

Elements of Profiles
(Questions You're Trying to Answer)

1. What's special/unusual/rare/valuable about this person or group?

These characteristics are WHY you're doing the story. Think about these concepts as you write up the answers to This story is about....and The audience should care because....

2. **What does this person or group bring to the community?** What problem/concern/need is this person or group trying to respond to? (This might need some statistics to help you answer How widespread is this problem?). For an elected official, this should also include his or her track record: What did she/he promise? Which promises fulfilled? Not? How/Why? This is part of holding public officials accountable. It is essential to good political reporting.
3. **What's this person or group's relationship to the political power structure?** Elected official? Power player? Outsider? If Power Player or Outsider, you need to explain how so.
4. **What are the RESOURCES of this person or group?** Tax money? Donations? Grants? Goodwill from a segment of the population? Volunteers who help out?
5. **WHY does this person or group do what he/she or it does?** Go beyond labels. Look for specific, even personal motivations. Was there some defining moment/event that prompted the person or group's to undertake this mission/job/work?
6. **Biography:** Yes, you need to tell basic bio info, such as where born, when, shape/size of family. Don't sprinkle this throughout the story. Sum it up in a Tedious Tidbits paragraph, relatively high in the story. Often this will be near the Nut Graf, or even part of the Nut Grafs section. After all, how we grew up often motivates our actions in life. Parts of this bio info could be the inspiration for major THEMES/ PATTERNS in the person's life. For groups: equivalent info is when/where/how founded – by whom and why.

7. **Anecdotes/ details/ examples**: These are the way you SHOW, don't tell, your audience about your person or group. But, remember: Details and anecdotes are NOT all equal. Some give insight, illustrate a point, are a metaphor for a main theme about the person or group. Some are just odd, mildly interesting. Choose only those that offer insight.
8. **Themes/ Patterns**: As you do your background research, interviews and other reporting, you should be asking yourself if you're seeing THEMES or PATTERNS in this person's life, or group's activities. As you become aware of those, ASK about them (You could be wrong, so you want to bounce your observations/conclusions off the people you're interviewing). Get people to talk about them. Look for the THREE main themes/patterns that you can explore. Summarize those in your nut graf. Develop each theme/pattern in the rest of the story.
9. **Outline**: Yes, it's a GOOD idea to make an outline of your story. That will help you stay focused, help you know what to cut, and help you organize the info.
10. **Sources**: Who's likely to know? From your background research, collect names. In your interviews, ask: Who else would know about this person or group? Follow the Source Trail!

Political Profile Tips

1. Remember your PURPOSES:

- ✓ To give voters useful information to make a choice about candidates.
- ✓ To answer: WHO is this person? What makes him or her tick? What kind of elected official will he or she be? WHY is this person running for this office?
- ✓ Your focus statement is going to be: Who is XXX? Why is he/she running for xxx office?
- ✓ To paint a word/image portrait of this person.
- ✓ To explain his or her stands on issues.
- ✓ To help voters hold elected officials accountable.

2. Read EVERYTHING about this person that you can get your hands on.

- ✓ Old news stories/ Letters to the Editor/ Local blogs
- ✓ Campaign material/ Lawn signs

3. Start early to arrange a sit-down interview several days ahead of time.

(Use the time in between to do other reporting with other sources)

4. Talk to MANY sources who are likely to know different aspects of this person.

- ✓ Family
- ✓ Friends (what groups does this person belong to? Church? Rotary?)
- ✓ Co-workers
- ✓ Enemies
- ✓ Party officials

5. Ask the candidate (and some other sources) some of these kinds of questions:

- ✓ What motivates you to run for this office?
- ✓ How would you describe yourself as an elected official (as a Democrat/Republican, as a mayor, as a county legislator)?
- ✓ Was there a special event/moment that made you decide to get into politics? Describe.
- ✓ What are your top three objectives in this office?
- ✓ How should voters hold you accountable to fulfilling those objectives? How will we know that you've done what you said you'd do?
- ✓ Where were you at 22?
- ✓ What experience, talent or education qualifies you for this particular office?

6. If you use an anecdotal lede, choose a symbolic moment or metaphor for the lede – something that SUMMARIZES this person's character/personality/motivations/style.

7. Construct a nut graf summarizing your themes/ Make anchor intro engaging.

8. Summarize BIO info in one place: The Tedious Tidbits paragraph(s)/Track.

9. For the rest of the story, develop each theme in the nut graf. Give each theme its own section.

10. At the end, do a LIST summarizing basic info, stands on issues or major proposals. Do another list of major accomplishments/failures (an assessment of an elected official's record). Post on TV Web site.