



# Feature Writing

## WRITING BOX

### What is a feature?

A feature is a human-interest story that appeals to a wide variety of readers. It often highlights a particular person, place, or event in great detail or explores an issue or topic of current importance. A good feature article contextualizes a story so it's relatable and immediately relevant to the reader.

Feature writing is defined by its style more than by any specific subject. In style it is good to strive for the following qualities:

- Lively
- Interpersonal
- Informal (write as you speak, using colloquialisms and jargon)
- Short paragraphs
- Compelling narration
- Variety in pace and rhythm

In content, feature writing commonly is characterized by the following qualities:

- Most importantly, a fresh perspective or angle on your topic
- Facts combined with opinions, keeping things concrete
- Descriptive writing
- Generous use of quotes and anecdotes
- Comprehensive background information and other explanation

## Why feature writing?

**Why write?** Write when you have an idea or a specific angle on a subject that readers might not know about or think about themselves. Don't think of it as simply sharing your knowledge about a subject but instead as sharing and developing your distinct thoughts and perspective on it. Write in ways that will strive to contribute to readers' own ways of thinking.

**Why do readers want to read it?** Readers' interests vary according to feature type. For example, their interests in a local story rest in wanting to feel part of and close to their community, environment or region. Your piece can personalize that locale for them. If the subject of your piece is a local person, readers' interests are piqued by hearing something interesting, inspiring, or unsung about this person's experiences. Consider as well local recognitions or significant local historical stories, appealing to readers' pride of place.

## What type of feature to write?

Many varieties of feature writing exist. As you select the type of feature you want to write, think about why readers will care, specific to that type of feature. Types include the following:

- **News** - Not in the mode of news reporting but a focus on some human interest aspect of a news event that is otherwise glossed over in the reported news. A news feature also can provide background stories about the given situation that aren't well known.
- **Profile** - An in-depth story about a person, organization or event. You might provide a history section (background, education, life experience) along with alluring behind the scenes details that can't be found in an easy web search.

- **Trend** – A highlighting of something new and exciting in modern culture. Provide details about the beginnings of the trend, why and how it is grabbing people, and what to watch for.
- **Human Interest** – A “day in the life of” stories that have some emotional aspect (e.g. facing a challenge, a plight, a conflict; experiencing a new belief; accounts of travel). Describe what it’s like to be in a specific situation or environment or location, to be at a certain event or to be a certain person in that person’s daily goings-on. Human interest also can center on dramatic events (such as rescues) where emotion is intense.
- **Personal Experience** – A dive into unfamiliar lifestyles offering readers a new perspective
- **Seasonal** – Some novel angle of interest associated with a holiday or other seasonal experience.

## What are the components of feature writing?

**Research and plan.** Here is where you develop a firm grasp of: why should readers care? What’s my angle? What direction am I taking?

- A compelling feature story requires more research than most other kinds of newspaper writing. Read different perspectives on your topic. See what perspective interests you most and whether evidence for it is strong enough.
- Narrow your focus – what type of feature will you write? What is your stance? What is a meaningful angle on your targeted topic – why does it matter? Why is it interesting?
- What is your purpose - Why are you writing about this topic in this way to this particular audience? What do you want your piece to evoke in readers? (sympathy, learning, anger, action)

- Read what has been published in this newspaper before to get a sense of the intended readers, topics of interest, and perspectives that offer fresh points of view.
- Research background information on your topic, different perspectives and arguments supporting them, evidence and counterfactuals that can strengthen your own point of view.

## **Flesh out your story**

- Look for statistics, already available quotes and case studies.
- Schedule interviews, prepare questions and probes to follow up possible responses to questions.
- If you are doing a profile feature, spend long enough with a person at different times to see what the person is really like.
- Include only the most colorful and interesting quotes. Everything else should be paraphrased.

## **Structure your piece for interest and clarity**

Figure out the best way to organize your piece. For example, consider organizing it chronologically, narratively, or by theme. Then, when ready to write, plan to structure your piece as follows: Title/headline; Introduction; Body; and Conclusion.

**Title/headline.** Make it catchy, short and snappy. Tell readers what the content is about. Feel free to use emotive language. Some techniques are to ask a question or give an imperative.

**Introduction.** Hook the reader with the introduction but keep it short and brief – no longer than 15% of your article. The Introduction should let the reader know why the story is important and worth their time without telling them directly. You set the tone for your piece in the Introduction.

In general, approaches to your Introduction include the following:

- Make an interesting or provocative statement
- Introduce the topic
- Foreshadow your points or challenge your readers to consider a distinct idea or perspective
- Provide background information on your topic

To do these things, feature writers follow certain organizing conventions:

A Deck – Start by capturing the gist of the article in one or two short sentences

Delayed lede – Here is where you more leisurely develop for readers the who, what, where, when, and why of the story. Hard news stories pack such information into one sentence. Your delayed lede, however, goes on for three or four very brief paragraphs. In them, you set the scene, paint a picture, or narratively recap the relevant situation and then end by explaining what the article will be about (in what journalists call a nut graph). See the Samples section for an example of a delayed lede.

**Body.** Break the body into several paragraphs/sections. Here's where you present your opinion and any visual elements that illustrate the story. Evoke the setting with imagery or sensory details. Support your opinions and use a variety of evidence– e.g. statistics, case studies, interviews, quotes

In developing the details in the body, show don't tell. The following techniques help in showing:

- Anecdote – a short and personal story that is relevant to ground the piece in real life situations
- Rhetorical question – a question that is supposed to go unanswered to trigger readers' own thoughts
- Hyperbole – an exaggeration

- Imperative voice – a forceful use of words through commands, like “we must...”
- Metaphor and simile – saying one thing is another or is like another to stimulate readers’ thoughts and images through associations
- Anaphora – a repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of sentences for emphasis (for example, from the Police song: “Every breath you take/Every move you make/Every bond you break/Every step you take/I’ll be watching you”)

**Conclusion.** Leave a lasting impression on readers and provoke the intended response – e.g. encourage a change of opinion, prompt action, or encourage making a decision.

## Tips for feature writing that draws readers in

- Share your opinion, express your views, show your personality (humorous, serious), semi-formal/conversational with colloquialisms, emotive language.
- Use strong verbs and nouns – limit adjectives and adverbs. Adjectives don’t show, they tell. Verbs convey action and give a story movement and momentum.
- Use active voice.
- Address the reader as “you.”
- Write with zest, find your voice.

**For additional help in feature writing, YpsiWrites offers one-to-one consulting. For more information, see [ypsiwrites.com](http://ypsiwrites.com).**

**And if you want to write a feature, Washtenaw Jewish News is looking for features, based in peoples, places, and events in Washtenaw County. Contact [ckinbergeditor@washtenawjewishnews.org](mailto:ckinbergeditor@washtenawjewishnews.org) for more information.**

# Some Samples to Help as You Write Your Own Feature

## 1. Examples of delayed lede

### Looking for Rose. How did They Meet

*Washtenaw Jewish News*, Jan 2021 Vol  
XX: 11, Clare Kinsburg

Title stating the main point for a Profile Feature

#### Deck

Sometime during the decade-long Great Depression, my aunt Rose and Zebedee Arnwine met and moved to Chicago together, but I don't know when or how. If I could just know this one impossible thing, then I think I would be able to grasp their lives. How did my aunt, a divorced Ashkenazi Jewish woman whose child had been adopted by her sister, met a thrice-married African American farmer from Muskogee, Oklahoma? How do any lovers meet?

My parents met in St. Louis in the late 1930s at the Young Men's Hebrew Association. Founded in 1880, the St. Louis Y recreation center was heartily utilized by Jewish immigrants for drama, sports clubs, and socializing. Well into his 50s, my father still sang songs from the *Pirates of Penzance* that had been performed at the Y when he was in his teens, and he still played handball with the friends he made there. St. Louis Jews will always ask a new acquaintance what high school they attended — high school is a defining signifier. For my father, who went to work at 14 when his father died, the Y was his high school.

I met my wife Patti 40 years ago through a mutual friend in the lesbian community. The friend was one of my housemates, and Patti was in a therapy group with her. We first crossed paths at a Sweet Honey in the Rock concert sponsored by the University of Missouri Women's Center, but I only saw her out of the corner of my eye. Our first introduction was in my kitchen, over a casual dinner.

Why focus is important

For my aunt Rose and Zebedee Arnwine, commonplace social meetings would not have been common.

## What 800 Nerds on a Cruise Ship Taught Me About Life

What I learned cruising the seas with a ship full of nerds celebrating geek culture while inverting classic rules of social hierarchy.

Adam Rogers

Catchy title for Human Interest Feature

Deck / Main focus

At a party at the workshop one evening I find myself talking to a Noted Writer, familiar from magazines and radio, a star of a kind. She is sitting on the edge of Savage's brown-felted pool table. I introduce her to Paul Sabourin, half the comedy musical duo Paul and Storm, and explain that I'm about to write a story about the fan cruise he helps organize, the JoCo Cruise Crazy, named after its cofounder and headline performer, singer-songwriter Jonathan Coulton.

After chatting with us for a few minutes, Sabourin moves on, and I'm left alone with the Noted Writer. "Do you know what all this stuff is?" she asks, motioning at the display cases with her drink. "I have no idea what any of it is."

"It's kind of my thing," I say. "You know, there's a lot of overlap between liking this kind of stuff and the JoCo Cruise."

"Right," the Noted Writer says, frowning. "Nerds." She puts her drink down on the pool table.

It has been years since I have heard anyone say that word, *nerds*, with contempt. It's been a compliment for, what, a decade now?

"I'm really sorry about this," I say, reaching to move her glass. It's wet;



it'll hurt the felt. And even though it's not my party and not my workshop, I'm suddenly feeling very defensive.

Introduces writer's personality

Jonathan Coulton loves cruise ships. He loves the weird artificial mall running down the middle, and he loves staring off the back of the ship into infinity ... We're sitting in the courtyard of a Fort Lauderdale, Florida, hotel; our ship departs tomorrow morning. Around us, other cruise-bound performers are gathering; Grant Imahara of *MythBusters* is introducing himself to NPR host Peter Sagal. The comedian Paul F. Tompkins is filling a plate with nachos at the buffet. This trip, Coulton says, he might break his rule not to go Jet Skiing, but he's not sure what he'll do with his glasses.

Coulton has built a career out of self-released albums and podcasts. Gentle and bearded, he's the "one-man house band" on an NPR quiz show and was the "contributing troubadour" for the magazine *Popular Science*. Coulton used to be a software engineer, a nerd in a cubicle, but he dreamed of being a musician; and unlike most people with those kinds of dreams, he made it happen. Perhaps more impressive, he did it without a record label, through persistence and online savvy, including a year in which he podcasted a new song every week.

That heroic origin story resonates with white-collar nerds who feel their spark of creativity getting dimmer while they screw around in IT or at a lab bench.

End of Delayed Lede

## 2. Examples of a Feature article

**My father and the moon landing,**  
Sandor Slomovits. *Washtenaw Jewish*  
*News*

Personal Experience  
Title's curious juxtaposition sparks  
interest

On the evening of July 21, 1969, my father and I were walking home from synagogue after evening prayers. The previous day our family had watched TV together as

astronaut Neil Armstrong uttered his famous words, “One small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind. Now I pointed up at the faint crescent moon in the still light sky and said to my father, “Isn’t it amazing to think that there was a man walking around up there?”

My father didn’t even look up. Staring intently ahead, he said with conviction. “There were no people up there.”

I was flabbergasted. “What do you mean there were no people up there,” I exclaimed with some heat. “We just saw it on TV!”

Taking little note of my outburst, my father went on in a condescending tone. “They faked those scenes in some desert.” (To be fair, my father was by no means alone in believing the various conspiracy theories that began circulating even before Apollo 11 blasted off from Cape Canaveral. Various polls have found that up to 20% of Americans believed that the moon missions were faked.) Before I could begin to argue against the preposterousness of this theory, he added, “They can’t be on the moon. It says in the Psalms, “’The heavens are for God, but the earth he gave to mankind.”’

Well, that was that. There was no arguing with my father on matters of God, dogma and religion. I was then 20 years old, he was 58. He was a cantor and had studied the texts of Judaism all his life. He could always pull rank. We walked the rest of the way home in an angry silence.

End of Delayed Lede

Fifty years ago, there were many other things about which my father and I could not talk. In particular, we never talked about his life before I was born. It was my mother who told me, when I was about sixteen, that she was my father’s second wife. That his first wife and three young children, as well as his parents, three sisters, his only brother, and countless other relatives and friends were all murdered in Auschwitz. That he’d been in a work lager in Poland for much of the war and had almost starved

to death. It was silently understood in our family that no one mentioned these things in front of my father. It took me many years to begin to understand the effect of that tragedy, those enormous losses, and especially of that silence, on my father's life and on mine. ↑

Heart-rending Anecdote

Eventually, gradually, my father and I did begin talking — even about his slaughtered family. And I started to see how, and why, he might have taken such an absolutist stance about the moon landing, and about all other matters pertaining to religion. I began to consider the possibility that, having lost almost everything, including nearly his own life, my father might have felt it essential to cling so literally to his faith, almost the only thing that remained of the life he led before the Holocaust. That perhaps it was this faith that allowed him to start over and reconstruct his life, and even might have helped him give me a solid foundation for starting mine. ↑

Distinct perspective

In 1999, just before the 30th anniversary of the moon landing, I again asked my father about it. Wanting to protect his dignity, I did not remind him of what he had said 30 years before.

Quotations

“Did you know,” he asked, “that they changed the Kiddush Levana after the moon landing?” (The Kiddush Levana is a prayer thanking God for the gift of the moon.) I said, no, I had not heard that. He continued. “In that prayer, we say to the moon, ‘Just as I leap toward you but cannot touch you, so may my enemies be unable to touch me harmfully.’ Well, they had to change that once people actually ‘touched’ the moon.” I found it fascinating that my nearly 90-year-old father had come to tacitly accept the reality of the moon landing and had even found a way to bring it into concordance with his faith.

After talking with him, I asked several rabbis about the prayer and they all said that it has not been changed. One of them, though, did remember much discussion at the time of the moon landing about whether an alteration was necessary. (Now that I am older, and have my own “senior moments,” I can readily see how my father might have confused hearing about discussions of a possible change, with an actual change.)

Lightened tone

I never told my father what the rabbis said. The Kiddush Levana has not changed—it was enough for me to know that he and I had. This July 20th will be the 50th anniversary of that first moon landing. My father has been gone for twelve years now, but I still regularly reflect on what he endured, how he persevered, and on his legacy in my life.

### **Meditating on Mindfulness: HOCUS POCUS OR MIRACLE CURE?**

Susan Mullane, *The Guardian*

Introduction hooks readers with imperatives, short sentences, senses, ellipses

Close your eyes. Breathe in. Feel the oxygen flood your core, flow into your limbs and cleanse your mind. Focus your mind, slowly, on your feet... calves... thighs... abdomen... hands... arms... chest... shoulders... neck... head... face. Listen to the sounds in the room. Allow your thoughts to wander and as they appear, let them flow away. Focus on the now. You are, I am, we are. Body. Breadth. Sensation.

Anaphora

For some, buying into the promise of mindfulness seems like a Volkswagen camper van too far. It’s all a bit touchy-feely, hippy-dippy, thanks but no thanks, I’d rather have tea and a scone to relax. For others, it is the infiltration of mindfulness into the popular consciousness that they find unforgivable. If it had remained a minority

pursuit, imported after one too many trips to Buddhist temples in Nepal, at least it would have retained some essence of its roots. But, critics argue, divorcing mindfulness from the quest for a moral life makes it an exercise in accepting the status quo, something that plays into the hands of the very forces, mostly corporate, who have popularized it for their own Machiavellian purposes.

Reducing stress via ten minutes of mindfulness a day boosts your employees productivity and that's a hell of a lot cheaper than hiring extra staff! McMindfulness indeed! But if mindfulness has made self-help gurus rich, as they pump out books promoting their expensive residential courses, does that in and of itself negate the benefits of a craze that has penetrated so deeply into our communities, reaching into schools, prisons and nursing homes? For me, the logic here is absurd. Just because something is popular, does not make it worthless. Just because it's been adapted from its original form does not make it toxic. It may have made men rich, but perhaps that's because it works.

Main focus	Question
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I spoke to Karen Miles, a staunch advocate of mindfulness and founder of popular website meinmind.ie. *"I've seen it transform my own life"* she enthuses *"and that's why I set up the website. I wanted others to experience the same joy, but I realized that first they'd have to believe it's worth bothering with"*.

Trawling her site, Facebook page and twitter account, the proliferation of testimonials could well make a believer out of this agnostic. Rather than grandiose claims, simple messages dominate. *"I am so glad I did this. It was hard to keep it going by myself at first, but now I practice mindfulness every day and I find I get a lot less stressed about the small stuff"* says Annette, 35 in Louth.

*"Feeling calm. Have been following the tips on your site for four months and I don't know myself. Thanks Karen"* comments Jennifer on the Facebook page.

*Your site helped me to get through the stress of my exams*” tweets Sean, 17. There’s plenty more in this vein, expressing simple gratitude for a coping mechanism that seems to genuinely reduce stress and anxiety in those who need it most.

Nor is mindfulness a new concept, despite what the cynics would have us believe. The earliest reference to *myndfulness* dates back to 1530 as a translation of the French word *pensée*. Indeed, Pascal’s book of the same name contains ideas which echo the core message of simply being that still resonates so powerfully with people today. “*All of humanity’s problems stem from man’s inability to sit quietly in a room alone*” he maintains. Perhaps the enduring appeal of every approach that embraces the now, from yoga to pilates; and from meditation to massage, is that it allows us to forget our anxieties, our worries, our fears and to enter into that state of flow which allows us to unconsciously feel at one with the universe.

Background

If all of that feels a little saccharine, perhaps now is an opportune moment to turn to science for some truth. Does it work? Or are we just wasting our time, handing over our hard earned cash to men in expensive suits who simply re-package the wisdom of the ancients for our modern secular age?

Whatever the original source, research by the US Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality concluded in 2014 that mindfulness does indeed have an effect. Following a mindfulness programme reduces many of the most toxic elements of stress, including anxiety and depression. Of course there’s a warning about the limitations of its effect. There’s no evidence that it alters your eating habits, helps you lose weight or sleep better, they add. It’s not better than exercise or behavioral therapies. To which I reply, who cares? Singing daily doesn’t make me better at playing the piano but that does not negate the joy of singing in my life. If I can find something that I can work into my daily practice and build into my life, that makes me less anxious, less stressed and less likely to become depressed, then hallelujah, bring it on.

If you can afford behavioral therapies, by all means do that too. Eating healthily and getting exercise remain the cornerstones of a healthy life, but this isn't an either or scenario. '*Everything that helps, helps*' my mother used to say and she was a woman full of wisdom. In my teens, as I was prowling the house one day, stressed about my impending mock exams, she suddenly went to the press, hauled out a stack of plates from the very back and said 'would you ever go and smash those. It might calm you down'. She also handed me a plastic bag and a dustpan and brush so I could tidy up after myself. I will never forget the liberating joy of willful destruction I experienced that day. I was aware of my body, aware of my surroundings, caught up in the present moment and relieved entirely of my despair. It didn't last forever, but I got a few days grace from the experience, the memory of which carried me through many future moments with a smile.

Remember, also, that a societal focus on positive mental health is a wonderful development for a country whose wellbeing has been severely challenged by years of austerity, high unemployment and emigration. Embracing mindfulness is not a pretense that all is fine; rather it reflects an awareness that when all is not fine we need to build our resilience; to learn strategies that help us to cope. As we emerge into better, more hopeful times, retaining our hard earned wisdom to stay connected to that which matters should stand us in good stead in the future, provided I remember to focus on the now.

And how does it work?

Close your eyes. Breathe in. Feel the oxygen flood your core, flow into your limbs and cleanse your mind. Focus your mind, slowly, on your feet... calves... thighs... abdomen... hands... arms... chest... shoulders... neck... head... face. Listen to the sounds in the room. Allow your thoughts to wander and as they appear, let them flow away. Focus on the now. You are, I am, we are. Body. Breadth. Sensation.

Repetition from Introduction to reinforce the writer's point of view and to motivate readers' engagement

## The Risks for Teenage Drivers. Jane

Brody. *New York Times*,  
Nov. 26, 2018

News Feature with angle of what  
parents can do for safety

Deck

My 16-year-old grandson, who lives in suburban Los Angeles, is on the verge of getting a driver's license and, quite frankly, I'm terrified. Driving around L.A. is scary even for very experienced adult drivers. Does a 16-year-old boy, whose navigation skills are limited to the internet, have the judgment, attention span and ability to process a dozen different inputs simultaneously necessary to avoid an accident?

Mind you, learning to drive was not my grandson's idea, but his parents are tired of chauffeuring the kids everywhere, and options to walk, cycle or take public transportation, which suited my 18-year-old grandsons in New York City just fine, are lacking where they live.

Informal, familiar, personalized


If I could make the rules, no one under 20 would be behind the wheel of a motor vehicle without an experienced licensed adult in the passenger seat. Even compared to 18-year-olds, the brain of a 20-year-old is more mature and less likely to succumb to risk-taking. Crash investigations have shown that "the cause of teenage crashes is not the skill with which they can drive, but the judgment they exercise while driving," according to an editorial in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*.

Although the number of teenagers killed in motor vehicle crashes has dropped by almost 50 percent in the last decade, crashes remain the leading cause of adolescent death and injury in the United States. And since 2014, along with the use of electronic devices, teenage motor vehicle fatalities have risen, according to a new policy statement by the American Academy of Pediatrics.



A recent study, published in the Journal of Adolescent Health, found that new teenage drivers were eight times more likely to crash or have a close call in the first three months after getting a license and driving independently than they were during the last three months on a learner's permit. New teen drivers were also four times more likely to engage in risky behaviors like rapid acceleration, sudden braking and hard turns, the study, led by Bruce G. Simons-Morton of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, found.

#### Delayed Lede strategy of building evidence



Although driver education helps students pass a licensing examination, there is little evidence that it produces safer drivers. As the pediatrics statement noted, “Studies consistently reveal no safety effect associated with traditional driver education.”

Graduated driver licensing policies, now nationwide for new drivers under 18, can help to reduce crash rates by requiring a specific number of hours of adult-supervised driving, restrictions on driving at night and with peers in the car, and phasing in exposure to more demanding driving conditions.

“These laws can reduce fatalities among 16- and 17-year-old drivers, but they’re not well-enforced, and the rates go up once kids turn 18,” said Dr. Brian D. Johnston, co-author with Dr. Elizabeth M. Alderman of the new policy statement.

But even when graduated license policies are enforced, Dr. Simons-Morton’s research showed, “Crash rates are dramatically high in the early months of independent driving.” As he and his co-authors pointed out, “It may take only a few hours behind the wheel for most novices to develop reasonable vehicle management skills, but safe driving judgment, as with all complex activities, comes only with experience.”

Therein lies the Catch-22: New drivers are more likely to get into trouble because they lack experience, but the best way to reduce the risk of a crash is to become an experienced driver. Dr. Alderman, an adolescent medicine specialist at Montefiore Medical Center, suggested in an interview that even after a teenager is licensed to drive independently, wise parents can mitigate risks by continuing to supervise driving in a variety of venues until teen drivers are more experienced.

End Delayed Lede - Main Focus

Actually, the parents' role in rearing safe drivers starts long before children can see over the steering wheel. "Parents need to be role models," Dr. Alderman said. "Always fasten seatbelts, never text while driving, and never drink alcohol or smoke weed and then get behind the wheel." To which I would add, parents should model safe driving habits by not speeding, tailgating or cutting in and out of traffic.

These days the most common risk facing young drivers involves distracting devices. A mere four seconds with eyes off the road vastly increases the chance of an accident. Using camcorders, the Teen Safe Driver Program revealed that three-fourths of moderate-to-severe rear-end crashes among teen drivers involved distracting behaviors, most often the use of cellphones. The teenage driver showed no response to the impending crash in half of cases in which the driver was using a phone.

"Teenage drivers have the highest rate of distraction-related fatal crashes of all other age groups," Dr. Simons-Morton reported. And the temptations keep growing, with in-vehicle information and entertainment technologies and portable electronic devices of which teens are usually the earliest adopters.

Quotes and evidence in successive paragraphs

"There are three kinds of distractions: visual, cognitive and manual," Dr. Johnston said. "Electronic technology is all three of these, and the risk of a crash goes way up."

Although alcohol as a factor in teen driving fatalities has declined in recent decades, “the use of alcohol by an adolescent driver remains a serious risk factor for motor vehicle crashes and resultant fatalities,” the pediatrics report states. In 2015, 16 percent of teenage drivers involved in fatal crashes had a blood alcohol level of 0.08 percent or higher, and 64 percent who were killed in alcohol-involved crashes were not wearing seatbelts.

All states now have a “zero-tolerance” law stating that a blood alcohol level of 0.02 percent or more for young drivers constitutes drunken driving and can result in an automatic suspension or loss of their license.

Sleep deprivation is becoming a more common risk factor for crashes by teenage drivers. Insufficient sleep not only increases the risk of falling asleep at the wheel, it impairs attention and judgment. Schools and parents can do more to assure that teenagers get enough sleep.

Parents should also think twice about the cars teens are driving. Though the tendency may be to provide an old car lest a new one get banged up, teens may be better off with a newer vehicle equipped with the latest safety features, like signals for lane

Advice / Instruction

departures and approaching vehicles and self-braking in an impending crash. Dr. Johnston suggests that parents “pick the safest, most up-to-date car you can afford.” Parents might also consider creating a teen-driving contract that spells out the expectations, responsibilities and risks for the teen driver. The pediatrics society offers a prototype contract under the teen section of its website, [healthychildren.org](http://healthychildren.org).