



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

# OUR CITY SPEAK OUT BE HEARD



## YMCA DC Youth & Government Delegate Guide

**YMCA DC Youth & Government**  
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## HISTORY OF THE YMCA DC YOUTH & GOVERNMENT PROGRAM

The YMCA Youth and Government program is a national program that takes place in approximately 40 states across the country. The program was first created in 1936 in the states of New York and New Jersey. In 2002, the District of Columbia became the 43<sup>rd</sup> YMCA Youth and Government program, with our delegates joining the more than 50,000 high school students who participate in Youth and Government programs nationwide each year.

Across the country, Youth and Government programs have influenced the real legislative process. Seat Belt laws, Highway Striping, Motorcycle Helmet Laws, Railroad Crossing Laws, and many other policy proposals were first passed by students in the many Youth and Government programs across the country before they were taken up by the state legislatures.

Today, more than 300 high school students in the metropolitan Washington area participate in the YMCA DC Youth & Government program. You will not regret choosing to participate in this program!

### Former YMCA DC Youth Mayors

- **Andre Glosson**, Friendship Collegiate Academy, 2014-2015
- **Ryan Washington**, YMCA Anthony Bowen, 2013-2014
- **Christian Tarver**, Bell Multicultural High School, 2012-2013
- **William Lovett**, Cesar Chavez PCS for Public Policy – Capitol Hill, 2010-2011, 2011-2012
- **Alicia Wade**, School Without Walls, 2009-2010
- **Damien White**, Friendship Collegiate Academy, 2007-2008, 2008-2009
- **Rochelle Mincey-Thompson**, Cardozo Senior High School, 2006-2007
- **Janeese Lewis**, The School Without Walls, 2005-2006
- **Nate Cole**, The School Without Walls, 2004-2005
- **Lawrence Chambers**, Thurgood Marshall Academy, 2003-2004
- **Rashelle Henderson**, H.D. Woodson High School 2003

## **HOW DOES YMCA DC YOUTH & GOVERNMENT WORK?**

Through the YMCA DC Youth & Government program, you will learn how city government works by simulating the legislative process. The YMCA DC Youth & Government program is divided into five components.

### **CIVIC EDUCATION PROGRAM & SKILL DEVELOPMENT (DELEGATIONS)**

The YMCA DC Youth & Government Program begins in the fall at your school or organization, where you and the current delegates actively recruit new members. During delegation meetings, you will learn about the basic DC government structure and discuss important issues in the community. In addition, you will prepare for the annual Youth Summit and Legislative Weekend conferences.

### **YOUTH SUMMIT**

The Youth Summit conference occurs in the late fall. At the Youth Summit, you will receive training on how to debate and write a bill. During the conference, you will also have an opportunity to meet the elected youth officials and attend workshops pertaining to your role at Legislative Weekend. After attending the Youth Summit, you should have a much better understanding of what will happen at Legislative Weekend.

After the Youth Summit, each delegate needs to identify a local public policy issue. Once you have identified an issue, you need to research the issue and write a bill based on the research you find. If you are going to be a member of the Press Corps then you need to interview your peers and write a press article. In addition, if you are going to run for office you need to develop your campaign.

### **LEGISLATIVE WEEKEND**

Legislative Weekend is the annual two-day conference in the spring. At the conference, you will participate in a working simulation of the DC government with an elected YMCA Youth Mayor, YMCA Youth City Council, and YMCA Youth Board of Education. You will spend the days debating legislation and producing conference newspapers. If your bill passes committee, you will present the bill in front of the YMCA Youth City Council or the YMCA Youth Board of Education. If the YMCA Youth City Council or the YMCA Youth Board of Education passes the bill, the bill goes to the YMCA Youth Mayor for his or her signature. Delegates participating in the Press Corps cover conference events and publish several newspapers throughout the conferences. Delegates serve as reporters and photographers. You also have the opportunity to run for YMCA Youth Mayor, YMCA Youth City Council Chair, or YMCA Youth Superintendent.

Candidates are required to give a speech and delegates vote for who they want to serve as the YMCA Youth Mayor, YMCA Youth City Council Chair, and YMCA Youth Superintendent at the next conference. The Editor-in-Chief is elected by the Press Corps members. On Friday night, you attend Teen Night at a local YMCA where you can dance, play basketball and games, and sing karaoke. On Saturday night, you will attend the YMCA Youth Mayor's Banquet where election results and awards are announced.

### **YMCA YOUTH CONFERENCE ON NATIONAL AFFAIRS**

At Legislative Weekend, a group of outstanding students are selected to attend this national conference where they meet approximately 700 high school student leaders from across the country. Each student selected to attend will write a proposal on a national or international issue. The YMCA Youth Conference on National Affairs takes place in Black Mountain, NC, at the YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly.

## **WELCOME TO THE YMCA DC YOUTH & GOVERNMENT LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES**

Welcome to the YMCA DC Youth & Government Legislative Committees. The YMCA DC Youth & Government Program Staff hopes that by participating in this part of the Youth & Government program, you will be inspired to further pursue your interests and expand your knowledge regarding public policy, creating change in your community, and local government in general.

As a Committee Member, you will write a bill to debate with other Committee Members at Legislative Weekend. A bill is an idea that you have that either creates a new law or changes a current law. Your bill will be published in a Bill Book and distributed to other delegates and advisors at Legislative Weekend. All bills at Legislative Weekend that pass through Committee, the City Council or the Board of Education, and are signed by the YMCA Youth Mayor will be sent to the real D.C. Mayor and City Council for their review.

This manual should serve as an overview of how to write a bill and how to debate using parliamentary procedure. There is certainly much more to be learned about public policymaking than just this manual, and we hope your participation in the program will encourage you to investigate other resources.

### **REQUIREMENTS OF THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

- Write and Submit one (1) bill
- Meet all registration deadlines
- Adhere to the Code of Conduct

# WRITING A BILL

A bill is an idea that you have on a local public policy issue that either creates a new law or changes a current law in the District of Columbia. Participating in the YMCA DC Youth & Government program is an opportunity for you to create positive changes in your neighborhood, community, and school. Therefore, you should write a bill on a topic that is interesting and meaningful to you. There are several steps involved with writing a bill. These steps are outlined below:

## STEP 1: CHOOSE A BILL TOPIC

The first step is to choose a topic. Begin by brainstorming what you would like to see changed in your neighborhood, community, or city. Remember that your goal is to improve your neighborhood, community, or city.

## STEP 2: RESEARCH YOUR BILL TOPIC

Next, you need to research your bill topic. You need to have facts, figures, statistics, and examples to support your topic. There are a number of resources you can use to conduct your research. These resources include the internet, local newspapers, library books, and personal testimonies. Through your research you want to find out who your bill will impact, how much it will cost to implement your bill, and who will be responsible for implementing or enforcing your bill.

## STEP 3: WRITING AND REVIEWING THE FIRST DRAFT

After you have completed your research, you are ready to write the first draft of your bill using the bill template provided in this manual. The template contains a number of sections that you must complete. The various sections are outlined below:

**Title:** The first section is the Bill Title. The title should be short and state what your bill is about.

- **Section 1:** In Section 1, explain what the bill does.
- **Section 2:** In Section 2, write the purpose of the bill. Why is the bill necessary and important?
- **Section 3:** In Section 3, define any terms that are included in the bill. For example, if the bill is related to schools in DC, does the bill affect only public schools or will it also affect public charter, private, and parochial schools?
- **Section 4 (Optional):** In Section 4, state what the penalties are if someone violates your bill. You do not have to include this section if the bill does not require any penalties.
- **Financial Impact:** In this section, explain how much it costs to implement the bill and where the money will come from. You may find it helpful to review DC's budget in order to accurately complete this section.
- **Effective Date:** Finally in this section, state when the bill takes effect. You may decide that the bill takes effect immediately upon passage or you may want to implement the bill at a later date.

*(NOTE: Keep in mind that you do not need to include all of your research in your bill. You can use some of your research in your opening and closing statements.)*

Once you have completed the first draft, give the bill to your Delegation Advisor for review. He or she will proofread the bill and offer suggestions.

## STEP 4: WRITE THE FINAL DRAFT AND SUBMIT

Once you receive edits and feedback, it is time for you to write the final version. The bill should be in the same format as the bill template. Do not worry about completing the Committee Section or the Bill Number Section. These sections will be completed by the YMCA DC Youth & Government Program Staff. Once you have written the final draft, find out from your Delegation Advisor how to submit the bill. He or she may ask you to turn in the bill to them or he or she may ask you to submit the bill directly online.

## STEP 5: RESEARCH AND DEBATE

Now that you have completed the bill, complete any last minute research. As you wrote the bill you may have discovered more questions that you need to answer. Remember that you must convince the other committee members, City Council or Board of Education Members, and the YMCA Youth Mayor that your bill should pass. Committee Members and City Council or Board of Education Members will have an opportunity to ask you questions during the debate. You want to be prepared to answer them. You should also study the parliamentary procedures included in this manual and be prepared to debate using these procedures. Do not worry! You will practice using parliamentary procedure at the Youth Summit and in your delegations meetings.

## STEP 6: PREPARING YOUR BILL PRESENTATION

The final step is to write your opening and closing statements. You will present these statements when it is your turn to present your bill in committee. You will have three minutes for your opening statement and two minutes for your closing statement.

- **Opening Statement:** During the opening statement, explain what problem in your neighborhood, community, or city you are trying to fix and why it is a problem. Next, explain how the bill solves the problem. You want to include facts and figures that support the bill and illustrate why it is important. Finally not everyone will agree with your bill, so address any arguments that you think will come up against the bill and explain why these arguments are not relevant.
- **Non-Debatable, Technical Questions:** After your opening statement, Committee Members will have 3 minutes to ask you non-debatable, technical questions. Non-debatable, technical questions are used to clarify the intent of the bill. They usually can be answered with a "yes," "no," or fact. To prepare for these questions, find out what other students in your delegation would ask about the bill. You may also want to create a fact sheet that has all of your research on it so that you can look up an answer if necessary. Remember, if you do not know the answer to a question it is always better to be honest and say that you do not have that information in front of you. You never want to make up an answer. There may be another Committee Member in the room that does know the answer and they may use that against you in their pro or con argument.
- **Closing Statement:** In your closing statement, you want to address the con arguments that were made against your bill. Using facts and figures, explain why the con arguments are not relevant or valid to your bill. After addressing the con arguments, you want to reiterate why your bill is the solution to the problem you are addressing. You may want to use research or a story to urge Committee Members to vote in favor of your bill.

## SAMPLE TOPICS FOR LEGISLATION

Gun control

Education standards and testing

Capital punishment (death penalty)

Increasing taxes on tobacco and/or alcohol

Internet censoring in public schools and libraries

Requiring school uniforms in public schools

Violence in schools

Re-design of the city flag

Welfare-to-work requirements

Enhance the University of the District of Columbia

Needle exchange for drug users

School vouchers

Quality of food service in public schools

Re-drawing Ward boundaries

Billing Congress for providing security at protests

Commuter tax

Attracting new sports teams

Juvenile rehabilitation programs

MPD Public Service Areas

Background checks for volunteers in public schools

Access to health care

Bilingual education

Official language for government documents

Youth curfew

Minimum wage

Development along the Anacostia

Metro expansion

Oversight of the DC Public Schools

Emergency management

High-speed police pursuits

Bridge repairs

Official city holiday to commemorate a specific event

Building a memorial

Support for pregnant teens

Create an official city song

# BILL TEMPLATE

## Proposal for the Youth Government for the District of Columbia

Bill No. \_\_\_\_\_

Committee:

Sponsor:

Delegation:

BE IT ENACTED BY THE YOUTH GOVERNMENT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, that this act may be cited as the \_\_\_\_\_.

Section 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Section 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Section 3: \_\_\_\_\_

Financial Impact: \_\_\_\_\_

Effective Date: This act shall take effect on \_\_\_\_\_ following approval by the YMCA Youth Mayor.

# PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES OVERVIEW

## OVERVIEW

Parliamentary procedures use a very common-sense, three-step approach to handling legislation:

- **INFORMATION-GATHERING:** learn the basic facts about the proposed bill
- **DEBATE:** examine whether the legislation is good and **Amend:** improve the bill, if desired
- **VOTE:** decide whether the bill will be adopted

This process underlies YMCA DC Youth & Government's Parliamentary Procedures. The only difference in parliamentary procedures in the City Council and Board of Education Hearings versus the Committee sessions is that the information-gathering process is longer during the City Council and Board of Education Hearings. City Council and Board of Education members will first hear the YMCA Youth Mayor's position on the legislation and listen to public testimony on the legislation before beginning debate on the bill.

Here is a summary of YMCA DC Youth & Government's Parliamentary Procedures:

### INFORMATION-GATHERING:

- City Council Chair, Superintendent, or Committee Chair announces the bill number and the Clerk reads the statement of purpose.
- Bill author gives an opening statement explaining and supporting the bill.
- The City Council or Board of Education members or Committee members can ask the author non-debatable, technical questions about the bill.
- During City Council and Board of Education Hearings, the YMCA Youth Mayor's Office is permitted to make a statement on the bill. The YMCA Youth Mayor may speak on six bills him/herself.
- During City Council and Board of Education Hearings, the City Council and Board of Education members hold a hearing to gauge public (i.e. delegates') opinion of the bill. Delegates offering testimony do not have to alternate pro-con debate. City Council and Board of Education members can ask questions of a testifying delegate following the delegate's statement.

### DEBATE:

- City Council or Board of Education members or Committee members engage in pro-con debate over the bill. All motions (including amendments) are in order. The City Council and Board of Education members cannot vote to extend the time for debate.
- Following the debate, the bill author is allowed to make a closing statement.

### VOTE:

- City Council and Board of Education members and Committee members make a show-of-hands vote on the bill.

## **COMMITTEE PROCEDURES**

In order to move through the docket of bills in committee, the Chair will apply our Simplified Rules of Parliamentary Procedure and the following guidelines:

1. Author's Opening Statement: 3 minutes
2. Non-Debatable Technical Questions: 3 minutes
3. Pro/Con Debate: 15 minutes, 2 minutes for each speaker (begin with con, end with con)
4. Author Summation: 2 minutes
5. Committee vote on whether to give the legislation a favorable report

Delegates are reminded that each time you speak you must:

1. State your name and delegation
2. Address the chair as Sir/Madam Chair
3. Declare how you intend to use any remaining time (yield to the chair or to their closing remarks.)

*If the bill passes committee, it will move to the Docket for the Council or Board Hearings.*

## **CITY COUNCIL & BOARD OF EDUCATION HEARINGS PROCEDURES**

The City Council and Board of Education includes representatives from each delegation. After passing committee, bills are sent to either the City Council or the Board of Education to be debated and voted upon.

As part of its deliberations, the City Council and the Board of Education opens the floor to all delegates for testimony on bills under consideration. While ONLY Council and Board Members are permitted to debate and vote on bills in the Hearing session, the Mayor's Office and the public (delegates) can offer testimony in one-minute speeches on the floor. The chair will call for a speaker's list and invite speakers on the floor. Testimony times can NOT be yielded, and Council or Board members can ask questions of the testifiers. These are statements intended for public record and to inform the debate and vote of the Council or the Board.

The City Council and Board of Education will operate much like the committees:

1. Author's Opening: 3 minutes
2. Non-Debatable Technical Questions: 3 minutes (answered by the author)
3. Mayor's Office Comment: 1 minute
4. Public Testimony: 15 minutes (Council and Board may vote to extend time for public testimony)
5. Pro/Con Debate: 10 minutes (Council and Board Members only, begin and end with con)
6. Author Summation: 2 minutes
7. Council or Board vote on the bill

Each time you speak, you must:

1. State your name and delegation
2. Address the chair in the City Council as Sir/Madam Chair. Address the chair in the Board of Education as Mister/Madam Superintendent.
3. Declare how you intend to use any remaining time (yield to the chair or to their closing remarks.)

# TECHNIQUES FOR LEGISLATIVE DEBATE

## **1. Debate is conducted through the presiding officer (Chair).**

When you are recognized to speak, remember that you are speaking to the presiding officer. If questioning another delegate or being questioned by another delegate, you always speak directly to the Chair and not the other delegate.

## **2. Recognition to debate is a privilege.**

You are not entitled to be recognized to speak by a presiding officer. Therefore, when you are recognized, you must first say: "Thank you, Sir/Madam Chair".

## **3. Make sure you identify yourself.**

After thanking the Chair, state your full name and delegation before you begin to speak.

## **4. State why you are being recognized.**

Begin your speech by stating that you rise "in support of" or "in opposition to" the bill.

## **5. Never get personal.**

It is out of order to refer to another delegate by his/her name. It is appropriate to say "a previous speaker".

## **6. Debate is scholarly, not an insult contest!**

It is entirely out of order to refer to bills using any of the following words and others like them: "sucks" "stinks" "horrible" "pathetic" "terrible" "worthless" etc. It is in order to say something such as, "I don't believe this bill will achieve the results the bill author is seeking..." You could be ruled out of order for using derogatory terms to describe a bill.

## **7. This is the democratic process!**

It is appropriate to be passionate about what you believe but it is inappropriate for any delegate to engage in attention-getting maneuvers (banging a podium, yelling into the microphone, etc.) that disrupt the flow of debate.

## **8. Put the Sponsor to work!**

If you support the bill, you can assist the sponsor by asking him/her to stand for questions and then ask "leading" questions to help clarify the bill's intent. If you oppose the bill, then you can also ask the sponsor to stand for questions and ask tough questions that might catch the sponsor misinformed or uninformed. To do this, you need to ask if the author yields to a (series of) question(s) and reserve your right to speak.

## **9. Do not argue from a high school student perspective.**

At YMCA DC Youth & Government, you are considered to be a young adult representing a broad and diverse constituency. How a bill impacts you as a student or as students in general is irrelevant. Construct your argument based on the bill's impact on its intended constituencies. Use factual information to support your argument.

## **10. Closing your speech properly can make a difference.**

Close your speech by urging your colleagues to either support or oppose the bill. A strong finish would go something like this, "My fellow delegates, Bill 05-113 represents the strongest possible message we can send to our senior citizens that their health care concerns are all of our concerns! I urge you to support Bill 05-113. Thank you Sir Chair."

# CITY COUNCIL, BOARD OF EDUCATION AND COMMITTEE

## POINTS AND MOTIONS

Points should be a short, clear, and relevant statement or question, not a speech. It must address any substantive matters. This conference operates under Robert's Rules for Procedures, unless revised in this manual.

### POINTS

- **POINT OF ORDER:** During the discussion of any matter other than a pending point of order, even when another delegate is speaking, a delegate may rise to a point of order to inquire about parliamentary procedure being implemented by the Chair. The Chair shall make an immediate decision in accordance with the rules of procedure. It is expected that delegates will not interrupt another delegate's speech with a point of order unless there is something preventing his or her participation in the proceedings (e.g. lack of decorum, sound problems, etc.). The Point of Order privilege may interrupt a speaker only if the conditions prevent the delegate from following the immediate proceedings (e.g. cannot hear the speaker, etc.).
- **POINT OF INFORMATION:** During the discussion of technical, non-debatable questions, a delegate may rise to a point of information to inquire certain facts by the speaker. This point rises before all other technical, non-debatable questions.

### PROCEDURAL MOTIONS

- **ADJOURN:** This motion is only in order at the end of the last session since it closes the committee proceedings at the end of the conference.
- **RECESS:** A motion for a recess is a motion to suspend proceedings until the next session as outlined in the conference schedule.
- **PREVIOUS QUESTION:** During the discussion of any substantive matter, a delegate may move for the previous question or close debate on an item under discussion. The motion requires a 2/3 majority to pass. If the motion passes, the committee will immediately move into voting procedure.
- **WITHDRAW A MOTION:** A delegate that proposed a motion may withdraw it before the motion is voted upon.
- **AMEND A BILL:** One of the most useful motions is the motion to amend. This is a very important action you can take as a delegate to help a sponsor improve the legislation. As a member of a Committee, you want to make sure the bill is as strong as possible.

A Delegate may move to amend any bill. The proposed amendment must be submitted in writing and must be approved by the Chair. Amendments may not alter the original intent of the bill.

## PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE MOTIONS GUIDE

<b>Motions to Help Us Gather Information</b>							
<b>Motion</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>May Interrupt</b>	<b>Must be Recognized</b>	<b>Requires Second</b>	<b>Open for Debate</b>	<b>Can be Amended</b>	<b>Who Decides</b>
Division	Request a recount of a previous voice	Yes	No	No	No	No	Chair
Point of Information	Ask a (non-debatable) question of a speaker or bill author	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Chair
Point of Order	Ask the speaker a question about parliamentary	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Chair
Adjourn/ Recess	Adjourn or recess a session	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Majority

<b>Motions to Help Us Deliberate</b>							
<b>Motion</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>May Interrupt</b>	<b>Must be Recognized</b>	<b>Requires Second</b>	<b>Open for Debate</b>	<b>Can be Amended</b>	<b>Who Decides</b>
Withdraw	Author chooses to remove a motion or bill from consideration	No	Yes	No	No	No	Majority
Amend	Make a change to a bill	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority

<b>Motions to Help Us Decide</b>							
<b>Motion</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>May Interrupt</b>	<b>Must be Recognized</b>	<b>Requires Second</b>	<b>Open for Debate</b>	<b>Can be Amended</b>	<b>Who Decides</b>
Alter Limits on Debate	Extend (or decrease) debate time	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	two-thirds
Previous Question	End debate early and move to a vote	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	two-thirds

## **WELCOME TO THE YMCA DC YOUTH & GOVERNMENT PRESS CORPS**

Welcome to the YMCA DC Youth & Government Press Corps. The YMCA DC Youth & Government Program Staff hopes that by participating in this part of the Youth & Government program, you will be inspired to further pursue your interests and expand your knowledge regarding reporting, editing, newspaper layout and design, and local government in general.

As a member of the Press Corps, you will work in conjunction with the YMCA DC Youth & Government Press Corps Advisors to write and develop a conference newspaper and conference slideshow. The paper will be distributed to delegates, advisors, and local officials, and will serve as an official record of the Legislative Weekend conference.

This manual should serve as an overview of general journalism topics, including writing, editing, interviewing, and photography. There is certainly much more to be learned about journalism than just this manual, and we hope your participation in the program will encourage you to investigate other resources.

### **REQUIREMENTS OF THE PRESS CORPS**

- Write and Submit one (1) original news article ready for publication
- Meet all registration deadlines
- Attend any Press Corps meetings or trainings prior to the Youth Summit and Legislative Weekend conferences
- Adhere to the Code of Conduct

## WHAT IS NEWS?

### *DETERMINING WHAT TO WRITE*

A newspaper can be useless if no one reads it. Reporters must search for topics that inspire interest and have an effect on their readership. Good reporters capture stories that are:

- Timely or New
- Informative or Educational
- Significant
- Unique and Interesting
- Entertaining

Writers and editors must ask themselves the following questions before choosing to write about a specific topic:

- Will this story be of interest to a large number of readers?
- Do people need to know about this topic, incident, or story?
- Is this story out of the ordinary?

YMCA DC Youth & Government Press Corps members can focus on a variety of topics, including:

- Heated, inspiring, or interesting debates regarding bills.
- Personal stories that have prompted the writing of bills.
- Elections, mayoral debates, and profiles of student leaders or candidates.
- Visits by actual elected officials.
- The origins of YMCA DC Youth & Government in Washington, DC.
- "Hot topics" in DC neighborhoods that have affected the conference or debate.

**Some examples of headlines in the mainstream media that are:**

<b>Timely or New:</b>	"Williams Breaks Campaign Fundraising Record"
<b>Informative or Educational:</b>	"A Personal Preparedness Guide for Anthrax Attacks"
<b>Significant:</b>	"Pentagon Workers Return to Rebuilt Section of E Ring"
<b>Interesting or Informative:</b>	"Bright-Eyed, Bushy-Tailed and Rotten: The Squirrel as a Forest Mascot or Meditative Object? Are They Nuts?"
<b>Entertaining:</b>	"Jay Leno, Recycling Advocate" (details how comedian Jay Leno recycles old and bad jokes)

## RESEARCHING AND INTERVIEWING

Once you have selected a topic on which to write, you must next develop a list of sources who will provide details and information on your topic. Sources can be people, reports, books, press releases, etc. For YMCA DC Youth & Government purposes, most of our sources will be our fellow delegates.

You may have noticed that most news articles quote 'officials' or individuals involved in the topic, or news, that is covered. Responsible journalists use many sources and tell their readers who gave them the information they use.

# WRITING THE STORY

After determining what to write and collecting information for your story, your final step is actually writing it.

## THE STORY'S FOCUS

Before you write, ask yourself the question "What is the point of this story?" Once you've found an answer, make sure everything you write is related to that answer. Staying focused on the point of your story is an important aspect of good reporting.

## KEY ELEMENTS OF A GOOD LEAD SENTENCE

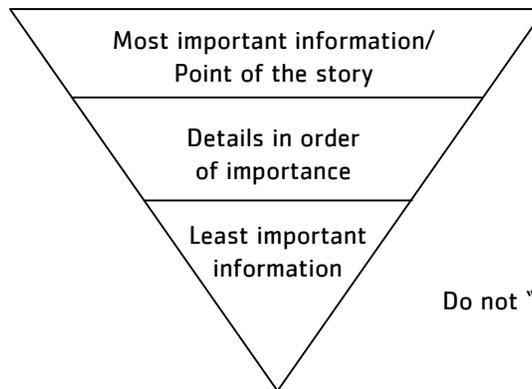
The best news stories tell the most important aspect of the story in the first sentence, also referred to as the "lead." Leads explain the WHO, WHAT, WHY, WHEN, WHERE, and HOW IS IT IMPORTANT for the entire story...and the rest of the paragraphs are simply details that support that lead sentence. The lead sentence should give readers a good understanding of what happened in a certain event, situation, discussion, etc. so if they do not read the entire article, they are still well informed. Here are some examples of good lead sentences (the key elements are indicated in **(bold)**):

"Poultry processor Pilgrim's Pride (**WHO**) is recalling 27.4 million pounds of cooked sandwich meat (**WHAT**) after warnings of possible contamination from the listeria bacteria (**WHY**) – the largest meat recall in U.S. history (**HOW IT IS IMPORTANT**)."

"A geologist (**WHO**) searching for earthquake faults (**WHAT**) at a construction site (**WHERE**) on Thursday (**WHEN**) found something even more earth-shattering: the 100,000-year-old fossilized remains of a North American camel (**WHAT, HOW IT IS IMPORTANT**)."

## DETAILS

In the supporting paragraphs of the story, arrange your information so that you present the most important information first. Remember to quote sources. A good amount of quotes makes a story more readable.



Do not "save the best for last" in news reporting!

## TRANSITIONS

One sign of good writing is the ability to move smoothly from one paragraph or thought to another. Transitions are words, phrases or entire paragraphs that hold a story together. Transitions take readers from subject to subject, fact to fact, time to time and place to place without confusing the reader. Here are several ways to incorporate transitions:

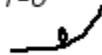
- Repeat a key word from a previous paragraph.
- Use a synonym that refers to a key word in a previous paragraph.
- Refer to a fact in a previous paragraph.
- Use the adjectives this and that or the pronouns he, she, it, they, if they refer to something or someone in a previous paragraph.
- Other good transition words are: for example, besides, consequently, furthermore, likewise, meanwhile, also and finally.
- The key to using transitions is that they must be smooth. Awkward transitions take the reader away from the information of the story and disrupt the flow.

## EDITING

Follow these tips for effectively editing your work or someone else's:

- Read your piece out loud. See if it flows.
- Put a check by each fact. These are items you have rechecked for accuracy.
- Box every name for accuracy and spelling.
- Put "SP" by any word with questionable spelling. Be sure you have checked the spelling of all words.
- Circle verbs. Ask yourself if you are using the most active verb.
- Put a strike through adverbs. See if you can replace adverbs with a stronger verb.
- Draw an arrow from subjects to verbs. Make sure there is agreement. How far apart is the subject from the verb? Can you get them closer together?
- Draw a dotted line from pronouns to antecedents. If you write the word "it," what is "it"?
- Examine your sentences. Enhance your piece by using strong words at the beginnings and ends of sentences. Check to see if your sentences are too long.
- Use strong leads and kickers. Does your lead draw someone to read further? Does your closing reiterate the main point?

## EDITING MARKS

	(squiggly line) rephrase, rethink
<u>      </u>	(underlined) error, mistake
<i>more</i>	develop this example, point, section
?	unclear
<i>ex.</i>	example required
<i>dev.</i>	develop this point, example, etc. in more depth
¶	paragraph (new one needed)
^	insert
<i>agr.</i>	agreement (subject/verb, number)
	switch order
<i>r-o</i>	run-on sentence
	omit
[ ] ( )	delete/replace what is within brackets
<i>m w</i>	missing word
<i>c-s</i>	comma splice
<i>frag</i>	sentence fragment
<i>awk</i>	awkward syntax or word choice

# ETHICS IN JOURNALISM

Journalists in America are called upon to adhere to strict ethics and values. Even journalists at YMCA DC Youth & Government must make a sincere effort to be accurate, fair, truthful, independent, and to minimize harm. *If you follow the core values of the YMCA: caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility, you will be an ethical journalist.*

## SEEK TRUTH AND REPORT IT

Journalists should be honest, fair, and courageous in gathering, reporting, and interpreting information. Journalists should:

- Test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error. Deliberate distortion is never permissible.
- Diligently seek out subjects of news stories to give them the opportunity to respond to allegations of wrongdoing.
- Avoid undercover or other surreptitious methods of gathering information except when traditional open methods will not yield information vital to the public. Use of such methods should be explained as part of the story.
- Never plagiarize.
- Distinguish between advocacy and news reporting. Analysis and commentary should be labeled and not misrepresent fact or context.
- Distinguish news from advertising and shun hybrids that blur the lines between the two.

## MINIMIZE HARM

Ethical journalists treat sources, subjects and colleagues as human beings deserving of respect. Journalists should:

- Show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by news coverage. Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.
- Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.
- Recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance.

## ACT INDEPENDENTLY

Journalists should be free of obligation to any interest other than the public's right to know. Journalists should:

- Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived.
- Remain free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility.
- Refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel, and special treatment, and shun secondary employment, political involvement, public office and service in community organizations if they compromise journalistic integrity.
- Disclose unavoidable conflicts.
- Be wary of sources offering information for favors or money; avoid bidding for news.

## BE ACCOUNTABLE

Journalists are accountable to their readers, listeners, viewers and each other. Journalists should:

- Clarify and explain news coverage and invite dialogue with the public over journalistic conduct.
- Encourage the public to voice grievances against the news media.
- Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.
- Expose unethical practices of journalists and the news media.
- Abide by the same high standards to which they hold others.

# THOUGHTS ON THE WRITING PROCESS

*(Source: Doug White, Online Reporter)*

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Tom French of the St. Petersburg Times is dedicated to the craft of writing. When he's not writing serial narratives and books, he often can be found speaking about journalism in workshops and classrooms.

Here are some of Tom's tips for surviving and thriving as a writer.

**ON FINDING STORIES:** When Tom was a younger writer, he thought great stories came from above. "As a high school journalist, I thought the heavens would open up," he says. But he quickly realized that there were plenty of great stories right before his eyes. Writers must see the world as potential stories, Tom says.

**ON CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS:** Tom says the most natural --- and often the most awkward --- approach is best. Be yourself and be honest with why you want to talk with potential sources. "Don't have assumptions or hidden agendas," he says.

**ON STAYING ON THE RECORD:** Tom advises being clear on your terms from the start. Set ground rules that your source understands. Different people mean different things by "off the record," he says. To avoid potential misunderstandings later, Tom tells sources that he likes all comments to be on the record. That way, if they're not comfortable having certain information in print, they know not to say it.

**ON ASKING DUMB QUESTIONS:** "The worst thing is to pretend to understand that which you don't," he says. You should ask dumb questions because "you learn by admitting what you don't know."

**ON ASKING DIFFICULT QUESTIONS:** "Ask them tough and straight," he says. For example, if you're interviewing the principal and have to ask if he or she stole money from the glee club, don't dance around the issue. Ask directly.

**ON GAINING RESPECT:** Tom says that you can't control how others view you. He says young journalists should take their job seriously, and ignore and deflect patronizing attitudes from administrators, teachers, and other students. "They'll learn quickly that you are for real," he says.

**ON FIRSTHAND OBSERVATIONS:** Tom says interviewing experts can be helpful, but often there is a simpler way to gain insight about a subject. For example, if you're writing about cliques, hang out and observe people in the cafeteria before contacting a mental health expert about the sociological structure of cliques. "Are there boundaries? Are there people who cross over from one territory to the next? Find out why people sit where they sit."

**ON DETAILS:** "The world is not made up of generalities," Tom says. "The world runs on details: specific, concrete details." For example, if you're writing about a rock thrown through the principal's window at dinnertime, find out where the principal was sitting at the time. What was he or she eating? To set poignant and vivid scenes, you must explore the details.

**ON THE ART OF ZAGGING:** "When everyone else zigs, you should zag." For example, Tom says that high school football is often covered "to the ends of the earth." While football is important, he points out that so are all the other sports. Instead of always focusing on what's happening on the field, he says some of the best action occurs in the stands, on the sidelines, and in the locker room.

**ON STARTING TO WRITE:** Many writers, even the most accomplished ones, often find the writing process frightening. Tom says you need to "put your terror aside and jump in."

**ON FINDING YOUR VOICE:** "The voice is in you," he says. "Your voice is everything that makes you you."

**ON BIG WORDS:** While Tom suggests that young journalists should "raise expectations" for readers, don't be a showoff. For example, Tom would not advise using "he retorted" when you could write "he said." But if a so-called big word fits or is most appropriate word, by all means use it.

**ON REWRITING:** Tom says all writers must rewrite. "A lot of times this is where you learn the most," he says.

**ON MONITORING YOUR TIME:** Tom says how much time you spend on a story is defined by the nature of the story and the deadline. "Some stories deserve an hour or a day, and some a whole year."

**ON GETTING MORE TIME WHEN IT'S TRULY NEEDED:** "When you have a story that warrants more time, ask your editor for an extension," Tom says. "Asking for an extension is like asking your parents to borrow the car for the weekend. Be creative in fighting for more time. Be convincing and use persuasion."

**ON TELLING IT LIKE IT IS:** Tom says you need to feel something about the person you're writing about. "Empathy is important," he says. "Your job is not to judge them, it's to understand them. And your job is not to make your high school look good, and it's not to make the high school look bad. It's to report how it is."

**ON ACCURACY:** Tom says get the facts right. Then double-check yourself. Then check again. "Be tough and scrupulous on yourself," he says.

## **WELCOME CANDIDATES, APPOINTED OFFICIALS, AND ELECTED OFFICIALS**

The YMCA DC Youth & Government program offers a number of elected and appointed roles that students can take on during the program year. Students elected or appointed to these roles are responsible for presiding over the Youth Summit and Legislative Weekend conferences. During the Legislative Weekend conference, candidates give speeches, answer questions during a press conference, and distribute campaign materials. If you are interested in running for office or being appointed to a particular position, you should make sure that you understand the requirements and the time commitment required of each position.

### **REQUIREMENTS OF ELECTED AND APPOINTED OFFICIALS AND CANDIDATES:**

- Complete and submit filing forms to the YMCA DC Youth & Government Program Office by the deadline
- Understand your official role at the Youth Summit and Legislative Weekend conferences
- Meet all registration deadlines
- Attend Officer's Training
- Attend the Candidate's Meeting prior to Legislative Weekend
- Adhere to the Code of Conduct
- Attend weekly Student Advisory Board meetings

## LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

The YMCA DC Youth & Government program offers a number of elected and appointed roles students can take on during the program year. Below is a description of the different participation roles as well as the grade requirements and the written materials required along with the registration forms.

Student Position	Grade Level(s)	Materials Required
Student Advisory Board	9-12	Weekly Meetings
City Council Member & Board of Education Member	10-12	Mandatory Officer's Training and 1 Legislative Bill
Appointed Officials	10-12	Mandatory Officer's Training
Elected Officials	11-12	Mandatory Officer's Training

### STUDENT ADVISORY BOARD (grades 9-12)

At the beginning of the program year, each delegation appoints at least one student to serve as its representative on the citywide Student Advisory Board. The Student Advisory Board works with the YMCA DC Youth & Government Program Staff to plan the Youth Summit and Legislative Weekend conferences. The Student Advisory Board representative also serves as a liaison between the YMCA DC Youth & Government Program Staff and his or her delegation. As the liaison, the representative is responsible for sharing program updates with his or her delegation and providing delegation updates to the Student Advisory Board. Student Advisory Board members may also hold another elected or appointed position within the YMCA DC Youth & Government program.

### YMCA YOUTH CITY COUNCIL & BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS (grades 10-12)

Prior to Legislative Weekend, each delegation elects one student to serve as its representative on either the YMCA Youth City Council or the YMCA Youth Board of Education. During Legislative Weekend, City Council and Board of Education members listen and debate bills that are passed by the committees. Bills that are passed by the YMCA Youth City Council and YMCA Youth Board of Education are then heard by the YMCA Youth Mayor. YMCA Youth City Council and Youth Board of Education Members must attend the mandatory Officer's Training and it is strongly encouraged that they attend the weekly Student Advisory Board meetings. Students elected to serve on the YMCA Youth City Council and the YMCA Youth Board of Education must write a bill and should have at least one year's experience in the program.

### APPOINTED OFFICIALS (grades 10-12)

- **COMMITTEE CLERKS (grades 10-11)**  
 Committee Clerks are appointed by the YMCA DC Youth & Government Program Staff to assist the Committee Chairs during Legislative Weekend. Committee Clerks must attend the mandatory Officer's Training to learn parliamentary procedure and should have at least one year's experience in the program.
- **COMMITTEE CHAIRS (grades 11-12)**  
 Committee Chairs are appointed by the YMCA DC Youth & Government Program Staff to preside over the various committees during Legislative Weekend. Committee Chairs must attend the mandatory Officer's Training to learn parliamentary procedure and should have at least one year's experience in the program.
- **YMCA YOUTH MAYOR'S CABINET (grades 10-12)**  
 Members of the YMCA Youth Mayor's Cabinet are appointed by the YMCA Youth Mayor with assistance from the YMCA DC Youth & Government Program Staff. Members help the YMCA Youth Mayor determine which bills to sign into law and which bills to veto. Cabinet members meet regularly with the YMCA Youth Mayor.
- **YMCA YOUTH SECRETARY OF THE CITY COUNCIL (grades 10-11)**  
 The YMCA Youth Secretary of the City Council is appointed by the YMCA Youth City Council Chair with assistance from the YMCA DC Youth & Government Program Staff to assist with administrative matters during the Council Sessions. The YMCA Youth Secretary is administrative in his/her role meaning he/she may not vote or debate in the session and may not hold another office at the time of his/her appointment. The YMCA Youth Secretary must attend the mandatory Officer's Training to learn parliamentary procedure and should have at least one year's experience in the program.

- **YMCA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION (grades 10-11)**

The YMCA Executive Director of the Board of Education is appointed by the YMCA Youth Superintendent with assistance from the YMCA DC Youth & Government Program Staff to assist with administrative matters during the Board Sessions. The YMCA Youth Executive Director is administrative in his/her role meaning he/she may not vote or debate in the session and may not hold another office at the time of his/her appointment. The YMCA Youth Executive Director must attend the mandatory Officer's Training to learn parliamentary procedure and should have at least one year's experience in the program.

- **YMCA YOUTH BOARD OF ELECTIONS DIRECTOR (grade 12)**

The YMCA Youth Board of Elections Director is appointed by the Program Director at the end of the Legislative Weekend conference and serves the following year. The YMCA Youth Board of Elections Director is responsible for helping to recruit new candidates and leads the candidate meetings prior to Legislative Weekend. The YMCA Youth Board of Elections Director must also moderate the Town Hall during Legislative Weekend, plan the Candidates Breakfast, and oversee the polling area. The YMCA Youth Board of Elections Director is required to attend weekly Student Advisory Board meetings and the mandatory Officer's Training. The YMCA Youth Board of Elections Director must also meet with the YMCA DC Youth & Government Program Staff as necessary.

## **ELECTED OFFICIALS (grades 11-12)**

- **EDITOR-IN-CHIEF (rising junior or senior)**

The Editor-in-Chief is elected by the Press Corps members. He or she is responsible for publishing the newspapers at the Youth Summit and Legislative Weekend conferences. The Editor-in-Chief must work with the Press Corps members to make sure that all events at the conference are covered. In addition, the Editor-in-Chief must work with the YMCA DC Youth & Government Program Staff to design the conference slideshow.

- **YMCA YOUTH CITY COUNCIL CHAIR (rising junior or senior)**

The YMCA Youth City Council Chair is elected by his or her peers at the end of Legislative Weekend and serves the following year. The YMCA Youth City Council Chair is responsible for presiding over the City Council throughout Legislative Weekend using parliamentary procedure. The YMCA Youth City Council Chair is required to attend weekly Student Advisory Board meetings and the mandatory Officer's Training. The YMCA Youth City Council Chair must also meet with the YMCA DC Youth & Government Program Staff as necessary.

- **YMCA YOUTH SUPERINTENDENT (rising junior or senior)**

The YMCA Youth Superintendent is elected by his or her peers at the end of Legislative Weekend and serves the following year. The YMCA Youth Superintendent is responsible for presiding over the Board of Education throughout Legislative Weekend using parliamentary procedure. The YMCA Youth Superintendent is required to attend weekly Student Advisory Board meetings and the mandatory Officer's Training. The YMCA Youth Superintendent must also meet with the YMCA DC Youth & Government Program Staff as necessary.

- **YMCA YOUTH MAYOR (rising senior)**

The YMCA Youth Mayor is elected by his or her peers at the end of Legislative Weekend and serves the following year. The YMCA Youth Mayor is responsible for presiding over the Youth Summit and Legislative Weekend conferences. The YMCA Youth Mayor must deliver a State of the City Address at Legislative Weekend and determine which bills to sign and veto. The YMCA Youth Mayor must preside over weekly Student Advisory Board meetings and is also asked to represent the program at various events across the city. The YMCA Youth Mayor must also meet with the YMCA DC Youth & Government Program Staff as necessary.

## **CAMPAIGNING FOR OFFICE**

Campaigning for office takes a lot of thought and preparation. There are a number of ways that you can campaign. Some of these ways include posters, fliers, and buttons. You may be as creative as you want to be with your campaign slogans. However, the slogans must follow the YMCA Core Values – caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility. YMCA DC Youth & Government program staff will offer several opportunities for you to make campaign materials.

In addition to campaign materials, candidates are required to give a speech during Legislative Weekend. This speech needs to focus on why you are the best individual to be elected YMCA Youth Mayor, YMCA Youth City Council Chair, or YMCA Youth Superintendent. Again, program staff will offer you assistance writing your speech if requested.

Finally, candidates will participate in a Press Conference at Legislative Weekend. At the conclusion of the Candidate Speeches, the Editor-in-Chief will ask candidates several questions. The Press Conference will take place in front of all of the students at Legislative Weekend.

Elections will take place during Legislative Weekend and the results will be announced at the YMCA Youth Mayor's Banquet.