**.
12 a.m. is written as midnight, and 12 p.m. is written as noon
All other times are written as # a.m. or p.m.
*The concert ran from 5 p.m. to midnight. The suspect was seen at 11:30 a.m.*

Spell out **percent** as one word, and always accompany it with a numeral.
*A deficit of 7 percent. Employees will receive a 10-percent increase.*

Know your **month abbreviations.** Spell out all **months** when only accompanied by the year.
*The concert will take place on Feb. 28, 2015. February 2015 is Black History Month.*

Use the **day of the week** when the event is several days away, and use the day of the week instead of "yesterday" or "tomorrow."

Abbreviate **Avenue** (Ave.), **Boulevard** (Blvd.) and **Street** (St.). Spell out all other street names.
Spell out First through Ninth when used in **street names**.
*He lives on East Third Street. The fire was reported at 1428 E. Third Street.*

Know your **state abbreviations.** A state abbreviation is contained in commas, and spell all states out when they stand alone.
*The stadium in Evanston, Ill., is magnificent. She drove from Michigan.*

An **independent clause** (subject + verb) must follow a comma.
*Wrong: The company treated its employees well, and won an award.*
*Correct: The company treated its employees well, and it won an award.*

**What's an ASF?**

You will be asked to produce one Alternative Story Form as a part of your third story. An ASF is another way to tell a story (graphic, written, visual, aural). They are usually the first thing a reader's eye will see! Here are some examples of some to help you get the ball rolling.

**1. Q & A.** Your interviews can sometimes be pretty interesting themselves. Type up a transcript and publish your best questions and responses.

**2. Tmelines.** A timeline is a linear way to show events as they unfold. They are visually appealing and a great way to communicate confusing information

**3. Fact-box.** Make a box with bulletpoints of relevant facts. Think: what bite-sized nuggets of information can my reader learn right off the bat?

**4. Public Opinion Poll.** Difficult to do original reporting, but if you have reliable statistics to publish, find a designer to make a beautiful infographic. A pie chart, line graph or bar graph can answer questions quickly and help visualize big, scary numbers.

**5. Headshot.** What does Joe Shmoe have to say about a topic you're reporting on? Get a headshot and a quick quote from a person at that concert you're covering, who knows the person you're featuring, a member of the band or anybody with an opinion.

**6. How To?** Make a How To guide and show your reader how to make an oragami piece, cook that recipe or study for a final. How Tos are fun, and give your reader a hands-on way to try whatever you're featuring.

**7. Multimedia.** Think beyond the printed page. Publish audio of your source, take a video of that person juggling chainsaws, create a photo story of the play's behind-the-scenes. The web opens up a whole new arena of ASF potential.

**8. Glossary.** Define interesting or confusing terms in a box that will attract your readers attention.

**9. Maps.** A map puts your story into context. Where did your event take place? How close is it to important points of interest?

**Ask great questions.**

Some questions fish for facts. Others open up your source to reveal interesting (and often quotable) information! Check out this list of Great Questions, adapted from *storycorps.org/great-questions.*

- What is your earliest memory?
- What are you the most proud of? The most ashamed?
- When have you felt the most alone?
- Can you help me understand what you do?
- How would you like to be known?
- What do people not understand about you?
- Can you tell me about the clothes you are wearing?
- What are your parents like?
- What do you hope for your children?
- How would you describe yourself as a child?
- Did you enjoy school as a child?
- Do you like your job?
- How do you imagine your death?
- Do you believe in God? An afterlife?

**Tidbits that your editors will thank you for.**

You've got your two sources, you've taken good notes. Now what?

**1. Write short paragraphs.** News stories read quick. Keep your paragraphs no longer than three sentences.
**2. Keep your opinion (and yourself) out of the picture.** Editorializing is including your personal opinion in a story, even if subconsciously. And never use the pronoun I.
**3. Take notes.** Even if you record your interviews, have a notebook with you and write down facts, on-the-fly questions and numbers.
**4. Know why your story matters.** Why should a reader spend their time reading your work? Don't just tell me what happened. Tell me why it matters.
**5. Follow up your interviews.** Ask to spend more time with your subject. Meet them in a new place.
**6. Tell the truth, and don't be boring.** The greatest ethical dillemas in journalism stem from when the truth is boring. Be careful.

**Contacting your sources**

Generally, you will be emailing your sources to set up times to interview them. Here's a template for shooting an unfamiliar source an email. Remeber, it is always best to meet your source where *they* are! Offer to sit in on a practice or visit their office before suggesting a coffee shop!

**Interview for IDS**

To President Michael A. McRobbie (presbn@indiana.edu)

Dear Mr. McRobbie,
My name is Jordan and I'm a reporter for the Indiana Daily Student. I'm currently working on an article about rabid squirrels attacking students the IU campus, and it would be very helpful for my reporting to get a chance to talk to you about the subject. I would love to meet you at your office for a quick 20 minute interview. Could you let me know what times work best for you?

Thank you,
Jordan Siden
(c.) 734-660-8153