Young Journalist Ireland

Student Journalism and News Literacy programme from NewsBrands Ireland



Young Journalist Ireland



Welcome to ***Young Journalist Ireland***, the award-winning student journalism and news literacy programme from NewsBrands Ireland.

How does Young Journalist Ireland work?

Young Journalist Ireland is a complete student journalism and news literacy programme. The workbook is designed to be used in conjunction with the Lessons Plans on our website, along with newspapers and news websites. By reading the news and using this workbook, students will gain an understanding of how news is produced, how to write like a journalist, and discover the important role journalism plays in our society.

Teacher's Lesson Plan

A Teacher's Lesson Plan to accompany this workbook can be found on www.youngjournalist.ie. Designed to equip teachers with practical guidelines and tips for teaching the Young Journalist Ireland module, the Lesson Plan has options to run the course as a 6 week or 12 week module – entirely dependent on your class group's interest and ability.

What is the aim of Young Journalist Ireland?

The aim of the Young Journalist Ireland programme is to teach students to think like journalists while building their confidence, communication, and news literacy skills through hands-on activities such as writing articles, conducting interviews, and researching facts. This empowers them to express their views constructively, evaluate information critically, and engage in public discourse with insight and integrity.

What is the Young Journalist Ireland workbook for?

This workbook is designed to be used in class alongside the Lesson Plans, newspapers, and news websites. It explores the key writing styles and skills that shape quality journalism, including how to write a strong news story, and how to distinguish between news and opinion. Students will also learn the essentials of opinion writing, effective photojournalism, and the techniques behind engaging sports reporting. In addition, the workbook introduces how to plan, record, and produce a podcast. It also offers practical tips for students preparing to enter the Young Journalist of the Year competition.

What about the competition?

We are always searching for new talent and the next generation of budding journalists. Students can enter the competition in any one of six categories – Podcast, School Newspaper, Opinion, Sport, Features, and Photojournalism. Details of how to enter, the rules, guidelines, tips and instructions are explained in the different sections throughout this guidebook and on the Resource section of our website. The use of artificial intelligence in the creation of any competition entries is strictly prohibited.

How to enter

The closing date for entries is February 26th 2027. There is a maximum of five entries per school for each category. Schools must submit all entries using the entry system in the competition section of the Young Journalist Ireland website.

The winners

Our panel of judges will choose the winning entry from each of the six categories, plus two runners-up from each section. An overall winner will also be selected by the judges, and all winners will be announced in April 2027.

Good luck – and enjoy the process!
NewsBrands Ireland





"News must give you an understanding of what is happening, must be true, and must give you information as quickly as possible."

We are all interested in news, right? 'I'm not', you say, 'it's boring, I'm not interested'. Well, I bet there are some reading this who are interested in the Premier League, fashion, the GAA, celebrities, rugby, or music, and you want information about those areas that interest you. That information must be new – there is no point in telling you something you knew already – and as accurate as possible – there is no point in having an inaccurate match score. Many of you either come from countries other than Ireland, or your families do: Africa, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, or even next door in Britain. Sometimes you want to know what's going on at home, what's going on in your city, town or village. All of that is news, and that news must give you an understanding of what is happening, must be true, and must give you information as quickly as possible. And that's not a bad definition of news.

But the issue for many of us, as we look at our phones, our iPads, TVs and newspapers, is that it is so hard to know what is real and what is fake. Those posts on X, that Tiktok video, the news you hear on the car radio, that video on YouTube, that influencer, what's real? People tell you things and swear they are true. It seems the more we hear and see, the less trustworthy it is.

So can you trust anything or should you just give up, accepting that there is no way of differentiating. Well no, that would be dangerous, because we make decisions based on what we see and read, everything from what film to see, to how to vote (if over 18-years-of-age) or what subjects to take at school, based on education advice on a newspaper education



“Understanding how the media works, what it does, how it does it, empowers you...”

page. Our views on the courts, the Gardai, politicians, or even footballers, is based on what we read, hear and see, whether on social media or on a news website, so knowing who and what to trust is important.

We need to learn how to interrogate all that information out there. What kind of content you are looking at – is it news, a feature, an opinion piece, a sports story, a blog post, a personal post on social media, a rumour, or someone’s opinion? Where did it come from? Is there a name attached? Does the journalist say where the information came from? What’s its source? What was the writer’s motivation? What evidence was provided? Was it fair to all involved?

You need to be able to trust the content you receive. Newspapers, either in print or online have trained journalists in newsrooms and are regulated. They have signed up to a code of ethics, they try to be transparent, but they are not all the same. Every day, news organisations will offer a range of news but it will differ. The main story might be about the economy in one, a murder in another and the housing crisis in a third. All three stories are important, and should be reported. Different types of news website or radio stations or TV stations, online or not, will give a different account of the world we live in. Look at the different outlets and find the one that you feel most comfortable with. Understanding how the media works, what it does, how it does it, empowers you, makes you smarter and gives you a better understanding of the world aro und you.

Michael Foley,
Professor Emeritus, School of Media, TU Dublin

News

"What you see is news, what you know is background, what you feel is opinion"

- Lester Markel, American journalist, 1894-1977

What is the job of a journalist?

Even in the age of 24-hour news cycles, digital platforms and social media, the key function of a journalist remains the same - gather the information and present it fairly and accurately.

The key for any journalist is to give an accurate and balanced report of whatever they are working on and whatever platform they are reporting on - print or digital.

If a criminal is gunned down in broad daylight, it's the job of the journalist to tell the reader what happened, who it happened to, how it happened, why it happened and when it happened

If you answer those five key questions, then 99 times out of 100, you've done your job properly. Remember, news is supposed to be fair, accurate and balanced – it's not your view on what's happened, not what you think might or should have happened. It's what actually happened – the facts of which you have checked, and double checked.

Do

- **Do:** Make your story interesting and relevant.
- **Do:** Always check your facts. Credibility is the most valuable asset to a reporter.
- **Do:** Be balanced - always give both sides of the story.
- **Do:** Use lots of quotes. People love reading what other people say.

Don't

- **Don't:** Start your news articles with a question. Stick to the basic introduction formula and you can't go wrong.
- **Don't:** Editorialise - news stories are fact not opinion. It is not your job to argue a point of view, or sum up with your opinion. Just present the facts and let the reader draw his/her own conclusions.
- **Don't:** Get flowery - keep your sentences and paragraphs short.
- **Don't:** Use lots of heavily descriptive language. When you've finished, go through the entire story and try to remove any words that aren't completely necessary.



What Makes Something Newsworthy?

Not every event or idea is a news story. Editors ask a lot of questions before deciding what's worth publishing. These help them figure out if a story is important, fair, and interesting for their audience.

(With thanks to Nóirín Hegarty, former editor of The Sunday Times and Sunday Tribune.)

Key Questions Editors Ask:

1. Is it actually a story?
Are we telling people something new? Does it reveal something the audience doesn't already know?

2. What's the impact?
How many people does it affect? Does it change something, solve a problem, or raise awareness?

3. Is there a human-interest angle?
Are there real people involved that readers can relate to? Does it make readers feel something — empathy, surprise, or curiosity?

4. Is it relevant and independent?
Why should our audience care right now? Are we reporting fairly — not just repeating someone else's agenda? after reading this?

5. Is it true, fair, and accurate?
Have we checked the facts? Are we showing both sides of the story? Have we contacted everyone involved and given them time to respond?

6. Are we being responsible?
Could publishing this invade someone's privacy? Could it cause harm, spread hate, or identify minors? Is it legal and ethical to share?

7. Will this build or break trust?
Are we confident in our sources and process? Would our readers trust us after reading this?

HOW TO CONDUCT AN INTERVIEW

An interview is one of the best sources of news. Talking to someone, asking questions, asking the **right** questions is a great way of eliciting information. Some of the best, most informative and interesting stories have come from interviews.



1) The more you do your homework in advance, the easier it will be.

Find out as much as possible about the person you are interviewing in advance - your background knowledge will tell your subject you are really interested in their story.

2) Be ready

Try to anticipate what kind of story you will end up with. You should know what to expect from the interview, but keep an open mind in case there's a different story - a better angle - or a second story.

3) Key questions

- Write down your questions in advance.
- Have an idea of what information you want to get - that should help you frame your questions.
- Make sure you cover all the key areas you want to talk about.
- Be realistic - there's no point asking 50 questions, if you only have time, or room in your article, for 10.
- Work out the timing - how long your questions will take to ask, how long the interviewee will allow you.
- Don't be afraid to ask about the time in advance - nothing worse than turning up only to discover that the person you are interviewing has only 10 minutes to talk.
- Be interesting - if you ask boring questions, you'll get boring answers.

4) Be right

Check and double check every detail. If the answer is not clear, or you don't understand it, don't be afraid to ask it again.
Check the spelling of names, addresses and other unusual details - don't presume you know. It would be a pity to get personal or other details wrong because you didn't take time to check.

5) Note taking

Make sure you take down the details correctly.
Not much good if you can't read your writing afterwards!
If you plan to record (either audio or video) the interview make sure the device is working properly, you have enough storage room and battery power.

6) Listen

You're there to listen, not to talk. Let **them** do the talking and then make sure you gather plenty of quotes.

7) Wrap up

Just before you leave, make sure you've asked all your questions and covered all the topics.
Then ask the "bucket question" - "Is there anything else you feel I should know / you would like to tell me"?
Get a phone number, in case you need to double check any details later.

8) Read it

Always read what you write. Make sure the transcript of your interview makes sense, reads well, is accurate and a fair reflection of the interview.



What is a feature?

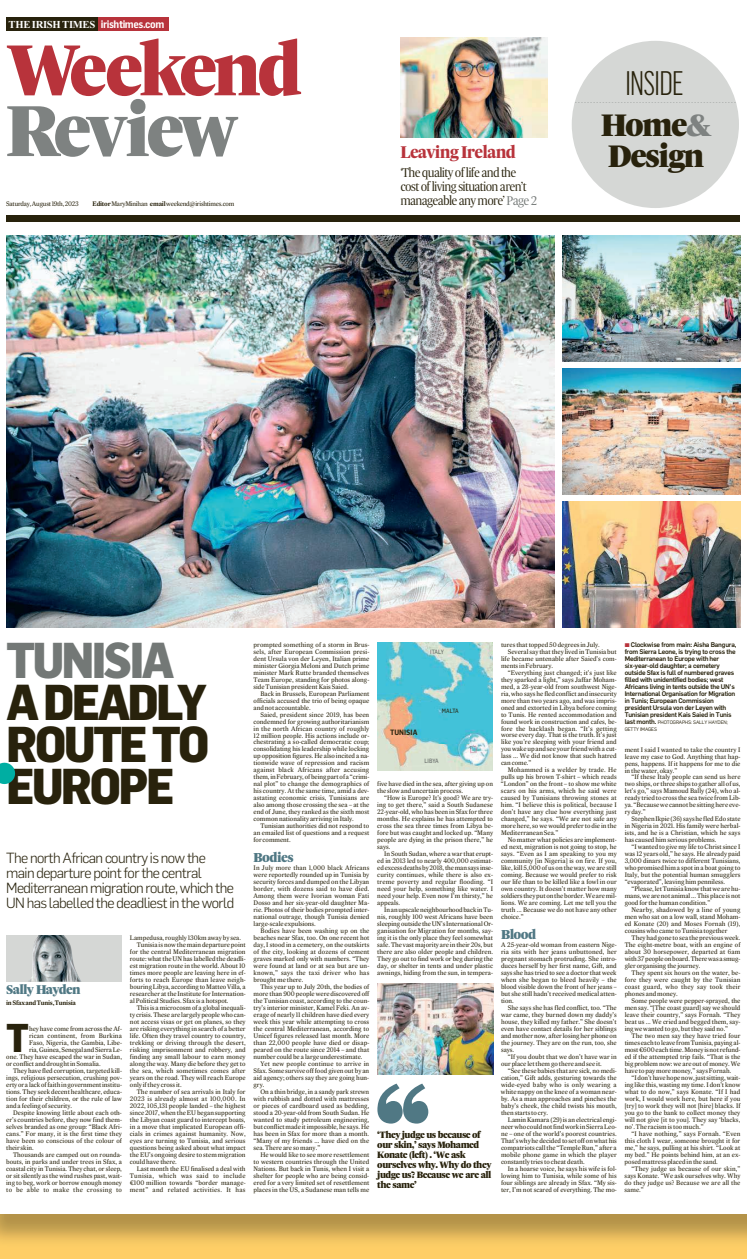
The main differences between a feature and a news story are style and length.

Whereas news is straight-up factual and strictly structured, features are longer, more analytical and softer focussed.

Features can vary widely, from fashion to diet fads, celebrity profiles to human interest stories. They can accompany a news story, or in most cases they have their own section in newspapers and magazines.

Headline

Catchy headlines help grab the attention



How to write a feature

Writing a feature affords the journalist the luxury to use more colourful, descriptive language. In addition, a feature story doesn't have to follow the conventional structure of a news story, i.e. the most important part of the story at the top of the article.

With a feature, once you catch the reader's attention from the start, you can then build to the climax, or the main point, and work around that with descriptions or important information on the topic.

It is a common style for journalists to start a feature with a very graphic, descriptive introduction to draw in the reader, building the information slowly but surely, and then round it off nicely, letting the reader feel satisfied that they know all they need about the subject by the last line.

Some writers end lighter stories with a funny line at the end, others with a knock-em-dead punchline - a 'shock' tactic.

Others finish with a technique of referring back to the line at the start and 'tying it up nicely'. As well as offering journalists a greater range of writing styles, feature pages also other real scope to page designers.

Some of the best looking pages in newspapers and magazines are often the features pages because the design rule book is thrown away.

The pages are meant to be colourful, striking and controversial, firstly to hook the reader, and secondly to dfferentiate the features section from other parts of the paper.

The hook for a feature is often a news story - the story behind the story as it were.


Irish Daily Mail, Saturday, December 7, 2024

Why the new obesity drugs are not a quick fix for a slim figure

Unregulated doses, unpleasant side-effects and bearing no resemblance to the products they say they are – unsupervised use of weight-loss jabs can be life-threatening

by Maeve Quigley

A Scottish nurse died from organ failure

Advice: Pharmacist Sheena Mitchell

Content

Engaging and informative


10 News

Picture: Posed by model

Design

Colourful graphics and pa are very effective


Page 10

Irish Daily Mail, Saturday, July 10, 2021

by Jenny Friel

He's just ten years old but already has a herd of cattle. After his viral video charmed the nation, William Woods reveals why ...

IT'S A FA LIFE FOR

'I would have bought every calf in the place'

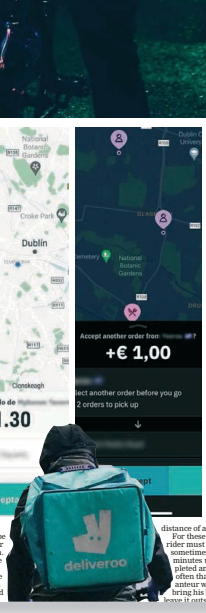
A feature should be entertaining, colourful but important



Irish Examiner
Saturday, 12.08.2023

‘What choice do I have?’ — the twilight world of delivery riders

Some are effectively subcontractors, working six days a week and facing the threat of violence to get less than the minimum wage after paying to access the app, writes Mick Clifford



rider, an overhead that must be paid before he or she earns a bean.

Thereafter the rider is effectively in a queue to pick up work. He has a map and an alert system ... distance of around 1km.

For these princely sums, the rider must to the restaurant and sometimes wait for up to 10 or 15 minutes until the order is completed and ready to go. More often than not, the restaurateur won't allow the rider to bring his bike inside so he must leave it outside as he goes in, ex... minimum price be introduced for each delivery.

"Why couldn't they just pay at least €6 per minimum for each delivery?" he asks. "That would not be a lot but it would be a lot for the riders."

He says that he can't understand why riders like him are targeted for violence.

"I deliver for Irish people and for everybody else," he says. "We are not doing any... have an account with the company. "Deliveroo takes a zero tolerance approach towards any rider who fails to meet their legal obligations when working with us."

The answer did not address the sub-contracting issue.

Fiachra O Luain, who founded the English Language Students Union and works with delivery riders says that a public debate is required so that people can see what is at stake for workers in this service industry.

"These workers are part of the invisible labour market," he says.

"They have to work all hours just to get by and that of itself is highly dangerous as numerous studies have shown. There is a correlation between better pay and road safety, for instance. We need to ensure workers here are treated properly as that sets the tone for the future. People coming in to serve the economy can and should be very positive but to have people going to work full of fear and insecurity is not the way to do it."

A statement from Just Eat did address the subcontracting issue.

"Self-employed independent couriers have the legal right to find a substitute courier. Legally, the courier account-holder is responsible for ensuring their substitute meets the necessary standards to deliver on our network," it stated.

Just Eat also said that it "constantly engage(s) with couriers through ha number of channels, including regular pulse surveys, emails and offline messaging with courier support".

It did not address a question about whether it operates a minimum fee per delivery.

A European Platform Workers Directive has been agreed by the Council of Europe and is now scheduled to go through the European parliament. The directive has two key features designed to improve the lot of platform workers, the regularisation of their employment status and the use of algorithms for human resource management. It remains to be seen what the final outcome will be but the technology companies have lobbied hard to protect their interests. In the USA, the major of New York announced last Sunday that delivery riders must now be paid $17.96 an hour before tips. The average earnings up until now for such workers was around $11 after tips.

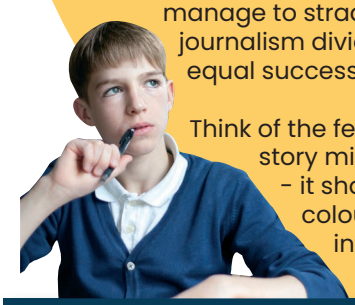
The advances in technology have rendered the delivery business as potentially lucrative.

The food takeaway and delivery market in this country is estimated to be worth €2.2bn

Before you begin

Many news reporters struggle with the freedom of the feature article, and vice versa with feature writers who are asked to report on a news story.

They are two very different disciplines, and few manage to straddle both sides of the journalism divide with equal success.



Think of the feature article like a short story mixed with a parable - it should be entertaining, colourful but with important information to convey.

Check list

- ✔ How much space do I have?
- ✔ What exactly do I want to include/exclude?
- ✔ What is my deadline?
- ✔ Make notes on the structure of the article - the main points of the story you wish to get across, and in what order. And cross them off as you write them.
- ✔ Always read over your article at least twice, do a spell check, and make sure all unusual words, names, website addresses, phone numbers and place names are correct.

Tips to writing features:

- Start with a strong idea. Look for human stories - people, emotions, or unique experiences.
- Do your research. Gather backgroud information and key facts. Get all the essential details in the opening background. Really try to draw your reader in.
- As with news, include all the essential details - the who, what, where, when and why.
- Always try to find an original angle, or hook, for your feature. Because features allow you more freedom, you have an opportunity to be more adventurous.
- Use plenty of quotes. If they are not quotes you gathered yourself, make sure you detail the source of where they are from.



Comment

Comment is free, but never easy

Facts are sacred, comment is free. So said the fabled editor of the Manchester Guardian, CP Scott, around the start of the last century.

This dictum has been handed down through generations of newspapers, usually interpreted as a shot across the bows of those who would comment rather than report.

In the near century since Scott's heyday, comment has been elevated within the pages of newspapers, but today, in the internet age, his dictum has more relevance than ever. The web is choc-a-bloc with comment, much of it little more than top of the head opinion, the kind of stuff that would have Scott spinning in his grave.

For those of us who do write opinion pieces in newspapers, there is a lot more required than just the capacity to have an opinion.

The first tool of the opinion writer should be the ability to write. You may have a subject that is difficult to sustain.

On these days, the reader might derive enjoyment from reading something that is well written.

Our old friends the facts are sacred in comment. For opinion to hold any water it must be based on fact. For example, if you are arguing that the Government is doing a terrible job, then facts require that you back up such a contention.

Opinion poll results, policies that have had a devastating impact on some people, the performance of leading politicians, all of these must be analysed in furthering such an argument, and facts must be sprinkled throughout the offering. Never, ever rely on the web for your facts, for if you do, you will fail, if not today, then certainly in the near future.

Experience is a good ally for the opinion writer. In order to garner opinions you must have some knowledge of the way things work, such as politics, the courts, areas like planning or education. If you have a reasonably good knowledge then you are aware when something is not right, and your passion is ready to be fired up.

Comment may indeed be free, but when it's done properly, it certainly isn't easy.



There is a difference between fact and opinion

News is fact - opinion is your point of view.

If teachers vote to go on strike, news is the account of what they did. Opinion is your view on their decision - good or bad.

The views expressed are your own. They may not be shared by everyone, but they are how you feel about the teachers going on strike, whether you think they are right or wrong, the effects the strike may have on you and other students.

But the key is to say something only if you have something to say. There is no point sitting on the fence. Be provocative, stir a few emotions, ruffle a few feathers. There is nothing better that a good rant, once you can back up your argument.

Never try to be controversial for the sake of it.

Comment

Over to you...



- News websites contain many views and opinions as well as news coverage . Can you distinguish between the two? Go to a news website such as IrishTimes.com or your local newspaper and select some examples.
- Choose an opinion piece from one of the Irish Journalism Awards shortlist available on. **https://www.irishjournalismawards.ie/slist25** Which articles interest you? Do you think they are well written? Why?
- Look at the Letters Page in a local or national newspaper.Choose one you agree/disagree with. Outline why?
- Write a letter to the editor on a subject you feel strongly about in more than 400 words.

> **"The views expressed are your own. They may not be shared by everyone, but they are how you feel."**



Sport

What makes a good sports journalist

The ingredients that make a sports reporter are similar to that of a decent stew. An unorthodox comparison, but bear with us! No one dominant component brings about that delectable flavour, more a combination of everything flung into the pot. A good sports reporter possesses every kind of spice you will find in a kitchen cabinet, and more.

You can write, sure, but can you investigate? Can you sniff out a back page lead? Can you ask the hard questions? Can you go where no one else is willing to go? Above everything else, are you willing to do all of the above?

Many exceptional writers didn't or don't have the work ethic to cut it. Sports reporting does not entail sitting at your desk, waxing lyrically about your favourite soccer team.

Heck, most sports reporters have never seen the inside of an office. You are on the beat all day, every day and you have to know how to utilise that. If Kellie Harrington is cutting the tape on some new club , get yourself there and ask her about her training regime.

Come away with a story. Objectivity is another important rule. Credit where credit is due and likewise, criticise when criticism is called for. Last, but by no means least, a good sports reporter is one who is prepared to start at the bottom and work their way up.

Award winning Irish Times sports journalist Ian O'Riordan and David Coughlan from the Irish Daily Star all started somewhere and it wasn't necessarily on the pages of a national newspaper. All- Ireland finals and Six Nations clashes are covered by those with years of experience. Be prepared for U10 soccer games and schools camogie finals. The path ahead is long and winding, but know that when you eventually reach the summit, the view is out of this world.



Tips to becoming the best

Sport is news

Sports writers work to some of the tightest deadlines in journalism and are still expected to uphold all the same professional, legal and ethical standards, so having that solid foundation of what it means to be a reporter is fundamental. Sports reporting could take a journalist anywhere.

Read everything

If you want to end up as a sports journalist or, to be honest, any type of journalist, listen to the radio, monitor Twitter, watch TV, read the papers with as professional an eye as you can.

Follow the best in the business. Look at what they are doing.

Absorbing the styles and techniques of the best writers will not only help to influence your writing style and structure but also help to develop that eye for a story, of what is newsworthy and how to pursue it.



HAPPINESS IS by Brendan Moran

Sport



MUD WRESTLE by Garry O'Neill

Over to you...

- Interview a local sporting hero. Invite them to visit your class for a questions and answers session.
- Write up a match report. Go to a game of your choice, take notes, try and get a few quotes and write up your account of what happened.
- Monitor and track a live game on the web or on X (Twitter). Record your account.
- Interview a well known sports reporter/ columnist / editor. Talk to them about their job, how they became involved in journalism, their loves/hates etc.

Tips to becoming the best

Get the skills

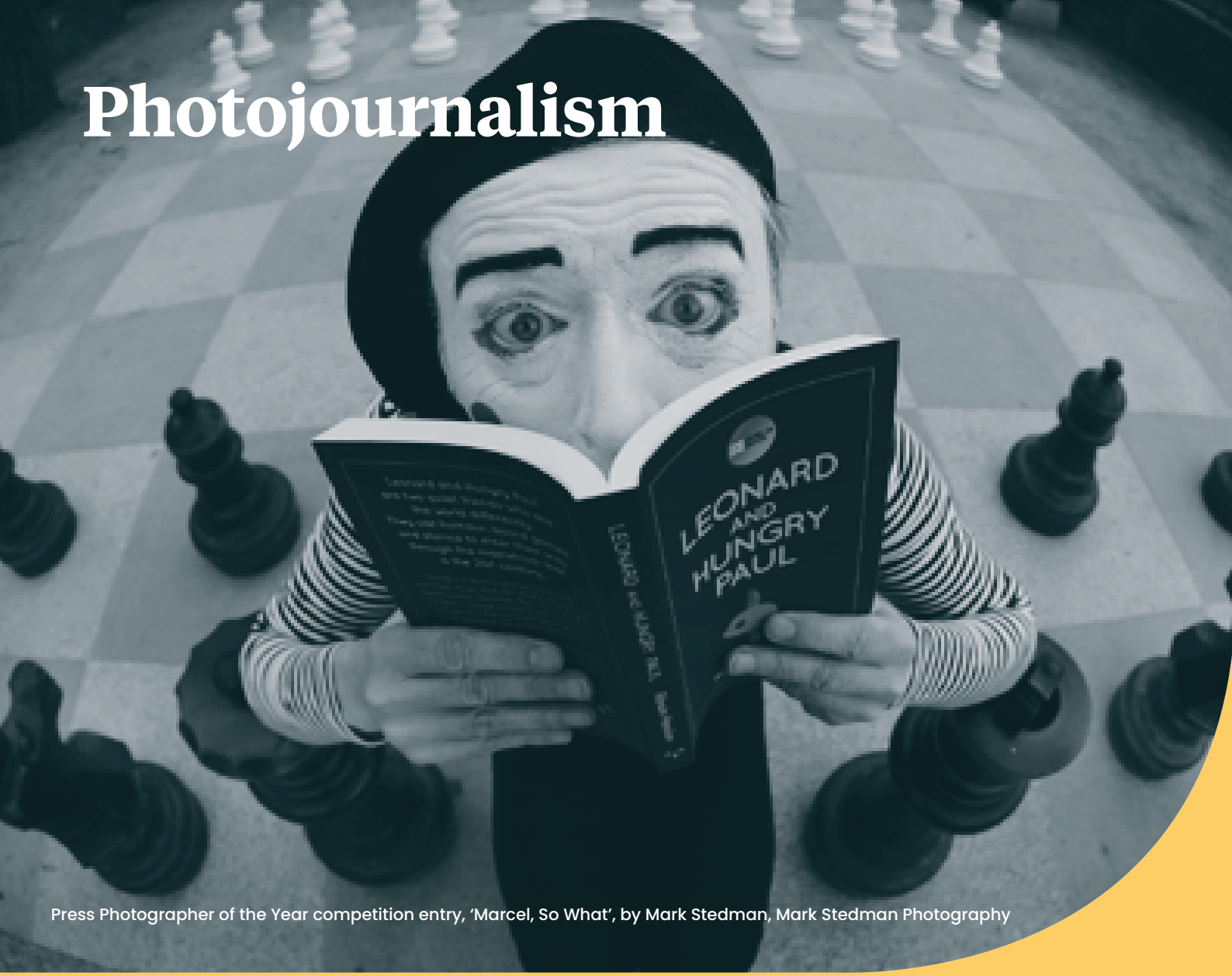
The skills and knowledge employed by journalists are exactly the same as for sports journalists. The basics are the basics no matter which area of journalism you're in: speed, accuracy, diligence, hard work.

Get the experience

What potential employers are looking for is evidence on a CV that you have the motivation that journalism requires. If you're offered work experience, don't just sit in the corner looking at the internet. Go to the editors and ask: What can I do?

Finding a niche or a specialism can make the difference in a competitive world because if you can show that you are as knowledgeable as anyone else in your field – be it tennis, golf, Formula 1 or football – then you have more chance of getting commissioned or getting that first job.

Photojournalism



Press Photographer of the Year competition entry, 'Marcel, So What', by Mark Stedman, Mark Stedman Photography

STRIKE A POSE

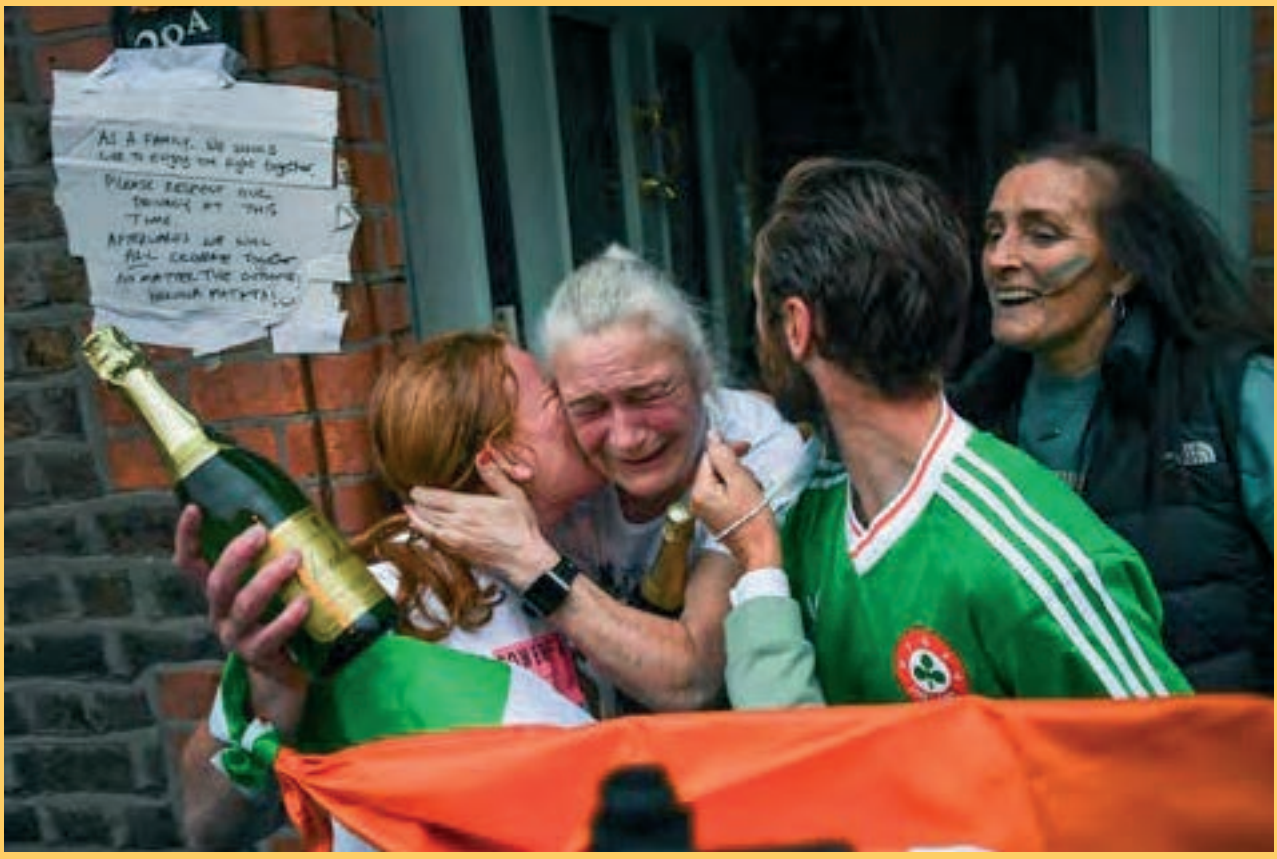
An unfolding news event, a portrait of modern Ireland, human emotion, a study of wildlife, children jumping on a trampoline, someone catching a fish – it really is a personal opinion as to what makes a good photograph.

More often than not it is simply a case of being in the right place at the right time –with a camera in hand, of course. Nowadays using a camera is much more simplifed. With the automated features in pocket cameras and on phones, it really is a case of point and shoot.

Photographs communicate information in a powerful way and the key to analysing or reading the information a photograph communicates is simple. We use specific questions to decode, evaluate, and respond to photographic images.

When looking at a photograph we need to consider not only the content of the photograph but the intent of the photographer. It is important to think consciously and critically and to pay attention to all aspects of the image.

Press Photographer of the Year competition entry, 'Murmuration' by James Crombie, INPHO



Press Photographer of the Year competition entry, 'Kellie's Family Reaction at Win' by Ray McManus, SportsFile

Photojournalism

Press Photographer of the Year competition entry, 'Brilliant Bohs', Eoin Noonan, SportsFile

Tips to taking a better picture



Press Photographer of the Year competition entry, Golden Moment, James Crombie, INPHO

- Move in closer - Fill the frame for a better shot.
- Be quick, and always be ready to take your shot as things change in front of you.
- Photograph the same subject from different angles and distances to get the best effect.
- Where is the light coming from? See how it affects your picture and think about how you can make the most of the light you have.
- Emphasise your main subject and avoid any unnecessary distractions.
- You have a maximum file size of 3MB for entries - you might also consider having a minimum size of 1 MB to make sure your photo is big enough.



Press Photographer of the Year competition entry,
'Covid-19 and the Small Irish Rural Pub' by Bryan O'Brien, The Irish Times



Press Photographer of the Year competition entry, 'Riders of the Storm', Clodagh Kilcoyne, Reuters

Navigating the News

So, by now the Young Journalist Ireland programme has hopefully taught you a lot more about how news is gathered, fact-checked, and reported. You'll have learned about the difference between a news report, opinion piece, and a feature, as well as the ethics behind responsible journalism.

News literacy encourages people to think carefully about the news they consume. Sometimes stories that appear to be news reports are really advertisements or propaganda from a particular organisation that seeks to further its own agenda. Other times, news reports won't include all the facts or all sides of a story.

To make good choices, we need reliable information. How do we know who is producing the news information that we're consuming, and secondly, is that information reliable?

Interrogate information instead of simply consuming it

Before the Internet, accessing information was less complicated. When you wanted news, you bought a newspaper, magazine, or turned on your local radio or TV news. Now news comes to us digitally from an unending number of sources so how do we analyse the author's qualifications or the trustworthiness of the site?

Lateral Reading

A new approach to checking content has come from Stanford University called "reading laterally," a technique that professional journalistic fact-checkers use. Lateral readers don't waste time on a story on a website or social media until they've first checked out the reputation of the source by looking at what other sites and resources say about the source at which they are looking. To verify the validity of a news source, the student has three checks:

- **Who's behind this information?**
- **What's the evidence?**
- **What do other sources say about the author or news site?**

Another useful way of deciphering information is to exercise "click restraint" by checking past AI Overview and the first page of the search results rather than just picking what come up first. Just because these stories come up first does not mean they are the most trustworthy, in part because some companies pay for you to see their stuff first.



In addition, The Be Media Smart campaign has been developed by Media Literacy Ireland and is supported by a range of organisations across Ireland, including NewsBrands Ireland, to help people tell the dfference between reliable and accurate information and deliberately false or misleading information. Information is everywhere and sometimes it can be difficult to judge how accurate or reliable information is. Always try to STOP, THINK, CHECK that what you are seeing, reading or hearing is accurate and reliable.



Read more than the headline

Headlines are designed to catch your eye but a headline can't give the full story, and neither can a short social media post. If it sounds unbelievable, it probably is.

Don't assume that a picture or photo is giving you the whole story

Sometimes pictures lie. If a picture has been altered or 'photoshopped', or simply used out of context, then it can be easy to draw the wrong conclusions. You can search for the photo or image to verify where it came from. Tools like Google Reverse Image Search can help to factcheck images.



Just because information goes viral or is trending, doesn't mean it's accurate

Disinformation can be designed to provoke a strong emotional reaction and prompt instant sharing or 'liking' in a moment of outrage, excitement, disbelief, and so on. Social media and messaging applications make it really easy to share information quickly to wide groups of people.

Navigating the News

Think

Think carefully about what the information is for

That means asking yourself some questions. Information is created to:

- *tell us something (news)*
- *entertain us (satire, cartoon strips, funny videos)*
- *persuade us (advertising)*

Look at the style, tone and source of the information to help you to judge how reliable or accurate it is.

Consider your own biases

Ask yourself whether the information challenges you or does it match your own views. We are more likely to believe information that supports our own views - even if it seems a bit dubious. Formulas like algorithms can track what you read, see and hear online and generate recommendations for you based on your previous choices. So the information that you get can be highly personalised and not necessarily reflect broader views or opinions.

See if the information is being reported anywhere else

If you can't find the same information elsewhere, it could be because it is inaccurate, unreliable or out of date. This is especially true if the information appears to very topical or newsworthy.

Check

Look closely at the web address

Sometimes disinformation is found on websites with a web address (URL) that looks very similar to a well-known news or media site. There might only be a small change in the spelling of the URL. If in doubt, go to the real site and compare the URLs. If the information comes from a website that you are not familiar with, look for an "About" section to learn more about who is behind the website and why they might have this information.

Find out who the author, producer or publisher is

Knowing who created the information will help you judge what their motivation is. Are they trying to sell something, a product, an idea or something else? If so, why? Is the author or publisher a supporter of a particular political idea or figure? Is the author an online "influencer" like some Youtubers? Are they likely to be paid to say this?

Look at the detail to check for accuracy

Do any dates mentioned make sense? Are there references to unnamed experts? Are the links to the author's sources clearly visible? Information that comes from reliable and trustworthy sources is usually well written. So, watch out for typos and strange sounding sentences.

Ask the experts

Get a second opinion. For a list of fact-checking sites across the world go to the fact-checking database created by Duke University's Reporter's Lab. Go to **YoungJournalist.ie** for more information on News Literacy such as videos, podcasts, and articles.

The Competition

How to Enter

As part of the Young Journalist Ireland programme, students and schools have an opportunity to enter a prestigious competition, the winners of which will be announced in April 2027. There are six categories in the competition - Podcast, Student Newspaper, Features, Sports, Comment/Opinion, and Photojournalism.

- All entries must be submitted via the competition section of the website
- All entries must be submitted by close of entry on February 26th 2027.

Important!

- **The work must be your own. It cannot be copied from any other source or written by AI.**
- **Any and all quotes you use must be taken from interview(s) you have conducted.**

If you do not adhere to the strict guidelines, your entry will not be considered by the judges.

TO ENTER GO TO
YoungJournalist.ie

Categories

FEATURES

Write a feature article about a topic or issue that interests you and would engage your readers.

Explore your subject in depth using your own research, interviews, observations or experiences. We are looking for original, engaging journalism that goes beyond simply presenting information or opinions. Minimum 600 words. Maximum 800 words.

COMMENT/OPINION

Write an opinion piece or a letter to the editor on a topic that matters to you.

A strong opinion piece is more than simply stating what you think. It presents a clear argument or point of view, supported by facts, examples and evidence.

Word count: 600–800 words

PHOTOJOURNALISM

A thought-provoking, action-packed, shocking or beautiful image – you decide.

Remember this is a photojournalism and documentary photography competition, so the photo must have news value. All entries must be submitted in jpeg format with a maximum image size of 3MB and a minimum of 1MB.

SPORT

Write a sports story based on your own reporting, research or experience. You could write a match report, interview a rising sports star, cover a local sporting event or explore a sports-related issue that interests you. Minimum 600 words. Maximum 800 words.

Please note: This category is not for biographies or profiles of famous sports stars based on information found online. We want to see your own journalism – your observations, interviews, research, opinions and reporting.

Go to YoungJournalist.ie to read award winning journalism and get tips and ideas

The use of AI to write or generate any part of your entry is strictly prohibited.

Student Podcast Category

Journalism has transformed dramatically over the past two decades. Once dominated by print newspapers, today's media landscape is dynamic and multi-platform - with news media outlets now producing stories across video, social media, and especially audio. Podcasts from established news publishers consistently top national charts, thanks to their access to expert voices, insightful reporting, and engaging storytelling.

Why Podcasting?

Podcasting teaches invaluable skills: research, storytelling, interviewing, editing and building audience engagement. Students can produce high-quality, journalistic podcasts using just a smartphone and free tools such as Spotify for Podcasters (Anchor) or GarageBand.

What to Create

The possibilities are endless — from investigative series and news round-ups to interview-based shows or in-depth explorations of social and global issues. Creativity is encouraged, but podcasts for the Young Journalist Ireland competition must:

- ***Focus on news or current affairs***
- ***Demonstrate journalistic integrity, including fact-checking and balance***

Getting Started

No fancy equipment required! While some schools may have microphones and editing suites, we've found that the best podcasts often come from students armed with nothing more than curiosity, creativity, and a phone. Free online tutorials — especially on YouTube — can help you learn recording, editing, and publishing techniques.

Start small, think big, and let your voice be heard.

Go to YoungJournalist.ie for more details on entering this new category





School Newspaper Competition!

This competition will allow the whole class to take part in this fun and educational project which will give students a hands-on experience of the news publishing process.

Teachers can take the role of Editor-in-Chief and assign roles to students such as researchers, writers, photographers, videographers, podcasters, sub editors, reporters, and designers.

For helpful hints and tips about creating your school newspaper, go to our website: **www.YoungJournalist.ie**

All entrants must adhere to the following guidelines

- Entry is free, and is open to all schools and classes participating in Young Journalist 25/26
- Classes are free to create either a traditional newspaper and submit it to us in PDF format or they can create an online newspaper.
- All entries must be created specifically for Young Journalist Ireland Competition 2025/2026 and be suitable for displaying in a public environment.
- Software programmes such as InDesign, Illustrator, or Photoshop can be used for the design of the newspaper. Alternatively, there are a number of free newspaper templates available online (please go to www.YoungJournalist.ie for useful examples)
- Avoid including any content in your entries (e.g.text, images, brand names) to which you do not hold the copyright. If you do, you must be able to provide written permission for its use. Entries containing any unauthorised content will be disqualified. You can contact the following organisations for more detailed information and resources: https://irishwriterscentre.ie/pages/copyright-information
- All entries must be submitted online (including uploading of your school newspaper as an interactive PDF)

Judging Criteria

Judges will select the winning work under the following criteria:

- Standard of writing, layout and design
- Compelling stories, great photography/illustrations, and high editorial standards
- The use of AI to write or generate any part of your entry is strictly prohibited.
- Appropriate audience focus will also be considered

For inspiration, check out last year's school newspaper finalists on: www.YoungJournalist.ie

The NewsBrands Ireland Young Journalist Ireland Competition is proudly supported by the following news publishers

THE IRISH TIMES

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Young Journalist Ireland

An initiative by:

NewsBrands Ireland

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Lisa Buckley,
Communications and Programmes Director

NewsBrands Ireland,
Clyde Lodge, 15 Clyde Road,
Dublin 4.
(01) 6689099

lbuckley@newsbrands.ie