

A proposal for a digital newspaper

Learn how to write a proposal.

Before reading

Do the preparation task first. Then read the text and tips and do the exercises.

Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–h) with the vocabulary (1–8).

Vocabulary

1. a drawback
2. to outweigh
3. viable
4. to outline
5. to offset
6. accessibility
7. a readership
8. an overwhelming majority

Definition

- a. to explain the main points
- b. capable of working successfully
- c. the group of people who read a book, magazine or newspaper
- d. a disadvantage
- e. a very large proportion
- f. to be more important than
- g. to balance the effect of something
- h. the fact of being obtained or understood easily

Reading text: A proposal for a digital version of the university newspaper

Introduction

This proposal intends to outline how a digital version of the university newspaper, *The Scallion*, could function and aims to show that an online paper is viable for the future of the newspaper. It draws on the views of 3,000 students surveyed in May.

Background

The Scallion is printed weekly and distributed free in faculty buildings, with a readership of approximately 10,000 students. It is written and produced entirely by students. The survey shows that the newspaper is highly valued by university students and staff for entertainment, cultural enrichment and work experience.

Current problems

The cost of printing newspapers is significant. Furthermore, some students do not have easy access to the paper, since the only way to obtain a copy is to physically go to university. An additional environmental issue is that a large number of copies end up as litter on campus.

Proposed solution

It is proposed that the newspaper could shift to an online format. An overwhelming majority (95 per cent) of survey respondents were 'keen' or 'very keen' on this.

The key benefits would be:

- **Lower costs.** Electronic publication is much cheaper than printing, and the website would require minimal maintenance. Although there are considerable initial costs of developing a website, these would be offset over time.
- **Improved accessibility.** Students unable to collect a copy and those with visual impairments would be able to read the paper online.
- **Eco-friendliness.** A website would reduce paper usage and produce no litter.
- **Digital media experience.** For student journalists, gaining experience in running a web-based news site would be invaluable for any job which involves digital communication.

Drawbacks

One issue is information management. The site would have to comply with data protection and privacy laws. Advice should be sought from the IT department.

Another drawback may be personal preference. Twenty-five per cent of survey respondents liked having a physical paper to flick through in a café. However, as this is a minority view, I would suggest that the benefits of the online paper outweigh the inconvenience on this issue.

Conclusion

The results of the consultation suggest that moving the paper online is the best option given that it would reduce costs, be more environmentally-friendly and reach a larger audience. A change to a digital format is therefore recommended to maintain the benefits of the newspaper while addressing its current difficulties.

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Tips

1. Start by reading the question carefully. Brainstorm all your thoughts about the proposal first. Then choose your best ideas and plan your paragraphs.
2. Use subheadings to make the structure clear. Start by stating the aim of the proposal (*Introduction*) and giving information about the context (*Background*).
3. Next, move on to the *Current problems* and your *Proposed solution*. You can also mention the *Drawbacks* and how to address them before you finish (*Conclusion*).
4. You should use an impersonal, formal tone for your proposal. Passive verb forms (e.g. *It is proposed that ...*, *Advice should be sought ...*) are a useful way to avoid *I think* or *You should*.
5. The final section should include an overall recommendation based on your previous points.

Tasks

Task 1

Are the sentences true or false?

	Answer	
1. You should say what the aim of the proposal is in the introduction.	True	False
2. Subheadings should make it easy for the reader to follow the proposal.	True	False
3. It is better not to mention the drawbacks of your proposed solution.	True	False
4. A proposal should be written in a persuasive and personal style.	True	False
5. The passive is a useful structure for writing a proposal.	True	False
6. Your proposal should make clear what you are recommending and why.	True	False

Task 2

Match the functions (a–f) with the phrases (1–6).

Phrases

1. It is proposed that ...
2. This proposal intends to outline ...
3. One issue is ...
4. A change to a digital format is therefore recommended ...
5. It draws on the views of 3,000 students surveyed in May.
6. The key benefits would be ...

Functions

- a. Stating the aim of the report
- b. Saying what information the report is based on
- c. Proposing a solution
- d. Justifying a solution
- e. Recognising the disadvantages
- f. Concluding

Task 3

Complete the sentences with words and phrases from the box.

proposed	issue	aim	significant
overwhelming	draws	valued	outline

1. The of this proposal is to the current challenges facing the university sports centre and suggest ways to address these issues.
2. The report on the views of 1,000 sports club members surveyed in January.
3. The service offered by the sports club is highly by all members, and it was rated as either 'very good' or 'excellent' by an majority of those interviewed.
4. However, urgent building work is needed to repair the roof. This carries a cost.
5. Another is that the centre is likely to be closed for four to six months, meaning loss of subscription fees and no sports facilities for students.
6. It is that alternative sports facilities are secured before the building work begins.

Discussion

Do you prefer to read a newspaper online or on paper?

Answers

Preparation task

1. d
2. f
3. b
4. a
5. g
6. h
7. c
8. e

Task 1

1. True
2. True
3. False
4. False
5. True
6. True

Task 2

1. c
2. a
3. e
4. f
5. b
6. d

Task 3

1. aim | outline
2. draws
3. valued | overwhelming
4. significant
5. issue
6. proposed