

YEARBOOK STAFF POLICY MANUAL TEMPLATE

This template is intended to help yearbook advisers and editors build a custom staff manual that reflects the values, policies and structure of their program. Each section includes a purpose statement and guiding prompts.

I. INTRODUCTION

Purpose: Explain the purpose of this manual and how it supports your staff.

Prompts:

- What is the function of this manual?
- Who is it for (students, advisers, parents)?
- What guiding values shape your program?

II. MISSION + VISION

Purpose: Define your yearbook staff's goals and core beliefs.

Prompts:

- What story are you trying to tell with your book?
- What does it mean to be a scholastic journalist in your program?
- What is your vision for your staff culture?

III. STAFF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Purpose: Outline the structure of your staff and describe each role.

Include:

- Titles (e.g., Editor-in-chief, Section Editors, Staffers)
- Responsibilities for each role
- Adviser's role and decision-making authority

IV. TIME COMMITMENT & GRADING

(if applicable)

Purpose: Set expectations for classwork, after-hours coverage and accountability.

Prompts:

- What are attendance expectations?
- How will students be graded (if in a class)?
- Are students expected to cover events after school or on weekends?

V. EDITORIAL POLICIES

Purpose: Define your standards for content creation, editing and code of ethics.

Sections to Consider:

- Decision-making process for what gets published
- Fact-checking and quote verification
- Editorial voice and objectivity
- Handling corrections or controversial topics
- Corrections to published materials policy
- Prohibited work

VI. PHOTOGRAPHY & EQUIPMENT USE

Purpose: Establish rules and procedures for responsible equipment use.

Prompts:

- How is equipment checked out and returned?
- What are the expectations during event coverage?
- What consequences exist for lost or damaged equipment?

VII. THEME & CONTENT CONSISTENCY

Purpose: Explain how your staff develops and maintains visual and verbal theme consistency.

Prompts:

- Who approves the theme and its use?
- How do staffers apply the theme across writing, design and photography?
- Do you have a style guide? [see style guide example here]

VIII. COVERAGE GOALS & INCLUSIVITY

Purpose: Ensure that your yearbook is representative of the full student body.

Prompts:

- What percentage of the student body should appear in the book and how many times?
- How do you track and balance coverage?
- What efforts will be made to include diverse voices and activities?

IX. SENIOR PORTRAITS & ADS

Purpose: Clarify how senior portraits and senior ads are handled.

Prompts:

- What are the submission guidelines and deadlines?
- What content is or is not allowed in senior ads?
- Who is responsible for ad layout and approval?

X. CRISIS & SENSITIVE COVERAGE POLICY

Purpose: Establish procedures for unexpected or sensitive events.

Topics to Include:

- **Student/Faculty Death:** Encourage schools to create a policy in consultation with administration. Provide space for them to define their own respectful process.
- School emergencies or tragedies
- Mental Health and/or sensitive topics

Prompt: "If an unexpected or sensitive event occurs, our staff will..."

XI. STUDENT CONTRACT OR ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Purpose: Provide a place for students (and optionally parents) to acknowledge the expectations and responsibilities of being on staff and disciplinary steps if responsibilities are not met.

- Behavior expectations
 - Deadline agreement
 - Equipment responsibility
 - Editorial standards
 - Disciplinary procedures
 - Signature lines:
 - Student signature / Date
 - Parent/Guardian Signature / Date (optional)
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XII. STYLE GUIDES

Purpose: Ensure consistency in writing, editing, design and branding across the yearbook.

Every staff should maintain a clear and accessible set of style guides to promote uniformity, uphold journalistic integrity and reinforce theme development. Style guides should be reviewed annually and updated as needed.

A. CORE STYLE REFERENCES

Include the following documents as permanent or annually updated resources:

- **AP Style Guide (or adapted house version)** – For grammar, punctuation, capitalization, numbers, titles and journalistic formatting
 - **Editorial Style Guide** – Rules for quotes, captions, headlines, class names, school traditions, acronyms, dates, etc.
 - **Brand Guidelines (if applicable)** – Specific requirements for school/district logos, color usage, typefaces or school branding standards
 - **Voice and Tone Guide** – Defines the personality of the yearbook (lighthearted, serious, theme-driven, etc.) and provides examples of language to avoid (e.g., clichés, overused superlatives, inside jokes, etc.)
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B. YEAR-SPECIFIC DESIGN STYLE GUIDE

This portion changes annually and helps staffers apply the current theme consistently throughout the book. It should be developed by the design/editorial team early in the year and shared with all staff

Include:

- Color palette with CMYK values/Formula Colors
 - Font pairings and point sizes (headline, subhead, body copy, captions)
 - Graphic elements (icons, lines, boxes, etc.)
 - Page templates and spread structure
 - Photo treatments and layering conventions
 - Theme phrase applications (e.g., how to carry voice/language across sections)
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XIII. APPENDIX (Optional)

Use this section to include additional tools and forms:

- Year-specific style guide requirements
 - Rubrics or grading policies
 - Event coverage forms
 - Equipment checkout logs
 - Staff directory
 - AI use policy
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Note: This template is not prescriptive. Schools should adapt each section based on their own policies, administrative guidance and publication goals.