

This Week's Focus: A Beat System

Professional publications often implement a “beat” system to help provide broader coverage for their readers. Over time, beat reporters build up a base of knowledge on and gain familiarity with the topic, allowing them to become knowledgeable and credible resources for readers. (See the formal lesson link to the right for more opportunities to discover the merits of beats in your program.)

Reporters are assigned a specific area (environment, school security, technology) or a specific club or group (Mock Trial, show choir, the football team) and submit content about that beat on a regular basis. Typically, reporters try to *preview* upcoming events within the news cycle (say, during the ensuing three weeks, or until the next time the reporter has scheduled an interview).

THE LESSON: DETERMINE BEAT AREAS

The size of your staff will determine how many beats you can cover. Big staffs can have lots of specific beats while smaller staffs should consider broader “umbrella” topics. In small groups, come up with a working list of the most important beat areas your staff should cover on a regular basis at your school. [Here's a link to some sample topics](#) to get you started.

FIND IT AT JEA.ORG

Establishing relationships in beat reporting

Description

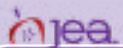
In this lesson students will understand and operate a beat reporting system. With a developed protocol, students will evaluate the benefits and validate the importance of relationship-building to successful beat reporting. Students will practice scenarios to assist in discussion and conclusions about rapport with sources. Students need a foundation in news literacy, research and interviewing.

Objectives

- Students will understand how they can use a beat system to engage with their subjects and build rapport in their campus community.
- Students will develop and revise protocol and procedures for beat reporting.
- Students will transfer reporting from beat to story pitches for staff coverage development.

The link

The link to the full lesson is [HERE](#). NOTE: This lesson is available free to **everyone** during the dates listed at the top of this page. Want to have access all the time? If you're not a member yet, consider joining JEA today for access to all of the resources.



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Adviser Advice

Kelsey E. Martin, CJE, Memorial HS, McAllen, Texas

As a 30-year veteran teacher, my best advice is to keep a sense of humor and develop a tough skin. Do not take yourself too seriously and understand that you, and especially your students, are not perfect and mistakes will be made. There will be times you have to laugh at yourself.

Grow a thick skin because parents and students will complain and get mad at the most ridiculous things. You will cry and you will get yelled at, but years from now, there will be an adult that comes up to you at a grocery store and tells you what a difference you made in their life when they were your student 10 years ago. Instant gratification is something that rarely exists in a journalism teacher's life, but the forever impact you will make on someone will make you smile one day.

JEA members, I want YOU to share your awesome ideas with journalism teachers around the country. Fill out this [GOOGLE FORM](#) to be a part of this newsletter.

You've Got Style

*Suggestions from Cindy**

PERIODS AND COMMAS

It's easy to get caught up in everything that is different about journalistic style, but in many cases, good writing is good writing. One of the basic rules that applies to all writing is as follows:

Periods and commas *always* go inside of quotation marks.

Examples:

Have you seen “Barbie,” the movie, yet?

Before the game, she will sing “The Star Spangled Banner.”

* Style pro Cindy Horchem, CJE, is a retired adviser and the current JEA business and projects coordinator