

## **Neighborhood Feature**

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J335 Spring 2018

Pitch Due: Class time on February 20.

Story Due: 11:59 p.m. on February 28, 11:59 p.m..

### **Format**

You have three options for how to deliver your feature story about anything relating to neighborhoods in Madison or the surrounding area:

1. A written narrative with one alternative story form. You should aim for about 800-900 words, but if you need more than that to tell your story, then you should use it.

The alternative story can take whatever form you'd like it to take — photo essay, slideshow, audio piece, graphic, video, timeline, map — but you want to make them really add to the rest of the story that you're telling. What is complicated to write but much better explained visually? (If it's a visual story, then you should include a couple of pictures to help your reader see what you're describing.) Do you have compelling audio from one of your interviews that evokes some emotion you can't convey in your story? These also must be original — you can't simply take charts created by someone else and use them as your own — and your sources must be credited.

2. A 3- to 4-minute long Wisconsin Public Radio/NPR-style radio package. If you choose this, it should include natural sound. You would need to submit a copy of the script when you turn in your project in MP3 form.

3. A 3- to 4-minute video package and accompanying script. The storytelling potential for video is high when it comes to stories with strong visuals — something to consider as you think about a topic.

Feature stories are often the most fun to write. You're not locked into any particular subject matter, the inverted pyramid goes by the wayside, and you can loosen up your writing by finding a different voice or tone than you use when writing straight news.

When it comes to deciding what to write about, the only limit is your imagination... and getting off of campus. You have great freedom in deciding what you want to tackle, what angle you want to take and how you are going to tell the story. The best reporters have a running list of ideas for these kinds of stories tucked in their back pockets — they're great for when an editor wants you to write something boring, and you can turn around with an idea you'd rather pursue.

Be creative and inventive and find a new story to tell. If you're having trouble, think about a couple of things on campus that interest you — check out university news on [news.wisc.edu](http://news.wisc.edu) for some ideas — then do an idea map to come up with different ideas about how to tell stories related to those topics.

The second step is planning. You'll want to start gathering information and getting interviews set up as soon as possible. You'll also want to start doing background research right away and drafting a list of questions you want to have answered.

Keep the search for an anecdotal lead at the top of your mind when you're reporting. Having an ear tuned to potential anecdotes and leads that really make a feature work is important when you are gathering information. Don't wait until you get into your notes and start writing to think about how you are going to lead the story.

This goes for audio and video stories, as well. Remember, in those story forms, you need to find a character to be the center of your story.

Also, spend some time looking at features you've enjoyed reading or watching yourself. What does the reporter do well? Why is it engaging? How is it organized and structured? How effective are the lead and nut graf. Breaking down other people's work like this is tremendously helpful for you when it comes to writing your own stories.

And, finally, this may be the most important thing to note; You have some time to work on this assignment, but DO NOT wait until the last minute. You'll have an idea to pursue by the end of the first week, and you can come to me with any questions you might have as you get going. Try to do a little work on this every day so you can stay on top of the story and write as you go.

### **Sources**

Your story must include at least three primary sources and at least one secondary source — for a total of at least four sources in the story. You will lose a grade for every primary source you're missing and a half grade for every secondary source missing. You must turn in a list of your sources; I reserve the right to check in with them.