Generic conventions of a feature article

The “Have I?” check sheet

Have I:

Written a headline
This is usually catchy and often uses a literary device like:
- alliteration, *The Secrets of his Succession*,
- a pun, *One Knight in Birdland*,
- rhyme, *Truly Madly Nicky* (in this case it’s imperfect rhyme) or
- an allusion to another text *Dr. Nicholas and Mr. Hyde*.
The above titles were all taken from *Vanity Fair* magazines written in 2008.

It is written in bold, in a larger font, a contrasting font (Ariel for the heading and Times New Roman for the text).

It is centred. It does not contain personal pronouns. Often it has a lot of white space around it.

Written a By-line
This is the journalist’s name. It is usually written in block capitals. On the front page it is sometimes wallpapered. JOHN SMITH. An easy way to achieve this is to turn the font colour to grey. In the sports pages it is larger and bolded. JOHN SMITH There may be co-authors. Sometimes a photographer is also named. In this case the by-line will be two lines in length. It will also contain information like MEDICAL EDITOR. The By-line may have a stylistic feature like a line or double lines over it. It is generally left hand justified. This is dependent on the style of the whole paper.

Written a two line summary or attention grabber
This serves to entice the reader into the piece. It is written in a larger font than the text and is sometimes in colour. It is wider than the words in a grab box. This is illustrated below.

It’s too dangerous to go out alone; AIDS is rife and people can’t afford to get to hospital, much less pay for treatment. But a group of West Australian volunteers is trying to make a difference on the mean streets of Johannesburg.

Words Belle Taylor


Constructed a lure
Here the journalist will relate a personal anecdote or select the human interest aspect of the story so the reader who has some leisure time (generally) will continue to read on. A different approach to news reports is used. In reports, readers want to glean information. Sometimes the first letter is written in a large font.

Included the comments of an expert witness?
In order to add credibility a journalist will research and add the views of an expert in the field. S/he will acknowledge this source by stating the title, name and position of this person. Former
KGB officer, Alexander Litvineko; Health Department director of communicable disease control, Dr. Paul Crisp. Some newspapers write positions with lower case letter at the beginning. This is a more modern stylistic feature.

**Included the comments of a bystander?**

To vary the sources and where the subject matter does not lend itself to experts a witness is often included. A brief description or a feature of the person’s character will be given. Dr Hanibf, an Islamic militant; Nikki Jones, a 14 year old student at Mount Lawley Senior High, Wheatley,59, the influential and respected figure.......

**Used emotive language (ideally)**

First person point of view is sometimes used. The tone is more colloquial and the language approachable rather than jargon filled. This means that the widest possible audience will have access to the message. The conclusion will leave the reader to think.

**Used appropriate grammar**

**Used a direct quote**

To verify what an expert or bystander has said the write will record speech that a person has uttered. This is then shown by inverted commas. “Doctors have long dreamt of being able to predict how...a reality,” Professor Mallal said. The quote always begins on a new line and is always indented.

**Used an indirect quote**

For variation on the above verification and particularly if the reporter has not used a recording device or does not have a written statement s/he will write the comments in his/her own words. This is called paraphrasing. Shadow transport minister, Simon O’Brien said that the Opposition would build a similar rail line if it won government.

**Added graphics**

A photographer will often work closely with the writer to capture potential readers’ attention. Because there are a greater number of words than in a news report the text will be broken up with the images.

**Written a caption**

This can entice the reader too. It does not simply state what the picture is about or who is in it. It is cleverly written.

**Used short paragraphs**

Unlike formal essays paragraphs in this genre are one sentence in length. Instead of leaving a line to show the paragraph the writer indents to save space.

The tab bar ensures uniform indentation.

**Included a grab box**

Variety is important. Visually the layout must not look dull. The words selected are the most controversial, dramatic or gossipy to draw the reader in. They are set out as column wide but are in a larger font. The words appear in the text too so are read twice.
Acknowledged paralinguistics

Different texts have different features. This text uses columns. If you highlight your written text and look at the icons you will see one for columns. By clicking on it you can adjust the number of columns.