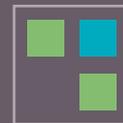


# Blogging our stories

...let's get our message out



**HOW WOULD YOU LIKE** to blog about your community gardening experience, about your garden, your ideas, the gardeners, the plants, the design and management of community gardens and city farms?

It's not hard to do this. That's why we have written this brief guide about writing blogs for the Australian City Farms & Community Gardens Network's (ACFCGN) website and social media. By following the material in the 'how to write' section you will create informative and interesting blogs that are published on our website.

Blogging our stories can be motivating to those just starting out and to others who have been growing the communal way for some time. It's the sharing of our experience and knowledge that is key to building thriving and productive community gardens and city farms and to building the social movement emerging around these things.

The Network's website and social media are the ideal place to get our stories out as they have national – even international – reach.

## IDEAS FOR BLOGGING

If you would like to become a contributor to the ACFCGN website, here's some ideas to write about:

- new community gardens
- gardening technique, plants, seasonal plantings, soil improvement, irrigation and other gardening and how-to-garden topics
- government policy affecting community gardening and community food systems generally (community food systems are community initiatives in supplying the foods people prefer: community gardens, city farms, food co-ops, community supported agriculture – CSA, food swaps, landshare; they include social enterprise set up to meet the social and nutritional goal of providing good, regionally-produced foods)
- management and decision making in community gardens, including conflict resolution

- plant pest and disease management
- personality profiles of community gardeners
- and much more, limited only by your imagination.

### A modest proposal

If you are feeling the urge to write and make photographs for publication on our website and social media, what would be useful would be for bloggers to produce something like six stories a year on their chosen field and on topics they have expertise in.

The ACFCGN publishes under a Creative Commons licence that allows republishing unless you stipulate otherwise. You retain copyright.

All you need do is send your story and photos to the ACFCGN email ([info@communitygarden.org.au](mailto:info@communitygarden.org.au)).

Simple.

### Good stories

The key to successful blogging is a regular flow of good stories with photos/illustrations/graphics. This attracts return visits to our website, and that is important.

Stories include:

- original content posted to our website and Facebook; notification of blogs published on the Network's website are distributed on Facebook and on its Twitter account and these link back to the website
- reposting links and content from other sources.

Content includes stories, event notifications, photos, photo essays (a series of related photos that, together with a minimum of text, tell a story), video (linked from video sharing sites such as YouTube and Vimeo), reposted material from social media, polls.



# ABOUT BLOGGING

*For most people seeking information in the well-connected countries, and increasingly in the less well-networked, the internet is the first stop.*

Before we look at how to write, here's the online communications platforms used by ACFCGN:

- the **worldwide web**  
[communitygarden.org.au](http://communitygarden.org.au)
- social media – **Facebook** Page:  
[facebook.com/australiancommunitygarden](https://facebook.com/australiancommunitygarden)
- **email**:  
[info@communitygarden.org.au](mailto:info@communitygarden.org.au)
- **Pinterest**: [pinterest.com/australiancommunitygarden/](https://pinterest.com/australiancommunitygarden/)
- **Twitter**: [twitter.com/#!/australiancommunitygarden](https://twitter.com/#!/australiancommunitygarden)

Of these, your writing and photos will appear on the ACFCGN website and notification of them will be distributed automatically via ACFCGN's Facebook and Twitter links.

## The importance of online communications

The internet, whether web pages or social media, are where most people first look for information. This makes imperative an online presence for ACFCGN.

Mobile devices such as smartphones and internet-connected tablets are the technologies through which increasing numbers of people access the internet and social media.

Sensis, publisher of the *Yellow Pages* telephone directory, reported that in 2014:

- 69 percent of Australians accessed social media with 58% of them using it in the evenings and after work, 42% first thing in the morning, 30% at lunchtime, 21% during work and 17% while commuting
- 45 percent of Australian social media users access the media a minimum of once a day
- 95 percent of Australian social media

users make use of Facebook, typically spending more than eight and a half hours a week on the site

- other platforms share of social media includes – Instagram (21%), Twitter (19%), Snapchat (16%), Pinterest (12%), Tumblr (6%), Google+ (19%) and LinkedIn (24%)
- hardware platforms used to access social media include: smartphones (71%), laptops (55%), tablets (39%), desktops (38%), iPod Touch (6%), internet-enabled TV (2%); global sales figures for devices show declining sales of desktop and laptop computers and increasing sales of tablets and smartphones, indicating that mobile devices are becoming the preferred platform
- small and medium businesses that have embraced social media were more likely to report better business performance; 36% of Australian small businesses make use of social media while only 24% of them have social media strategy

Source: [http://about.sensis.com.au/IgnitionSuite/uploads/docs/Yellow%20Pages%20Social%20Media%20Report\\_F.PDF](http://about.sensis.com.au/IgnitionSuite/uploads/docs/Yellow%20Pages%20Social%20Media%20Report_F.PDF)

A blog reported the age demographic of online users for particular platforms:

- the fastest growing demographic on Twitter is the 55–64 year age bracket; this demographic has grown 79 percent since 2012
- the 45–54 year age bracket is the fastest growing demographic on both Facebook and Google+; for Facebook, this group has jumped 46 percent, and for Google+, 56 percent
- 189 million of Facebook's users are mobile device only.

Source: <http://blog.bufferapp.com/10-surprising-social-media-statistics-that-will-make-you-rethink-your-strategy>

This trend suggests strongly that bloggers and organisations need to think social media when it comes to getting their message out.

The Worldwide Web remains important, however, considering that 89.62% of Australians (21,176,595 out

of a total population of 23,630,169) access the internet.

Source: *Internet Live Stats*  
<http://www.internetlivestats.com>

Linking an organisation's website to automatically post to its social media is a way to bring social media users to websites. Postings on the ACFCGN website automatically repost to its Facebook and Twitter, from where clicking a link takes the visitor to the website.

This makes it important that we make use of 'responsive' website software so that the website automatically adapts to reading on desktop computer screens, laptops, tablets and mobile phones.

## Audiences

Social media caters to different audiences and the type of content varies accordingly:

- **Facebook** is used for blogging about people's lives, to share news with friends and family, to link participants in a common interest network. Facebook Pages are used by organisations (including the ACFCGN) for organisation-related information posted by social media administrators and members, and for linking to website blogs and events pages.
- **LinkedIn** is used mainly for work-related and professional communication.
- **Google+** sets up circles of interest around topics. The design of the site has made it particularly attractive to photographers.
- **Flickr** hosts photos arranged into albums.
- **Instagram** is used to post photographs arranged in time sequence.
- **Pinterest** shares interesting web-sourced images. Organisation can post their website blog images to direct traffic back to their website.

# YOUR BLOGGING

*Blogging can be an occasional activity or, for serious bloggers, done to a schedule.*

If you are thinking of blogging on the ACFCGN website, you can write a range of blog types that are directly related to community gardening, community food systems and urban agriculture (of which community gardening and city farms are community sector examples).

Blogging ideas include:

- informational, news-type reports on events and community gardens
- asking questions that readers can respond to in our blog's 'comments' window
- write a tutorial, or tutorial series – 'how-to' articles
- review a book, website, blog, video or other relevant media product
- follow a project with successive progress reports over time
- ask question of readers about solutions to a problem
- run a competition seeking solutions about some problems readers have in their community gardens, including people-problems (though don't identify people involved)
- compile a list of useful website and blog links
- write a profile of a garden or a community gardener; people like reading about other people and their experiences
- ask a question and invite answers from readers; set up a question and answer topic and invite reader contributions
- take a series of photos of some event and post as a photo essay; accompany each image with a short caption describing what is being done, by whom, where, why and how
- post a single-photo story; this is a clear, in-focus, sharp photo of something or someone with an accompanying descriptive caption.

## Photos, too

The web is as much about visual communication as it is about text. Providing a couple photographs to accompany your blog story makes it more attractive to readers.

When making photographs:

- get close to your subject; if it's a person, fill most of the frame with a head-and shoulders or a head and torso photo; try different angles, not just looking straight at the camera, and try to get the person to relax; photograph them doing something relevant to your story
- try an environmental portrait of a person you are writing about in their work environment, such as a community gardener, tool in hand, in the garden, with them clearly the main subject and not lost as a small figure in the distance
- avoid photos of people in harsh sunshine where there are very bright and very dark areas of shade; light shade is a good place for photos of people
- make sure your photo is in focus
- although you can photograph anything in a public place (most community gardens are on public land, such as those occupying council land) because in law there is no

expectation of privacy in a public place, it is courteous to let people know what you are photographing for (it makes for a better relationship with them and makes them more cooperative – why not offer to email them copies of the images?) and ask if they don't mind appearing online; when photographing children, find out from parents whether any are subject to a child protection order – the last thing we would want to do is disclose the location of a protected child to a hostile parent

- if you are photographing in the common .jpg format, set your camera to the 'fine' resolution for .jpg; ACFCGN can also accept images in RAW and TIFF formats
- the photos you make are in the great tradition of documentary photography.

## What happens then?

After you write your story and send it to ACFCGN, we will endeavour to get it online as quickly as possible (bearing in mind ACFCGN people are volunteers and that this might mean a slight delay in posting your material).

If there are any questions about legals, relevance or other matters we will consult with the ACFCGN Communications Team as well as you.

### Edible roots for the community garden

POSTED BY RUSS GRAYSON / JANUARY 10, 2010 / 1 COMMENT

Root crops are a concentrated source of dietary carbohydrates and proteins. They are among humanity's oldest crops.



Example of a blog posting on the ACFCGN website

Edible roots are suitable in community gardens in:

- shared gardening space for root crops which grow as spreading crops
- larger allotments of a size to cope with spreading crops
- smaller allotments in which root crops with a shrub growth form, such as potato, can be grown.

# ABOUT WRITING

Visitors come to the Network's website and social media to find and offer information, post notices of events and workshops, ask and answer questions, post links to information on websites and more because the Network has developed its media niche as a go-to place for people seeking information about community gardening and related activities.

For a website to maintain its interest to visitors and to attract new and return visitors, a regular flow of new content is crucial.

For the website, this is original material, whether text, photos or video, and for social media it is a mix of short, original material and reposts originating elsewhere.

## WORTH THINKING ABOUT...

### Legals

To keep the peace, the law forbids inciting racial or religious hatred or inciting people to violence with your writing and media products. This does not stop you writing critically about those topics, it is about inciting violence against people. This is unlikely to be relevant to those writing on community gardens and urban agriculture.

The law also forbids bringing someone into disrepute among their peers such that it would affect their reputation. This is known as defamation and it could result in court action.

### Credibility

How we write about something, how we treat different arguments around a topic and those making them and the accuracy of what we report as facts affects the credibility not only of our stories but of us as writers.

For the ACFCGN, the considerations that appear below in this section on writing are important to the organisation's established reputation for credibility.

*Here are some principles and practices to think about as you start to write...*

### Accuracy

We want our story to be as true a representation of the topic as possible. This is our responsibility to readers and it is an ethic in responsible journalism.

Have we reported the facts, as we understand them at the time, as accurately as we can? Have we quoted our sources accurately and identified those making them? Are our figures correct?

Accuracy can be slippery, as can eyewitness accounts. In reporting an incident, for example, an eyewitness might see something happen that they take to be the complete incident. Out of sight, though, might be some other part of that incident which, had they seen it, might have led them to a different conclusion as to what happened. That's why talking to several eyewitnesses is useful in trying to piece together what happened.

It's the same with writing on a topic around which there is disagreement. Try to get all competing points of view to build a more complete story and better inform your readers. Doing that allows them to draw their own conclusions.

If you are writing about something that is still happening, expect the facts and numbers associated with it to change as new information comes to light. This is where reporting tools like Twitter are useful as they allow you to publish frequent, fresh, brief updates as new information is learned. A fuller account in story form can be written up later.

What one person sees as accurate another may not. Facts are contested. People interpret things through their own values, beliefs and mindsets.

In writing about something, make it clear that what you write is what you saw or were told, and that your deductions are based on that.

### Adequacy

This is about the amount of relevant information you provide for readers to understand what you write about.

As a story unfolds more information may come to light and it is an advantage of online media that we can include this in story updates.

We need ask this question: Is the information I am providing enough for readers to make sense of what I am writing about?

If we make use of the key questions we look at later, the five Ws and an H, we are more likely to produce a story that is adequate in the quantity and accuracy of the information provided.

### Attribution

It is good practice and a journalistic ethic to attribute facts, information and quotes to those making them. This also addresses story accuracy that we looked at earlier.

Quotes are enclosed in double quote marks to signify direct speech and to attribute them to the person making them.



### FOR EXAMPLE:

*“The outdoor classroom is funded by a state government waste reduction grant”, said Linda Lavender.*

OR –

*Linda Lavender confirmed the source of the funding. “The outdoor classroom is funded by a state government waste reduction grant”, she said.*

Even when we paraphrase what someone said we identify the source.

For example:

*According to project manager Linda Lavender, the outdoor classroom was funded with a state government waste reduction grant.*

It helps our credibility and allows readers to follow-up original sources when we attribute information to those making them.

### FOR EXAMPLE:

Rather than writing an unattributed comment like:

*A recent report claimed that small, family farms are the key to ending food insecurity.*

...we could base that claim in the credibility of its source:

*‘According to a 2013 UN FAO report, State of Food and Agriculture 2014, putting the smaller, family-owned farms first would contribute to the ending of hunger.’ (see: <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/260535/icode/>)*

Providing a web link to the source, or naming the source of a print story or a book, makes it easier for readers to learn more.

Although it is unlikely in writing about community gardens and urban agriculture, a source might request anonymity.

A local government staffer, for example, might pass on information on condition they are not identified because they are not authorised to make comments publicly.

This does not stop you reporting what a person says publicly, and identifying them – those are public statements.

Information may be provided as:

- **background**, to inform the writer about how something came about, what it is based on and its context; confidential information can sometimes be provided with the request that it not be reported
- **not for attribution**, which means that the person supplying the information doesn't wish to be identified, but the information may be used; perhaps you could put it this way: “A spokesperson said... ”.
- **on the public record**, for reporting.

With facts and figures, try to track down the original source and attribute the facts to them. When this is not possible, attribute the facts to those stating or writing them.

When using quotes by well known people such as authors, try to find the original quote so you get it right. There are websites specialising in quotes that you can check with.

## Identify opinion and unsubstantiated information

Opinion should be clearly identified as such to separate it from fact.

Clearly thought-out opinion pieces, usually written by authors with a

good knowledge of their subject, are valued and allow for knowledgeable speculation, which, like opinion, should be clearly identified to readers.

Hearsay is information originating with another source and passed on uncritically and unexamined. Like opinion and speculation, readers are best served by identifying hearsay as such.

Bloggers should treat hearsay with a good degree of scepticism as to its likely truth. Information can become distorted in being passed on and can become rumour.

Identify information as an ‘unconfirmed report’ or ‘unconfirmed information’ when it is of potential value but when there are doubts about its legitimacy.

## Fairness

Even when we do advocacy journalism, promoting some idea, we can still be fair, including to those who oppose or have reservations about what we say.

Treating opponents and others fairly brings respect for us and credibility and a civility to our writing that publishing rants does not.

It makes us appear thoughtful and considered. This also applies to writing other than advocacy, of course. It's about being fair to those we mention as well as to our readers.

## Disclosure

We can advocate something, as we might in advocacy writing, but honesty suggests we disclose that we are doing this. You can do this within your article.

Usually, it will be apparent. Advocacy is based on reasoned argument, not hiding the reality that we are advocating in favour of an idea.

Likewise opinion – it's best to identify it as such to separate it from factual content.



# HOW TO WRITE

## Kinds of writing

There are different kinds of writing:

- news stories
- longer and more detailed feature stories
- personality profiles
- instructional stories and more.

## Our short news story

We're going to look at the **short news story** as this is often the easiest way to get your message across or to tell readers about something in a straightforward way.

We focus on a news writing style because it has an established structure, making it easier for new writers to use.

### The news story has six features:

- it is built around the six questions – **the five W's and an H**
- it puts the most important information at the start and gives details in descending order of importance
- it is a straightforward factual narrative
- it uses short sentences and paragraphs
- it uses common language rather than technical language or jargon so that it is understandable by more people; remember you are communicating, so the more people who can understand your communication, the more successful you are at getting the story across
- it uses only a single, or at most two, ideas per paragraph.

## Adopt a writing style suited to your blog

When it comes to writing style, different websites make use of different voices.

A news site may use the third-person where the writer is distanced from the content and does not appear in the text, more like a report from a disinterested observer. This is like conventional news journalism.

Although this style might read as more objective, it merely hides the writer and is still influenced by their point of view, biases and agenda.

Social media is personal media and so is often written in the first or second person. It is a style of writing where 'I' and second-person terms like 'we', 'our', 'us', 'they' are used. This can also be used for more formal writing, such as on websites, as it does not hide the author as does the classical news journalism, and can make clear the opinion of the writer and their agenda. The writer may appear as a narrator, as someone telling a story.

Write as if you are speaking to one other person. This makes your writing conversational rather than journalistic or academic in structure and tone. Sometimes, you might want to write in a journalistic style and it is useful to be able to produce blog content in both, as well as other, styles.

As you gain experience, if you have not already done so, you will develop your own distinctive style with your own voice.

## How long is enough?

Not too short, not too long... the best length for an article is that which adequately covers the story. All pertinent points should be covered and no more, otherwise the story becomes over-long. It's different when you write a feature story as they are detailed and, in print publications, would run over quite a few pages or the equivalent in online media.

Stories that are too short may exclude important information. Those that are too long may lose readers. Although much is made of online readers' short attention spans, there are websites that cater to longform writing and treat topics in depth.

Longer stories may adopt a fiction writing style with character and plot development and descriptive passages. This is the 'literary journalism' that developed in the 1980s with journalists like Tom Wolfe and Joan Didion. It offered an alternative to the conventional, terse, short and author-disembodied news writing style.

It is related to the practice, which also became popular at the time, of 'investigative' journalism that examines topics in a more forensic manner, reporting motivations, character, methods, the backgrounds of those involved and seeking comment from multiple sources. Today, these styles are known as 'creative non-fiction'.

## The six questions

In reporting something, whether for online or print media, the six questions quickly capture the gist of the story. If you answer these questions your story provides your readers with core, adequate information about the topic.

The six questions, the **five W's and an H**, are sometimes called the 'journalistic questions' because they are the basis of news writing.

The questions cover:

- **what** – what happened or will happen; what is our story about
- **who** – who is involved or started whatever happened or will happen; is it an individual or an organisation? who are they? do they represent an organisation?
- **when** – when did it or will it happen?
- **where** – where will it happen or did it happen
- **why** – what is behind the event/incident; why did or will it happen?
- **how** – how did or will it be done?

If you can answer these, you have a complete story that will provide your readers with an understanding of your topic. You can obtain answers to these six questions through interview, by observation and research.

Such information is included in media releases issued by organisations, however these should only be a starting point for your story as they may have left out information and may be framed to cast only a favourable light on something. It is useful to get other opinion.

The six key questions are about providing adequate information that leads to an understanding of a topic.

### Use short sentences

We don't want readers to find our writing hard to follow and lose track of what they are reading and become lost in our story, so we use short sentences – not long sentences like this one.

Let's do it again...

*We use short sentences so readers can easily follow our story. We don't want them to lose track.*

In blogging, short sentences work best because they improve comprehensibility.

Usually, only a single idea is discussed in a paragraph, which may consist of a number of sentences... perhaps two ideas at most, especially if they are related. This breaks up long, dense columns of text and improves readability by creating what graphic designers call 'white space' – the empty space between paragraphs so important to easy reading.

### Use simple language

Academic writing is for academic journals; technical writing containing lots of acronyms and jargon is intended for a particular readership in which those terms are understood; clear, simple writing is that which is comprehensible to most people.

Avoid using technical or long words where a simple term will suffice. If a technical term is used, briefly explain its meaning. Here's an example:

*Overshading can reduce photosynthesis (the conversion of carbon and water into energy by sunlight acting on chemicals in the leaves)...*

## STUFF TO THINK ABOUT...

1. Think of the legals
2. Answer the journalistic questions: the five Ws and an H
3. Be accurate in what you write
3. Identify opinion and unsubstantiated information
4. Provide adequate information
5. Attribute statements, facts to those making them
5. Be fair in your reporting
7. Disclose your motivation and interests
8. Not too short, not too long
9. Adopt a writing style suited to your blog's readers
10. Use short sentences
11. Use simple language
12. Adopt a personal style
13. Keep the main thing the main thing.

Example of a blog posting on the ACFCGN website

#### Festivities mark opening of a garden that looks like giant flowers

POSTED BY RUSS GRAYSON / JULY 29, 2012 / 1 COMMENT

by Russ Grayson

BLUE SKIES, tens of people, the mayor of Leichhardt and a truly impressive—and large—cake all came together on Sunday 28 July for the launch of Sydney's newest community garden at Mort Bay.



Accompanied by Mort Bay community gardener Tony, Mayor Rochelle Porteous first cut the tape then cut the cake to mark the garden's official opening.

Like many community gardens, Mort Bay moved from idea through uncertainty then toward actuality as the first community garden to be developed under council's community garden policy. And like many community gardens, this process of getting started called for patience and good communication between garden members and council.

In writing about a plant, for example, we might put the widely-known common name followed by the less-known scientific name like this:

*...the magenta lillipilly (*Syzygium paniculatum*)...*

Acronyms are useful to avoid repeatedly typing the name of an organisation. Use the full name followed by the acronym in brackets at first use, then use only the acronym.

For example, you might write:

*'Michael Smith, speaking for the Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network (ACFCGN), said...'*

Future mentions of the organisation appear as 'ACFCGN'. An alternative would be to refer to it as a shortened version of the name, such as 'the Network' (note upper case 'N' as it is a proper noun, the name of some actual organisation).

Widely understood acronyms need not be cited in full, eg, UN, FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN, PM (Prime Minister), UNESCO, UNICEF, NASA, WTO, EU etc.

## Keep the main thing the main thing

This is one of the principles of personal effectiveness identified by the late Stephen Covey, and it's something worth adopting in our blogging. It is especially relevant to writing media releases.

State your main idea close to the start of your blog entry, perhaps in the first or second paragraph. This is your 'lead' and it shouldn't be buried further down in your blog. An exception may be where you adopt a creative non-fiction style of writing.

Conventional news journalism adopted the 'inverted pyramid' writing style to do this and to make it possible for

editors to shorten a story by deleting from the bottom where the least important information ends up (space – column centimetres – are important to fitting copy into print newsletters and magazines). The inverted pyramid is an artefact of print journalism, however it has a place in writing for online media.

Let's look now at the structure of your story.

## Arrange in order of importance

We start by placing the most important information at the start of our story, followed by additional detail, and quotes if you can get them, in descending order of importance. It is good if you can get your main points, such as the five W's and an H, into the first two paragraphs.

Doing this makes your story skimmable, allowing people in a hurry to read only a few paragraphs and come away knowing the gist of what happened.

Your first sentence is very important as it will attract readers and, if written in a catchy way, encourage them to read on. How you write it will depend on your writing style or the editorial style and focus of the publication, as well as on the topic itself. In journalist's jargon, the first paragraph is the 'hook' that catches reader attention and keeps them with the story. Make it interesting. Make it intriguing.

### LET'S LOOK AT AN EXAMPLE. A STORY MIGHT START LIKE THIS:

*The mayor of Oceanside will open a new outdoor classroom at the Oceanside Community Centre this coming Saturday.*

*The classroom will provide needed space for the council's schools education program.*

That's fine, it reports on council affairs and on a new facility. But is it the

real story? Is the real story less about council affairs and more community benefit? That depends on the focus of your publication.

### IF IT IS MORE COMMUNITY-FOCUSED, WE MIGHT WRITE THE LEAD LIKE THIS:

*Oceanside schools are to gain a valuable new educational resource with the opening this Saturday of the Oceanside outdoor classroom.*

*The classroom will meet a demand for additional space to accommodate Oceanside Council's successful schools program.*

*Oceanside mayor, Moringa Olifera, will open the outdoor classroom during National Community Gardening Week celebrations at the community centre.*

Here we have answered the what, when, where and who of the six key questions. Answers to the others would appear in the body of the story. As you can see, even if you read no further you still gave the gist of the story.

It makes for more lively reading to include quotes from the news source so that the source tells their story in their own words. You denote this direct speech through the use of double quote marks, making sure you attribute the quote to the source.

### HERE'S AN EXAMPLE – QUOTES:

*"The outdoor classroom is funded by a state government waste reduction grant", said project manager, Linda Lavender.*



## OR, YOU MIGHT START BY IDENTIFYING – THE SOURCE:

According to project coordinator Linda Lavender, “We obtained a state government waste reduction grant to finance the outdoor classroom”.

Make your quote as accurate as possible. This is why recording interviews can be useful. Rather than a long quote, you might paraphrase what your source said. For example:

*Project coordinator, Linda Lavender, said that funding for the outdoor classroom was obtained from the state government.*

Here, we still have what was said and the attribution to its source.

## LET’S SEE HOW OUR STORY MIGHT READ:

Oceanside schools are to gain a valuable new educational resource with the opening this Saturday of the Oceanside outdoor classroom.

The classroom will meet a demand for additional space to accommodate Oceanside Council’s successful schools program.

Oceanside mayor, Moringa Olifera, will open the outdoor classroom during National Community Gardening Week celebrations at the community centre.

“The outdoor classroom is funded by a state government

waste reduction grant”, said project manager, Linda Lavender.

“It is going to solve the problem we have when the community centre is booked out at a time that schools want to attend.”

The classroom has been built using as many recycled materials as possible to demonstrate the purpose of the waste reduction grant.

“The grants are made to organisations that can demonstrate waste reduction in what they do”, said Linda. “The outdoor classroom does that quite well”.

Linda pointed out the energy efficient design of the building, harvesting roof water in a 10,000 litre tank to irrigate the surrounding gardens and the use of recycled floorboards and recycled bricks for the walls as evidence of its waste minimisation and reuse features.

The official opening will be this coming Saturday at 2pm outside the new classroom.

Note we referred to our source by her first name. A more formal blog or newspaper might refer to her as ‘Ms Lavender’. Once again, it comes down to your blog’s and your personal writing style.

The piece places the main idea at the start, features one idea per paragraph, expands on the main message in the

body of the text and directly quotes an attributes a source. Later paragraphs contain less important information.

The inverted pyramid is a writing style suited to reporting something briefly and to-the-point, and works well for newsy content on your blog.

## Longer stories

You might want to talk about people, their character, appearance and motivations in doing whatever they do. This brings more colour to a story and moves us away from the straight news story towards a style common in feature writing.

The purpose in doing this is as much to profile those doing something as it is about what they are doing.

## LET’S LOOK AT AN EXAMPLE:

*It’s a bleak landscape in the depths of winter, this rolling countryside just outside the ACT, a landscape fit only for stoic characters*

*That well describes farmer Mandy Craft. She says the landscape is beautiful, just as are her thirty black pigs that grunt and slosh in the cold, muddy puddle that is their pen.*

*“I suppose you have to be hardy to put up with our bleak winters”, she said. “The rain, the cold southerlies, the early mornings when you get up rain, hail or sunshine. I’m no different to other farmers around here, though”.*

*The hardiness she mentions is quite useful in Mandy’s other work – advocating for a fair*



future for Australia's small, family owned farms.

*"Having to deal with vested big agribusiness interests and politicians, I think I prefer the company of my pigs", she said, not in jest.*

*Mandy explained how her organisation, Fair Food Farmers United, had only last year completed a national survey about what people in country and city wanted in our national food system.*

*"You will find that in our Peoples' Food Plan", she said. "It's a blueprint for a better, fairer-for-all food system for this country".*

*In contrast to Mandy's muddy blue jeans, old grey sweater and black waterproof jacket, her husband, Tony, is starting his workday in the city in grey suit, blue shirt and red tie. Unlike Mandy's wind-dishevelled grey hair, Tony's has seen the passage of a comb this morning.*

*"He's dressed up because he's talking to our local MP, then a TV appearance this afternoon in town, about the food plan", she says, gesturing in the general direction of Canberra.*

... and so the story goes on. You can see we have used the landscape to segue into Mandy's character and work. We used contrast to her husband's formal dress to introduce the idea of their work in food advocacy. The story thus becomes one primarily about their advocacy work and secondarily about them. It embeds a serious theme of national food policy by characterising the farmer advocates in their everyday rural life.

This approach to storytelling takes more time to write and makes a longer read. A photo of Mandy with her pigs would make a suitable environmental portrait to accompany the story.

The story would cover the **five W's and an H** as it would if written in a more conventional news writing structure, however you can see that the longer story provides a more human, characterised, more detailed and contexted story.

One of the advantages of this approach is catering to the preference for reading about people and how they live as a means of gaining readers.

## AND NOW, OVER TO YOU...

In this publication we've briefly covered some of the principles, practices and structures you might use in getting started in writing about community food systems and community gardens.

If you are encouraged to start writing for the ACFCGN website or your community garden's, or even your own blog, there are other writing forms you could use that were mentioned earlier: compiling useful resource lists, interviewing community gardeners, how-to articles, asking and answering questions, running opinion polls, profiling plants and their cultivation and use, writing about soil management and growing plants and the rest.

The best way to start writing is to start writing.

So, why not put fingers to keyboard and get going?

The ACFCGN's website awaits.

## CONNECTING WITH ACFCGN...

**WEBSITE:** [communitygarden.org.au](http://communitygarden.org.au)

**FACEBOOK:** [facebook.com/australiancommunitygarden](https://facebook.com/australiancommunitygarden)

**TWITTER:** [twitter.com/#1/austcomgardens](https://twitter.com/#1/austcomgardens)

**PINTEREST:** [pinterest.com/austcomgardens/](https://pinterest.com/austcomgardens/)

**YOUTUBE:** [www.youtube.com/user/CommunityGardensAust](http://www.youtube.com/user/CommunityGardensAust)

**EMAIL DISCUSSION LIST:** [communitygarden.org.au/mailman/listinfo/acfcgn\\_communitygarden.org.au](mailto:communitygarden.org.au/mailman/listinfo/acfcgn_communitygarden.org.au)

