

The Beat System

Beats editors

What do they do?

The beats editors' job entails reading, editing and posting the dozens of beat reports and sports updates that come in each week. Beats editors (we have five) also determine the newsworthiness of each beat, deleting those that are poorly written or not newsworthy and scheduling the newsworthy ones to post.

How do they schedule beats to post online?

Wordpress allows users to schedule stories to post in the future. Certain beat reports are valid immediately; however, most refer to events that will happen in the future. Beats editors use the calendar to schedule beats to post closer to when they will be newsworthy.

Getting social

Each day, the beats editors also use Twitter to tweet what they consider to be the most newsworthy story of the day.

Space out deadlines

Work smarter, not harder

We've always written beats, but they used to be due all at the same time during each print news cycle. Since we moved the beats to the website, we simply shifted our schedule to accommodate the online venue.

How does the schedule work?

We divided the total number of beats (and beat reporters) by three and made A, B and C deadlines over a three-week period. Group A beat reporters have a beat due by Tuesday of Week 1. Group B beats are due the Tuesday of Week 2, and Group C beats are due by the Tuesday of Week 3. Then we repeat the cycle all over again. Beat reporters end up writing about four beats per semester.

A partial list of beats

Cover as much as you can

With a larger staff, you can break your beat reports into smaller groups. Every club and activity could be its own beat. For smaller staffs, you'll want to consolidate your beats. For example, instead of having one reporter cover each academic department, you could have one reporter simply covering "academic departments."

Some sample beat areas

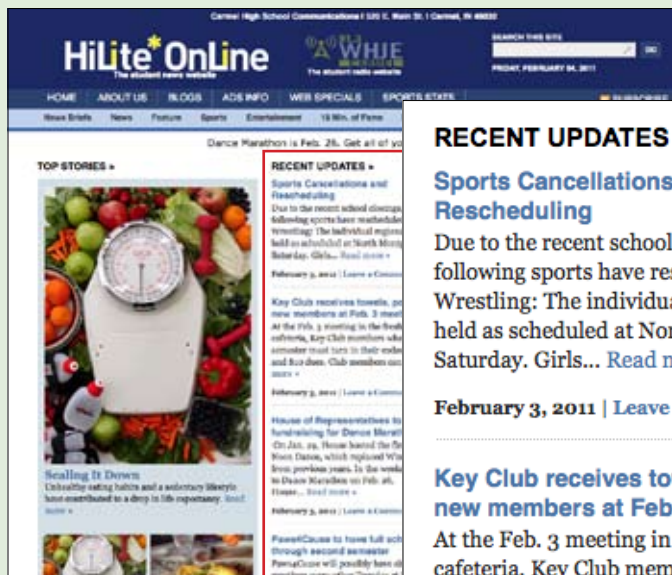
English department	Cafeteria
School board	Marching band
Chess Club	Athletic teams
DECA	Senior Class
Breakdancing Club	Recycling Club
Choir	Intramural sports
Orchestra	Nat'l Honor Society
Student government	Key Club

Photos of the Day

Similar to written beats

Photographers on staff also participate in the beat system. Photo editors outline a daily photo schedule (in our case, a two-week schedule), and each photographer (we have 10 this year) is required to take a Photo of the Day on his assigned day and submit it via e-mail. The photo editor then posts the photo and cutline to our FlickrR account and to the home page of the website.

Where and how do beats appear



Newest stories at the top: When readers check back, they want an easy way to see the latest updates. Make sure you include the date (or even the time) of each post so readers can see how recent it is.

Help out the 'scanners': Many (most?) readers won't read entire stories, so give those scanners what they need as quickly as possible. Here, we provide readers with an informative headline and part of the lead.

RECENT UPDATES »

Sports Cancellations and Rescheduling

Due to the recent school closings, the following sports have rescheduled:
Wrestling: The individual regional will be held as scheduled at North Montgomery on Saturday. Girls... [Read more »](#)

February 3, 2011 | [Leave a Comment](#)

Key Club receives towels, pop tabs, new members at Feb. 3 meeting

At the Feb. 3 meeting in the freshman cafeteria, Key Club members who joined this semester must turn in their codes of conduct and \$10 dues. Club members can also... [Read more »](#)

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House of Representatives to continue fundraising for Dance Marathon

On Jan. 29, House hosted the first annual Neon Dance, which replaced Winter Formal from previous years. In the weeks leading up to Dance Marathon on Feb. 26, House... [Read more »](#)

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Paws4Cause to have full schedule through second semester

Paws4Cause will possibly have six more meetings every other Tuesday at Room E204

The Beat System (con't)

A Sample Online Beat

Headline: Should contain a subject, verb and object and summarize the beat's content. Remember, many readers won't look beyond the headline.

Counterpoints choir continues preparing for auditions *January 31, 2011*

Always use the date: Don't use the day of the week. You don't know when readers might access your story, so having the date in there is helpful.

CHS freshman choir Counterpoints continues to prepare for its auditions, which are scheduled to be between Feb. 4 and March 7. The auditions determine choir placement for next year. All three of the choir directors are prepared to help students select songs and perfect performance techniques for the auditions, according to choir director Ann Conrad.

Lead/Lede: Should summarize the beat's content. Try to get the who, what, when and where in there.

"We're happy to help students. If they have a piece of music and ask us, 'Too long or too short?' we're happy to look at it and tell them yeah, sing it twice or this needs to be longer. Many times if the song is too short, by the time you get your nerve up, you're already done. We want to try to avoid that," Conrad said.

Expert source: This person—the sponsor, teacher, administrator, etc.—lends credibility to the story.

Conrad said that most Counterpoints members continue with choir, giving the directors a wide range of voices to use. This year, for example, has been the largest amount of male members Counterpoints has ever had. However, Conrad said that the choral department will never completely cut someone who auditions, no matter how many people end up auditioning in the future.

"We will never reach a point where someone will not be able to get into any choir at all. We accept everyone that auditions. In the future, we might add more choirs or make certain choir groups bigger, but there will always be a place for everyone," she said.

Students can be placed into seven different choirs, with Accents and Ambassadors being the top two show choirs. According to Conrad, though anything is possible, it takes a very mature voice, personality and work ethic for a sophomore to be in Ambassadors or Accents. Currently, only a few sophomores are in Accents, which is the highest choir a sophomore has been in so far.

When it comes to selecting who gets into what choir, Conrad said that all three directors come together and decide.

"Well, there's no specific way. We evaluate them on tone quality and performance, and we give each one of them a score. When we group them, we start seeing how many people we have here and how many people we need for each group. Then we look at how many sopranos and how many altos and how many guys and girls are in each group as well. So, it's a little bit subjective but we do give them ratings and figure it out," she said.

Student source: Students tend to listen to students more than adults. This person puts a "face" on your story. Make sure, however, that the source is relevant to the story.

Vessi Doncheva, Counterpoints member and freshman, said that she is nervous about auditions.

Doncheva said, "I really hope that my song and performance is good enough. I want to be able to make a good choir." **By Dhruvi Patel** <dpatel@hilite.org>

Shirt-tail: Comparable to a byline, this is the name (and e-mail, if applicable) of the person who wrote the story. We put them at the end of stories because our home page shows the headline and part of the lead. Putting the reporter's name at the end increases the amount of story a reader sees (see inset "Where and how do beats appear?" above).