

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 Graf's 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!