



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
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## YMCA WISCONSIN YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT

### MEDIA BRANCH: PRINT, VIDEO, DIGITAL

Use this packet to prepare for Pre-Gov and the Model Government Conference.

Media Delegates document the significant events of Youth in Government at the local level and statewide. This includes but is not necessarily limited to information about your local delegation including leadership roles, fundraising efforts, community program awareness, Pre-Gov, the Model Government Conference, and other events leading up to statewide programs.

#### THINGS MEDIA DELEGATES WILL ACCOMPLISH

- Complete the biography document
- Cover events and create content at the local level
- Complete 1-2 projects at the direction of the Media Director before Model Gov
- Meet all deadlines
- Attend Pre-Gov
- Cover events and create content at Model Gov
- Adhere to the Code of Conduct

As a member of the media, delegates will understand and practice the role of media in the government. Through this process of “learning by doing,” delegates can choose from newspaper, video, podcast, or digital media. Each position revolves around working on some aspect of media production: reporting the facts, writing, interviewing, commentary, layout and graphic design, photography, editing and production.

The information in this packet is set up chronologically. Work through the lessons and activities with the other delegates in your delegation. The following information will help you understand what is expected of you.



**LESSON** – read through the information.



**ACTIVITY** – print these pages and complete the activity.



**ASSIGNMENT** – share these completed pages with your youth leader or Delegation Director

Before beginning this packet, make sure you have submitted your application for Media to the State Office.

<https://wisconsinyig.org/media/>



## **LESSON: Journalism and Ethics**

The goal of a good story is to provide clear, concise facts to the reader in an easily understandable manner. Media delegates have a unique opportunity to observe and research the activities of Youth in Government during the program year including Pre-Gov and Model Gov. Media delegates report observations and facts to colleagues and advisors, in addition to audiences beyond YIG.

Media delegates have the responsibility to:

- Present accurate accounts of Youth in Government activities.
- Create high-quality stories that inform readers.
- Provide information that readers want to know and need to know.
- Discern between “hard news” and “fluff,” keep each category separate when reporting
- Organize sections of the news appropriately.
- Create daily editions in a timely, consistent manner.

The media is a record of Youth in Government – as reporters, editors, and leaders of the media, you have been entrusted with keeping that record. As a member of the Media, you will find yourself in situations where you need to answer challenging questions about what is right or wrong to document and broadcast. Another thing you need to keep in mind throughout your experience is the general ethics of journalism – the moral principles and values that are at the heart of the field.

### **JOURNALISTIC ETHICS** (Modified from the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics)

#### **Seek truth and report it**

Journalists should be honest, fair and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.

#### Journalists should:

- Test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error. Deliberate distortion is never permissible.
- Diligently seek out subjects of news stories to give them the opportunity to respond to allegations of wrongdoing.
- Identify sources when feasible. The public is entitled to as much information as possible on a source's reliability.
- Make certain that headlines, news teases and promotional material, photos, video, audio, graphics, sound bites and quotations do not misrepresent. They should not oversimplify or highlight incidents out of context.
- Never plagiarize.
- Tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience boldly, even when it is unpopular to do so.
- Avoid stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance or social status.
- Support the open exchange of views, even views they find repugnant.
- Give voice to the voiceless; official and unofficial sources can be equally valid.
- Distinguish between advocacy and news reporting. Analysis and commentary should be labeled and not misrepresent fact or context.
- Recognize a special obligation to ensure that the public's business is conducted in the open and that government records are open to inspection.

## **Minimize harm**

Ethical journalists treat sources, subjects and colleagues as human beings deserving of respect.

### Journalists should:

- Show compassion to those who may be affected adversely by news coverage. Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.
- Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.
- Recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance.
- Recognize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than do public officials and others who seek power, influence or attention. Only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone's privacy.
- Show good taste. Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity.

## **Act independently**

Journalists should be free of obligation to any interests other than the public's right to know.

### Journalists should:

- Avoid conflict of interest, real or perceived.
- Remain free of associations/activities that compromise integrity or damage credibility.
- Refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel and special treatment, and shun secondary employment, political involvement, public office and service in community organizations if they compromise journalistic integrity.
- Disclose unavoidable conflicts.
- Be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable.
- Deny favored treatment to advertisers and special interests and resist their pressure to influence news coverage.
- Be wary of sources offering information for favors or money; avoid bidding for news.

## **Be accountable**

Journalists are accountable to their readers, listeners, viewers and each other.

### Journalists should:

- Clarify and explain news coverage and invite dialogue over journalistic conduct.
- Encourage the public to voice grievances against the news media.
- Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.
- Expose unethical practices of journalists and the news media.
- Abide by the same high standards to which they would hold others.



## ASSIGNMENT: Biography

Delegates need to write a biography and submit it to the State Office.

Bio submission link: <https://bit.ly/wiyigmedia>

### Mandatory

- Name
- Grade and school
- Delegation
- Years in program (prior program areas)

### Extra

- What you enjoy about YIG
- What you like to do in your free time
- What you like about journalism/ writing
- Anything about yourself that you wish to add!

### Guidelines

- Third person
- Not bragging, just informative
- Approximately 70 to 100 words (about 5 sentences)

### Example:

**Media Director – Aliyah Thompson** is the 2024-25 Media Director for Wisconsin Youth in Government. She is a junior at Fond du Lac High School and serves as the President of the Fond du Lac Delegation. This is her third year in YIG, participating in the media branch every year. She loves the sense of community in YIG, and how welcoming and kind everyone is. She also appreciates how YIG has not only improved her media skills but empowered her to be a better leader. In her free time, she enjoys hanging out with friends, listening to music, participating in various extracurricular activities, and taking photos. Aliyah is so excited for the 2025 Model Government session and looks forward to working with everyone!

You will also need to submit answers to the following questions:

- What media would you prefer to work with (print, video or podcast)?
- Would you prefer to cover a specific topic (legislative, judicial, etc.)?
- Any ideas for new/fun/interesting projects for Media?
- Comments/Questions



## LESSON: Media Workflow

Keep this process in mind as it is vital for producing good content:

- Step 1** Decide the type of content: article, video, or podcast AND news, feature, or opinion
- Step 2** Choose a topic and submit it to the grid for approval
- Step 3** Research, plan, and interview
- Step 4** Draft content, create the piece, and submit to content area editor
- Step 5** **Optional:** Create a social media visual for your content and submit to digital editor
- Step 6** Submit all related content to Media Director
  - \*Media Director will submit to Media Advisor for final approval and publication





## LESSON: Media Basics

Be clear and concise.

- Use short, direct sentences. If you confuse the audience with long, complicated excessive wordiness and illogical ordering of information, you have defeated your goal of trying to convey information and/or opinion.

Use active sentences.

- In other words, always try to show something is happening now, not yesterday, not two weeks ago. The object of your sentence is performing some action, not having some action performed on it. For example:
  - "The carton was delivered by the United Postal Service." – passive
  - "UPS delivered the carton." – active
- \*BUT it becomes even better if it can be worded as if the action is presently occurring:
  - "The weather watch plane reported a hurricane." active, but boring
  - Reporting hurricane conditions, weather watch planes continue to keep an eye open." – more active, better

Use 3rd person.

- Never use "I," "me," or "you" in a news story. "He," "she," "it," and "they" are the appropriate pronouns. You should never refer to yourself in a news story and RARELY in a feature story unless it is creative writing or a special interview. (Note: in many entertainment magazines the reporter will refer to his or her surroundings and experiences as s/he interviews a celebrity).
  - Special Consideration: You would not follow this guideline if you are writing an opinion article or a review that requires your personal statement!

Use neutral terms when possible.

- A good reporter knows that simply using certain verbs and adjectives that have certain negative or positive connotations can change the tone of the story and express an opinion without coming right out and stating it. Consider the following:
  - "Lecturing to a full hall, the professor explained the ramifications of not studying." – neutral
  - "Lecturing to a full hall, the professor droned on about the ramification of..." – negative

Use good grammar and appropriate language.

- Slang terms are only useful in stories about slang. Sexually suggestive language or terms are NEVER appropriate. Words, nicknames, or adjectives meant to embarrass or hurt another person are NEVER appropriate.

Review your piece before you turn it in!

- Make sure it makes sense to you, because if it doesn't it will NEVER make sense to anyone else. AND, when you type a story into the computer, read through it before you consider yourself finished and make sure it is right.



## **LESSON: Types of Content (Step 1 from the Media Workflow)**

News – to inform or educate

- News stories can be hard-hitting news such as who won an election or what bills were debated. Most are considered “spot news,” meaning the news happens on the spot and involves material that must be reported immediately.
- News stories involve serious facts, and in-depth research and follow an inverted pyramid structure – 5 W’s and 1H – Who, What, Why, When, Where, and How for writing news. Generally, news stories are written with essential information on top (in the beginning of the story), with supporting information in the following paragraphs.

Feature – to entertain

- Feature writing is a style of writing that is fun to read. Reporters write feature stories to explain a trend, show color and personality of the topic, and entertain the reader. Features are idea-related, meaning they center on a topic, person, or concept. They should include very colorful language and LOTS of QUOTES.
- Youth in Government Media delegates will most likely focus on these types of Features:
  - Human Interest – people and their troubles or successes;
  - Personality – semi-biographical;
  - Historical – past related to present
  - Explanatory – explain how/why something has happened

Opinion – to persuade or inspire

- Columns are opinion and commentary that give personal views or try to persuade the audience.
  - In Youth in Government, we encourage delegates to be controversial and innovative, but we also ask them to remember the spirit of the program and keep in mind the Y’s four core values (Caring, Honesty, Respect, and Responsibility).
- Opinion articles should be written with the following Youth in Government Media Guidelines in mind:
  - No articles may be written with the purpose of slandering an individual, group, or delegation, or using specific details for the purpose of simply slamming or criticizing policies, procedures, or behavior you don’t like.
  - No articles may be written with inflammatory or profane language of ANY KIND.
  - No activity, policy, procedure, etc. should be criticized WITHOUT offering a solution.
    - Anyone can complain. Be specific in your concerns. Offer suggestions for improvement.



## **ACTIVITY: Types of Content**

Look through a newspaper or news website and find the types of content described above.

Another important thing to think about is, “What is the goal of the content?”

As a group, discuss what the different goals of each type of content could be. Some goals are to educate, to entertain, or to inspire.



## LESSON: Choose a Topic (Step 2 from the Media Workflow)

One of the most significant challenges to the student journalist is deciding what to write or report about. Below are several topics covered in previous Youth in Government media stories. Some stories have appeared consistently over the years, while others were good ideas that only made it once. This list is not even close to exhaustive -- don't let this limit your creativity.

Delegation Director or Advisor Profile	Resource Staff profile
Big Delegations vs. Small Delegations	Resources Available to Delegates
Candidate Interviews	Pre-Gov Training Event Recap
Officer/Appointed Interviews	Op/Ed pieces on specific bills or court cases (either pro or con)
Court Proceedings	Program Overviews (Supreme Court, Media, Assembly, Senate)
Delegation profile	Steering Committee Profiles (Local Committees and State Committee)
Downtown Madison	Youth Governors Platforms
General conference information	YMCA History
Hotel and Capitol staff profile	Youth in Government Tradition
Information for Youth in Government Veterans	
Info for Youth in Government Rookies	
News features from "the real world"	
Restaurant Reviews (State St. & near the Capitol)	



## LESSON: Research and Plan (Step 3 from the Media Workflow)

Choose a topic and then spend at least 10 minutes thinking about your story and writing down the following:

- Who is the audience?
  - Determine the audience, which will in turn determine the subject of the story, what points it covers, and how it is written.
- What is the purpose of the story?
  - Is it to inform the readers, challenge the sources, give a preview, review the course of events? This will determine how it is written and how the information is used.
  - Draw the shape of your story. Decide where you want your story to start and how you want it to finish. This seriously affects the nature of questions you ask and what you write.
- Who are the sources?
  - Write down what you know about the subject so you can confirm it. Write down what you don't know or would like to know.
  - Information must come from people or documents, not just "what everyone knows" or what you think. Who will be the best source of information for the subject of the story? Who will be most knowledgeable and credible? What documents are available to back up what the sources say?
  - Write a list of all the people you might need to talk to and places you might need to go to research your story.
- What's the "new" part of this news? What's the angle?
  - Long before the newspaper hits the street, or the story hits the 6:00 news, people will already know the facts. What will the story add to the discussion? Will it be an analysis piece? Will it put the subject in historical context? Will it provide commentary from the people affected by the subject?
- What visual content will I need to go along with my story?
  - Are their photos or videos I should capture during the interview.



## **LESSON: Prepare for an Interview (Step 3 from the Media Workflow)**

Know the purpose: Are you trying to report the facts OR write a feature.

- Develop good questions
  - Ask questions, don't make statements.
  - Keep questions simple, but avoid questions that can be answered simply with a yes or a no.
  - Ask only one question at a time.
  - If working on a pro/con piece, ask pro questions first.
  - Ask more than you think necessary.
- Ask questions in a logical order:
  - Fact to opinion,
  - General to specific,
  - Easy to difficult.
- Six ways to ask questions:
  - Compare and contrast – ask for similarities or differences.
  - Example/illustration – ask for a description.
  - Criticism – ask about positives first, then be tactful.
  - Discussion – ask for a detailed explanation.
  - Definition – ask for definition.
  - Observation – ask for thoughts, feelings, beliefs.

After completing initial research and developing good questions follow these steps:

Schedule an appointment

- Identify yourself.
- Decide on appropriate place and time.
- Be prompt and polite.

The interview

- Introduce yourself and ask for permission to record the interview.
- Verify the spelling of the person's name.
- Note reactions of the person you are interviewing.
- Note surroundings (if interesting or important).
- Notice direction of the interview—keep on track or go where it takes you.
- Don't be nervous or uncomfortable.
- Remain neutral.
- Take accurate notes:
  - Ask to make certain you understand;
  - The cardinal sin of reporting is misquoting people – quotes must be verbatim.
  - Check numbers, names, titles and spellings.
- End interview with the question, "Is there anything else you would like to add?"
- Make sure to thank them for their time.



### **ASSIGNMENT: Conduct Interview & Write Article (Steps 3 & 4 from the Media Workflow)**

Choose a topic from page 7 to write an article that will be printed in a pre-conference newspaper. Use the skills from the research lesson to prepare. Follow the advice of the “Prepare for an interview” lesson to develop good questions. Complete an interview and write an article. Peer edit the articles of other Media delegates.



### **LESSON: Visual Content (Steps 4 & 5 from the Media Workflow)**

Visual content includes, but is not limited to, pictures, artwork, diagrams, charts, and infographics. This visual content is not only for use in social media. All articles should contain at least one piece of visual content.

You should develop a plan for what visual content you want during the Research and Planning stage.

Canva is a great tool for creating visual content.

Tips for creating visual content:

- Understand your audience and the goal of your content
- Less is more – use bite-sized pieces of information, do not use a lot of words
- Make it interactive – use polls, quizzes, Q&A
- Make sure it is visually appealing – equal spacing, not too close to the edges



### **ACTIVITY: Create Visual Content (Step 4 from the Media Workflow)**

Use the font and colors listed above to create visual content that goes along with the article that you wrote.

Submit the article and visual content to the State Office - [afisher@ymcafoxcities.org](mailto:afisher@ymcafoxcities.org).



### **LESSON: Creating Video Content**

Use the following guide to create effective video content.

1. Decide the type of video to create.
  - a. Newscast, interview, testimonials, training, recruitment, entertainment
2. Write a video script.
  - a. Include directions for videographer, reports and anyone else involved
  - b. Consider creating a storyboard or use scene by scene format
3. Shoot your video footage
4. Edit your video
  - a. Make sure your content is organized
5. Preview and make final edits, then submit to Video Manager



### **ACTIVITY: Create Video Content**

Work with other delegates to create a video showcasing something special from your delegation.

Continue creating content using the ideas in this packet. The Media Director or the State Office will contact Media Delegates once the applications have been approved. At that time, other assignments will be shared.