Story Flow

No two news organizations will have an identical story flow, and no two stories will follow exactly the same course. However, certain patterns are typical. The more often a story is checked, the less likely it is to violate ethical or legal standards. Long-form journalism, features, evergreen stories (stories without a strong time element so that they remain fresh—and green—over a long period of time), center spreads, some reviews and some news stories will go through many or all of the following stages of story flow.

Pitched

- Story ideas come from staff writers, editorial board members, the audience and audience reaction to previous stories.

Assigned

- The story is chosen by editors.
- It is confirmed by the editor-in-chief.
- The story is assigned to a reporter and other journalists, such as a photographer or infographics designer.
- Deadlines are determined for the next step or the final product.

In Progress

- The reporter does background reporting.
- The reporter shares notes, tells the editor what the story is in 30 words or less.
- The editor assigns the appropriate multimedia team, sketches a possible story package and sidebars, and assigns deadlines.
- Reporting, recording and photographing are done by assigned staff members.
- Others may be responsible for writing, creating graphics, choosing photographs, and editing audio and video.
- Responses are sought from peers and the team. This stage may make use of blogging and wikis.
- The reporter revises the story.
- The editor reviews progress.
- The reporter revises.
- The editor requests more changes.
- The reporter revises.
- The copy editor edits the copy. He or she may send it back to the writer or confer with the reporter.
- The reporter verifies all facts and quotations.

Journalism: Publishing Across Media

Ready to Publish

- The reporter and the editor or online editor send out short messages to the sources, subjects and audience letting them know that the story is about to appear.
- The story is published, posted online or aired.

Reaction and Evaluation

- The audience, sources and subjects comment on the story by email, letter or phone. Online stories usually have an area directly below the story for inputting comments.
- The reporter writes a reflection for self, staff and adviser.
- The staff does a read-around and evaluates the edition, online edition or broadcast.
- If necessary, the story is updated and corrections are published.

Review and Assessment

1. Which of the following are part of your publication's story flow?
   - reporter pitches story
   - editor assigns stories
   - editor keeps track of progress
   - reporters seek response and revise
   - story is prepared for publication
   - evaluation and reflection
2. How many people are involved in a story as it flows from idea to publication? List what they do.
3. Which bullet points are part of your publication's story flow?
4. How could the story flow of your publication be improved?