

# TALON MARKS BEST PRACTICES

## GENERAL/ONLINE

1. No story should appear in print unless it has first appeared online. Page editors have primary responsibility for making this happen.
2. Ideally, all stories should be featured on the Facebook page and Twitter feed before they appear in print. The primary responsibility for this lies with the page editors. Secondary responsibility lies with the social media and online editors.
3. The online editor should “touch” every story once it has been posted to assure that it has a snappy headline, has a photo attached if one exists, and the template layout is best for the story. Stories should be properly and consistently categorized and tagged. Web sources should be linked, as should be related stories where appropriate. Movie and other entertainment reviews should be linked to official sites when appropriate; movie trailers may be embedded with reviews.
4. Event stories, including sports, should be featured online SAME DAY when possible, but no later than 24 hours after the event. Sports GAME stories should be featured online. Sports TEAM stories should be featured in print (as opposed to game stories). Team stories should feature upcoming contests high in the story.
5. Dates in online stories should include both day and date (Wednesday, Dec. 3), but when stories are moved to print the date should be edited to include ONLY the day OR date, depending on the AP Style seven-day rule. Don’t use today, tomorrow, yesterday. Primary responsibility for editing dates rests with page editors.

## WRITING/COPYEDITING

6. Stories should be thoroughly edited in Camayak before being posted online or placed on a page. The goal should be that when we copyedit the print edition there are no errors to be found because they have already been fixed.
7. When online stories must be edited, we should note that they have been edited, especially if we are fixing a factual error.
8. All written non-opinion stories should have a minimum of two sources, with three or more preferred. When copy editing, always check that sources are properly introduced (first and last name on first reference) and identified. Subsequent references use just the last name and/or singular pronouns. The exceptions to this are stories with multiple subjects with the same last name. If a sentence or paragraph with a first-reference name is deleted/cut or moved, double check to see if the name is now improperly used elsewhere in the story.
9. A single paragraph should have only one attribution at most. If there are two attributions, make it two paragraphs.
10. In addition to watching for spelling, style, grammar and factual errors, part of copyediting includes assessing the “interesting” and “understandable” focus of the leads. Avoid long leads, focus on results, avoid “when” leads, and draw the reader in.
11. When copyediting, stop at every plural pronoun (we, us, their, them, etc.) and manually check to see if the subject noun it refers to is plural. If not, fix either the pronoun or the subject noun. Subject nouns may not always be in the same sentence or even the same paragraph.
12. Single quote marks may ONLY be used for quotes within quotes or in headlines. If punctuation is present around a quote mark it ALWAYS goes INSIDE the quote mark, even with single quotes. The exception to this would be when single quotes and double quotes meet at the end of a sentence; then the punctuation mark goes between the single quote and the double quote.
13. If a quote extends beyond one paragraph without interruption with attribution, place quotes at the beginning of both paragraphs, but ending quote marks only at the end of the paragraph where the quote ends.

14. When changing speakers in a story, be sure to notify the reader early in the quote that this is another speaker. Do not wait until after a long quote for the attribution.

## **PHOTOS**

15. Photos should be cropped and pre-pressed to 900px wide x 600px deep at 200dpi. They should also be tone corrected. Vertical and square photos should be pre-pressed to 600px deep, regardless of the width; this applies to mug shots as well. NO photo should be placed on a page or online in its raw camera mode resolution and size. Because we are standardizing cropping sizes, page editors should be able to accurately calculate photo sizes for print pages even before they are properly pre-pressed.
16. If a photo is resized on a page, it must be PROPORTIONALLY resized both directions. DO NOT use the “fill” command. NO STRETCHED PHOTOS.
17. All print photos (and preferably online), except mug shots, should have two-sentence cutlines with the first sentence explaining who is doing what in the photograph and the second sentence giving a secondary fact. If the focal point of the photo is on specific individuals, the individuals must be properly identified.
18. The focal point of a photo should be on one or more of the tic-tac-toe axes (rule or thirds). No photo should be cropped to put the focal point in the middle of the photo. No photo should have two focal points (i.e., individuals with gaps between them). A focal point is preferred over a generic crowd shot.
19. All photos should have an embedded AP Style caption. (Note, no photo can get grade credit without it.) Photographers have primary responsibility for embedding cutlines. Photo editors secondary responsibility for checking that photos have embedded cutlines. If there is no photo editor secondary responsibility falls on the page editor. Photo captions should be embedded BEFORE a photo is placed on a page.

## **MULTIMEDIA/ONLINE**

20. Audio and video stories should be accompanied by a written story and/or, at the very least, a transcript.
21. SoundCloud audio stories should have a relevant photo attached to go with the audio link instead of relying on the Talon Marks logo.
22. If a meeting is filmed and posted as an archive (i.e., the whole meeting broken into multiple files for upload), the files should be uploaded to YouTube and a single post should contain the links/embeds. But this should only be done if the videos are accompanied by a written or edited standalone video story. Posting of archive videos is not journalism, but can be an aid to journalism.
23. Meetings should be live tweeted and followed up same day with Storify versions, complete with transitional explanatory paragraphs. Traditional stories should follow ASAP.
24. The e-edition should be posted online as soon as the print edition is sent to the printer.
25. Design/page postings should be posted in talonmarks.com within 24 hours of the print distribution. The preference is to do this before we leave on production night.
26. Sports schedules and latest scores should be updated no less than weekly. But sports schedules, except for playoffs, should be entered into the system in their entirety as soon as they are available. Sports scores should be updated within 24 hours of a contest.
27. Arts events and other events should be entered into “upcoming events” before a story is assigned to a staff member. Primary responsibility for this lies with the page editor.

## **HEADLINES**

28. When designing a print page, headline sizes should graduate downward as they go down the page. Larger type headlines go at the top of the page. Refer to the headline graduation illustration in the Newspaper Designer’s Handbook.

29. Print headlines should be written so that 1) word pairs are maintained wherever possible, 2) line lengths are equivalent, and 2) prepositional phrases are not split over two lines (see No. 1).
30. Drop heads should be only one leg of a story.
31. Bylines and jump/continued lines are considered part of the story, not a headline. As such, they should be placed in the first leg (last leg for jump lines) of a story and square off with the tops and bottoms of the remaining legs.

## **PRINT DESIGN BASICS**

32. Adjust the leading (spacing between lines) of stories to avoid spacey last legs of a story. Watch out for the hidden extra return at the end of a story. The last leg should square off with the other legs of the story.
33. The proper placement of page items is 1) photo, 2) cutline, 3) headline, and 4) story. (Ads are bottommost on a page). Maintain a 2/10 inch space between the tops and bottoms of page modules (i.e., the bottom of one module/story and the top of the next module/story). Photos and cutlines go together, so there should be no more than 1/10 inch between them. Likewise, headlines and stories go together, so there should be no more than 1/10 inch between them. There should be 2/10 inch between a cutline and a headline. Two-tenths of an inch is equal to the gutter width between story legs.
34. If a story is boxed, or has a side or top/bottom separator line, leave 2/10 inch between the line and the photo/text.
35. Be consistent with spacing.
36. When designing a print page, first place all stories in standard six-column format. Adjust to variable widths only for visual identity sake. Wide measures are not the norm, but enhancements.
37. When designing a print page, start with a four-column or wider photo/module at the top. Horizontal photos in the top half of the page should be a minimum of four columns wide. Horizontal photos in the bottom half of the page should be NO MORE THAN three columns. Never put a three-column photo in the top half of a page. If it is necessary to place a three-column photo at the top of the page you MUST shift it from the page corner so that it crosses the center gutter.
38. Avoid photo collages in place of real news photos.
39. Free Speech Zone-style presentations on non-opinion pages should follow a similar design/layout pattern to promote consistency in the publication. There can be flexibility in design, but the two designs should show signs of consistency in width and depth of photos, font choices, identifications, etc.
40. Stories resulting in large blocks of type should be chapter-ized with subheads or accompanied with drop quotes, infographs or information boxes. (See info boxes graphic in Newspaper Designer's Handbook)

## **BLOGS/INFOGRAPHS**

41. Blog-style projects should 1) be designed with blog-to-talonmarks.com-to-print in mind, and 2) include full navigation from front page to story post and back, as well as from post to next and previous post.
42. Infographs should be designed so that what is being displayed is readily understandable with a quick glance. Most often this is done with headlines and related graphics.
43. Infographs should indicate the source of information.
44. Infographs that appear in print should also appear online.