



Southern California Conference  
of Seventh-day Adventists

COMMUNICATION & MEDIA PRODUCTION

# HOW TO WRITE AN ARTICLE

# FOR PUBLICATION



No thinking — that comes later. You must write your first draft with your heart. You rewrite with your head. The first key to writing is ... to write, not to think!





# THE INVERTED PYRAMID

## MOST NEWSWORTHY INFO

*Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?  
The answers to these questions go in the first paragraph or two.*

## IMPORTANT DETAILS

*Expand on the core info you shared to set the foundation of the story. After you answer the 5 Ws and H, then you can begin to add details to strengthen the story.*

## SUPPORTING INFO

*What other information did you gather? Maybe it wasn't exactly foundational to the story but still an interesting detail. Add it in here!*

# HOW TO WRITE AN ARTICLE

## COLLECT 5 WS & H

Gather all the data you can to answer the following questions: who, what, when, where, how and, most importantly, why. These answers will form the basic foundation of the article.

## TELL THE STORY!

Always remember that it's perfectly OK if your first draft isn't pretty. In fact, it's expected! So just think about the reader and what you would tell them about the story if they were sitting in front of you. In short, what happened...and why does it matter?

## INCLUDE QUOTES

Ask questions relevant to the why, and seek meaningful statements. For example, what was the motivation behind the new innovative program? This is more interesting than the hours the program runs or the services/goods it provides. This information is still helpful, but it does not need to be a direct quote. Aim to include quotes from at least 2 people.

## MECHANICS

Write in third person. Write a catchy headline that hints at the why and includes an active verb. Include a byline that states you are the author below the headline. As the author, avoid all subjective statements. Subjective statements must be quoted from one of your sources. Use past tense for attributions. Aim for 400 words for the finished article. Format: submit the article as a Word document, Times New Roman, 12 pt, single spaced. Keep in mind the article will be edited multiple times after submission.

## PHOTOS

Focus on action and people related to the heart of the story. Photos of large crowds or empty facilities are usually not helpful. Provide at least 2-3 hi-res photos (minimum 5-10Mb, 300dpi) with captions. Submit the photos as separate files, not embedded in a Word document (.jpg, .png and .heic files are acceptable). When possible, provide the photographer's name.

## REVIEW

It's always a good idea (although not required) to have your story reviewed by your source(s), if time permits. Be sure to let your source know when you need to hear about any changes—ideally at least a day before your deadline to submit the story, so that you have time to rework it with their requests, if needed.

# HOW TO INTERVIEW



## QUESTIONS

Consider the statements you want to include in the article that must be quoted, things that are too subjective for you, as the author, to say. Perhaps you want to share what an amazing and incredible program you're reporting about. Ask something that will elicit such a response. Try to experience the source's inner thoughts; ask what motivated them to launch this endeavor or what's their favorite part of being involved in this ministry. And always, always conclude the interview by asking, "Is there anything else you'd like to share that I haven't asked about?" The answers to this question are often the best quotes!

## PROCESS

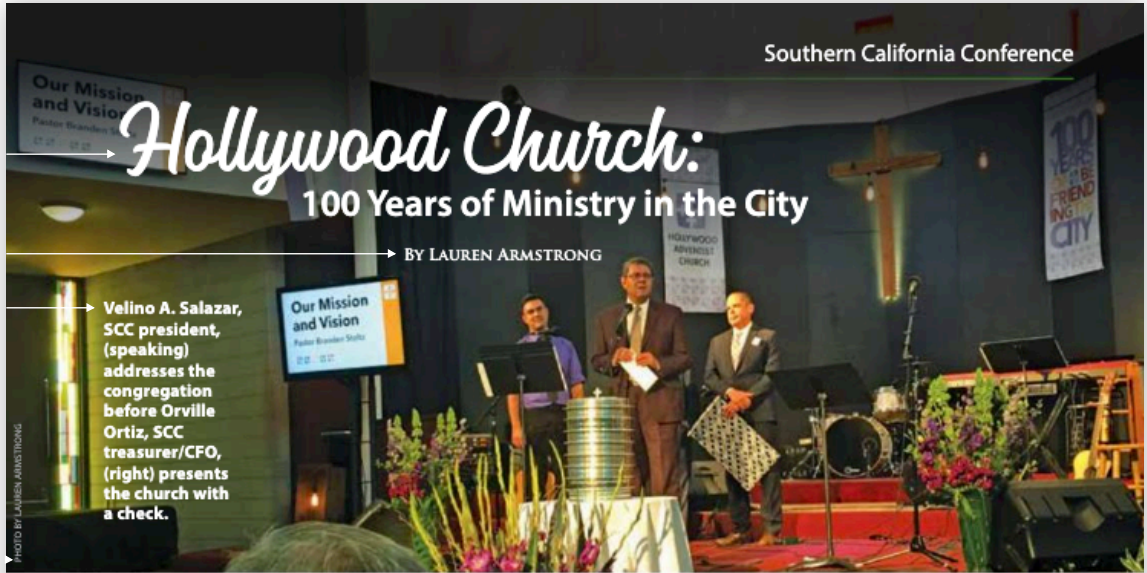
There are a variety of ways to conduct an interview, and which one you use will depend on your circumstance. In-person interviews are best because you can read the interviewee's nonverbal behavior as well as their words, giving you the ability to include statements like, "he said with a smile" or "she mentioned hesitantly." Plus, follow-up questions come more naturally. Emailing the questions or conducting an interview over the phone are also viable options if an in-person interview is not possible or practical.

## EDITING

Generally, don't reword statements the source gave you unless you have permission to do so. Mistakes (misspellings, grammatical errors, etc.) in a quote can be addressed by including [sic] so the reader knows the mistake was part of the original quote. If a quote is very awkward and you would like to revise it, always ask the source to approve the edited version.

# THE ANATOMY OF AN ARTICLE

How do these guidelines look in a complete article? The article below is marked up to illustrate the application of these guidelines and show how these puzzle pieces fit together.



Headline

Byline

Caption includes verified names and titles, signifying who appears where in the photo.

Photo credit

It's often not necessary to include an exact event date, and it can be distracting.

Fact check titles, name spellings, etc.

Third person perspective is used.

Includes quotes from two people.

Summarize major themes/elements of the program.

This fall, the iconic Hollywood church celebrated its milestone centennial. Elder Branden Stoltz, current senior pastor of the Hollywood church, said of the theme of unity: "We are not the same—we are one as a community in Christ." The morning's focus was laser-sharp on the theme of unity and the church's mission of love and grace as it has played out through the years.

Elder Greg Hoenes, SCC West Region director, shared the morning's message. Hoenes, who pastored the Hollywood church from 1997 to 2004, highlighted important historical landmarks in his message.

He recalled the contextual ministry of the church by highlighting its unique and opportune location in the city of Hollywood. "If context can't determine who we are, what is the point of being here?" he reflected. "God in His mercy and God in His greatness provided history and continuity," Hoenes said, illustrating the complex leading of God. In 1 Corinthians 3:9-11, Paul outlines

the co-working of God's people in His church through the passage of time. Verse 11 points out Jesus as the foundation of this growing work, of which Hoenes said: "That is our shared DNA—the basis of our mission and fellowship."

The celebration ended with communion, which allowed attendees to gather together in unity and partake of the Lord's Supper together. This familiar ceremony was performed differently than perhaps is common: attendees were invited up near the stage to partake of the bread and the juice, and they were further welcomed to remain standing as everyone amassed into a large group. This, as Stoltz explained, is a more personal, communal way to experience this meaningful ceremony. The

communion was followed, quite fittingly, by the congregation singing "God of This City." The song states that God is the king of these people, the community of Hollywood in this instance. The lyrics proclaim, "For greater things have yet to come, and greater things are still to be done in this city."

Hoenes recalled the church's mission preceding his time on staff: "That we hear the sound of grace from every wall of this church." Indeed, this mission still resonates.

Stoltz emphasized the focus on grace. "We want to be a place where we love fully, completely," he said. "A people of God, clinging to the law of love."

The church's mission today? It can be summed up simply. *Hollywood Adventist Church: Where God's Spirit is given space to change lives.*

Attendees gather together at the front of the church to partake in communion together.

Caption



PHOTO PROVIDED BY BRANDEN STOLTZ

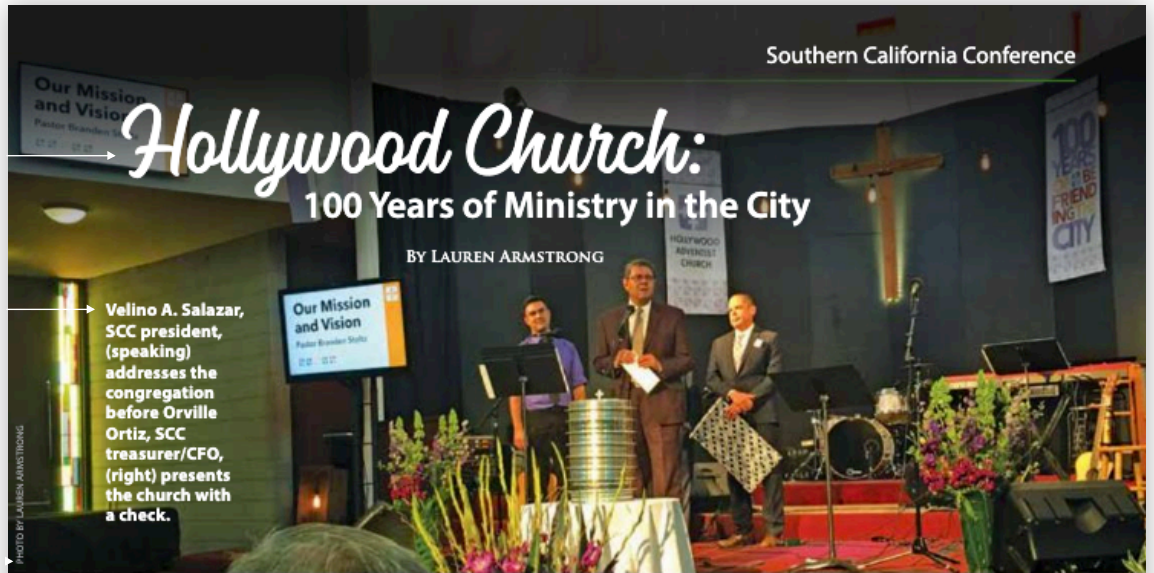
Photo credit

Good conclusions use a strong quote or impactful summary statement.



# WHERE DO I GET ALL THAT INFO?

Where did these different pieces of information come from? How did the author confirm the various facts throughout the article? See the article below to learn how each component of the story was obtained.



Headline written by the author.

Caption written by the author.

Photo taken by the author.

Stoltz's title was listed in the program and double checked with the West Region.

Quotes all written down in real time during the event.

Hoenes' years pastoring with the church verified with the West Region.

Components of event were outlined as the author simultaneously experienced it and took notes.

Outline of sermon written by the author as it was preached.

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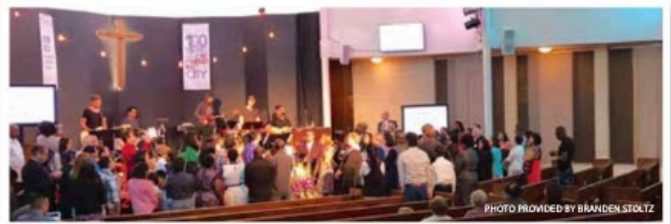
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Caption written by the author.



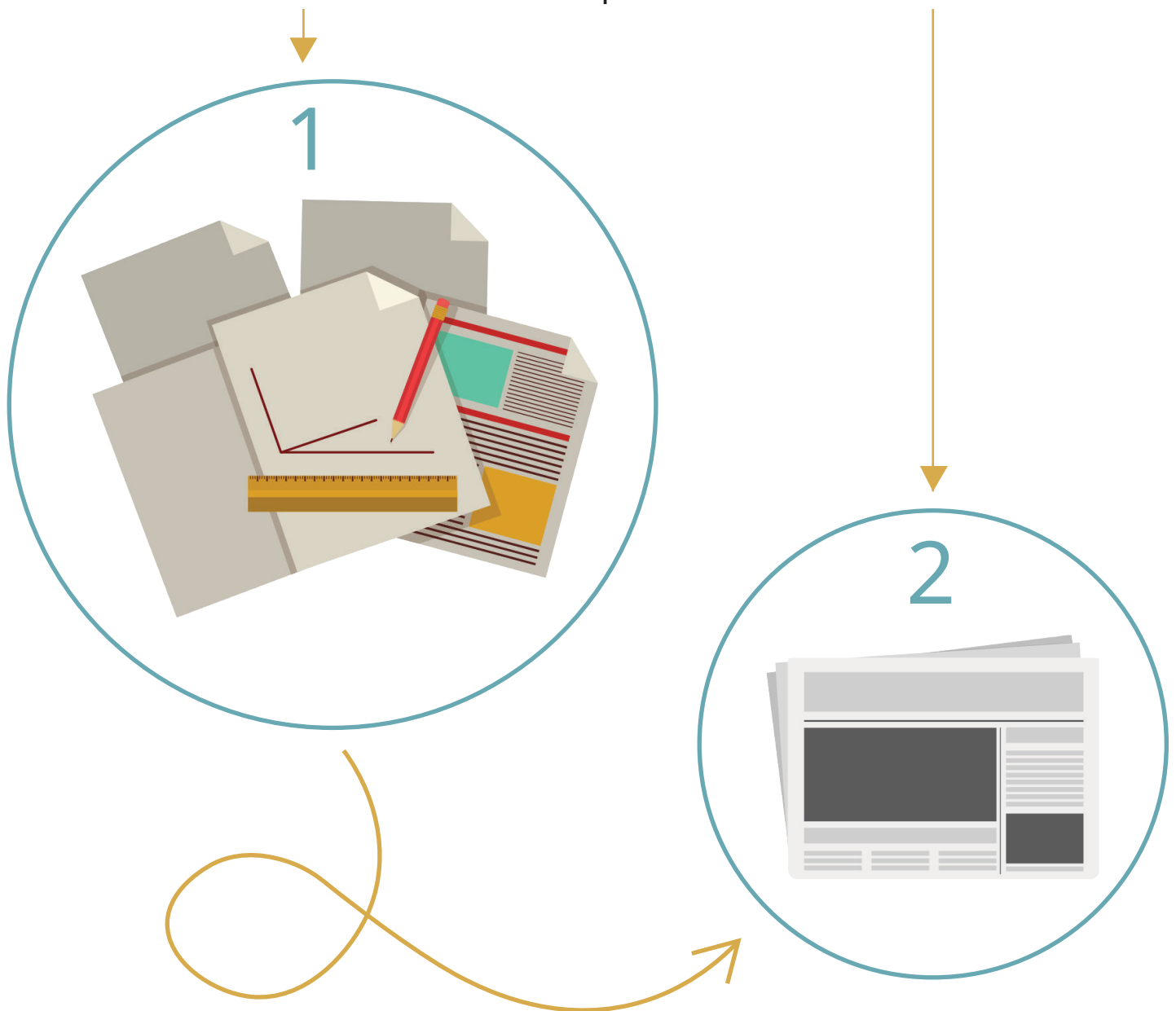
One photo submitted by the pastor.

The current mission statement was confirmed by visiting the church website. Although it was referenced during the program, the verbiage was slightly off.

Lyrics of the song were written down at the event and verified online.

# THE RESEARCH PROCESS

You'll always have more data than you end up using in the article. In fact, that's how it should be! Expect to start with something like *this* for a final product like *this*:





A true piece  
of writing is a  
dangerous thing.  
**It can change  
your life.**

TOBIAS WOLFF

# how to submit your article

Ready to send a draft our way? Remember, the story doesn't have to be completely perfect when we receive it; we'll help with polishing it and preparing it for publication.

When you're ready, there are a few ways you can get in touch with us to submit a story for publication.

**1**

## **SUBMIT THE FORM**

<https://scc.adventist.org/submit-a-story>

**2**

## **CALL US**

818.546.8462

**3**

## **EMAIL US**

[communication@sccsda.org](mailto:communication@sccsda.org)





# platforms where we can publish your story

We have a variety of platforms available where we can publish your story. To learn more, visit <https://scc.adventist.org/cmp>.

Once you submit it, we'll take a look at the story, its audience, our production schedule and more to determine the best ways to share it.

While we often can't guarantee exactly which publication your story will show up in, we'll more than likely publish it on at least one of our platforms.





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