BRITISH ORIENTEERING NEWS ARTICLES

Writing stories for a website is very different from writing any other articles. Here are some helpful tips to follow:

KEEP IT SNAPPY

Think about how you read when you use the internet. Most people scan the page and quickly click onto something else if they aren't interested, so you have to grab their attention.

The three C's are a good starting point for any web writing. **Making sure your writing is: Clear, Concise and Correct.**

Short words in short sentences give you a much better chance of keeping hold of your reader, and are easier to understand for a wider audience.

Long v short words
apprehend - catch
ascertain - learn
at this moment in time - now
leaves much to be desired - poor

In many cases there are longer alternatives - but do they really add anything.

What makes a good website story?
To get all the key information inside the top four paragraphs of a story.

It's a good discipline to have - can you sum up your whole story in four paragraphs (which equates to about 80 words)? This means you have to strip out everything but the most important and interesting details.

The top four paragraphs should provide all the information a reader would need if they didn't know anything about it in advance.

Try to answer all the 5 W's: Who, What, Why, When and Where.

If you can answer all these questions, you are on the right track

GET THE BASICS RIGHT

Nothing undermines a story more than getting a simple fact wrong, like somebody's age or the spelling of somebody's name.

Truth and accuracy are important, so it is best to double check all the facts with two sources whenever you can, and stop to think before you use words like unique, unprecedented, first, last and so on.

Read your story back to check it makes sense. Get somebody else to read it too, and see whether they understand the story.

Always run a spell-check, but don't rely on it completely. Mis-spelt words or typos can go through a spell-checker unnoticed.

Jennie Taylor, Communications Officer
Email: jtaylor@britishorienteering.org.uk

NEVER ASSUME KNOWLEDGE

Think about who will be reading the articles on the website. Readers might be: members, orienteers, teachers, young people or the general public.

They aren't all necessarily going to be alike, either in their age, where they live or what they are particularly interested in. So to help them understand your news story, you need to explain things to them.

For instance, Graham Gristwood might be very well-known in the world of British Orienteering, but you still need to highlight that he is a GBR elite athlete and member of Forth Valley Orienteers to some new members or general public. Don't assume people know!

Don't assume everybody knows who this is!

IT'S GOOD TO TALK

A great way to liven up a news report is with some quotes from the people who are part of the story. The best way to get these is to speak to and interview the people involved yourself, so you can ask the questions you want to know the answers to.

Make sure you quote them accurately, but don't feel you have to get every "...erm", "...like I say" "…you know" or "...yeah" in the report. You can tidy up somebody's words as long as you don't change the meaning.

It's not always possible to talk to somebody directly, so sometimes you might need to use quotes from other sources: perhaps a press release or a personal website. That's fine, but you should make it clear where the quotes came from, so your audience understands.

SELL YOUR NEWS STORY

A good headline should "tell and sell" the news story. Think about what would make you click on a story, and about how to get the most interesting elements of your story across. Avoid headlines which are unclear, assume too much knowledge or promise something that the story doesn't provide.

Always re-read your headline to check if it could be taken the wrong way...

Remember - the best headlines are often a result of collaboration, so don't feel you have to 'go it alone'. Chat to other people and see what ideas you come up with.

BREAK IT UP

One of the most important elements of a good online story is to avoid large chunks of unbroken text.

Lots of research has shown that it is very off-putting to readers, who tend to click onto something a bit easier on the eye.

So use photos, bullet points, crossheads (like the 'BREAK IT UP' one just above) or other techniques to help break up the page.

Jennie Taylor, Communications Officer
Email: jtaylor@britishorienteering.org.uk

Look back at this page and see some of these features in use, and think about how the page would look if they weren't there.

REMEMBER GOOD NEWS STORIES AND CONTENT ENGAGES READERS

You should now feel confident to write a news story for the British Orienteering website.

Below is a 'News Story Content Template' which is designed to help you with writing news story and provides some prompts as to what you need to include.

All you have to do is please complete all the necessary fields as highlighted and send your completed form together with imagery (e.g. logos, photos, etc.). If you have included photos please complete and send the permissions form, with relevant parental / guardian consents.

Please send all documents and images to:
Jennie Taylor, Communications Officer at National Office.
Email: jtaylor@britishorienteering.org.uk.

Please note: Jennie Taylor is the editor responsible for signing off the news content for upload on to the British Orienteering news section of the website and will contact you with any changes she feels should be made to improve the news story.

If you have any questions or queries about any of the above, please feel free to contact:

Jennie Taylor, Communications Officer
Email: jtaylor@britishorienteering.org.uk
Tel: 01629 583037

NEWS STORY – CONTENT TEMPLATE

For all news articles requiring uploading on to the website – this template needs to please be completed and sent direct to: Jennie Taylor, Communications Officer at British Orienteering.

News article for publishing on the British Orienteering website

Strong headline: Write an engaging headline that will engage and pull people in. **Top tips!** Use 11 or fewer words in your headline. Use keywords, the words people would use to search for your article. Write your headlines in a tone that matches your personal voice. If you are writing for a reason other than to persuade, make your headline personal, or useful, or find another way to make it engaging.	Headline text:
Teaser: For example: A teaser is about how you hook your audience for a click, so keeping them curious is essential to make the audience want to know more. Keep it snappy and to the point.	Teaser text:

Content:	Content:
Top tips! **Keep It Short** Reading from a computer screen is slower than reading from a paper. So if newspaper stories need to be short, online stories need to be even shorter. A general rule of thumb: web content should have about half as many words as its printed equivalent. So keep your sentences short and limit yourself to one main idea per paragraph. Short paragraphs – just a sentence or two each – look less imposing on a web page. **Break It Up** If you do have an article that's on the longish side, don't try to cram it onto one web page. Break it up into several pages, using a clearly visible "continued on next page" link at the bottom. Short and to the point. **Write in the Active Voice Use the Inverted Pyramid** Summarise the main point of your article right at the start. Put the most important information in the top half of your article, the less important stuff in the bottom half. **Highlight Key Words** Use boldface text to highlight especially important words and phrases. However, use this sparingly; if you highlight too much text, nothing will stand out. **Use Bulleted and Numbered Lists** This is another way of highlighting important information and breaking up chunks of text that may be getting too long. **Use Sub-headings** Sub-headings are another way to highlight points and break up text into user-friendly chunks. But keep your subheads clear and informative, not "cute." **Use Hyperlinks Wisely** Use hyperlinks to connect surfers to other web pages that are related to your article. But use hyperlinks only when needed; if you can summarise the information succinctly without linking elsewhere, do so.	

Imagery: Photos, Logos, Maps For example: logos, photographs, maps, etc. Please name photos as: 1, 2, 3, 4, etc.	Details of imagery attached Are you including any imagery to be included in the news article? Yes / No? If yes, what items are attached?
Photo captions for each: Please list the captions for each numbered photo, map, etc.	Photo captions – text:
Photo credit for each: (Who has taken the photo?)	Photo credits:
Photo permissions: Form to be completed and attached.	Yes / No?
When to be published? Date and time news item to be published on the website	Date / Time
SOCIAL MEDIA	
Twitter:	
Is the news article to be published on Twitter?	Yes / No
If yes, attach an image to be included. Tweets with a photo get twice the engagement.	Image attached: Yes / No
Teasers – for use on Twitter	
Top tips! To get your content retweeted, include relevant Twitter handles of prominent tweeters you know might be interested. Attach it to a trending hashtag (again, only if it's relevant). Doing so helps people who may or may not ordinarily follow you see what you have to say. The shorter the tweet, the better. Say as much as you can in the fewest characters possible. This means you may need to edit your tweets, seriously.	
Details of hashtags and @_ to be included in the posts?	
Facebook:	
Is the news article to be published on Facebook?	Yes / No
If yes, attach an image to be included.	Image attached: Yes / No

Teasers – for use on Facebook	
Top tips! Make your title even shorter. Facebook will pull in your existing title, but you can click it and change it before sharing. Don't make the title longer; make it shorter! Punch up the emotion in your title to align with what your Facebook followers care about. Use the text to point out a key section of your news article, ask a question, or suggest your readers do something specific. Try quoting a line from your article and ask your Facebook followers to share a thought about it. A couple of sentences only should suffice.	
Details of hashtags and @_ to be included in the posts?	
Additional posts required?	Yes / No
If yes, when?	Date / time?
Details of additional tweets?	Content and hashtags? 1. 2. 3.
Details of additional Facebook posts?	Content and @_?

Please send your completed template together with all the photos, logos and maps you have highlighted in the template which you would like including in the article to Jennie Taylor, Communications Officer for approval. Email: jtaylor@britishorienteering.org.uk

OR post to: Jennie Taylor, Communications Officer, British Orienteering, National Office, Scholes Mill, Old Coach Road, Tansley, Matlock DE4 5FY
Please note: If you want any materials returning please include a self-addressed envelope.

Jennie Taylor, Communications Officer
Email: jtaylor@britishorienteering.org.uk