

Speech assignments: Write “advance” and “after” stories.

1. **For Tuesday (March 26)**, write a brief “coming event” or “advance story” about a (fictitious) visit to campus by Michael G. Gartner. This story would appear in The Tartan a few days before the event. Do background research online to find out what makes him interesting. Although he isn't really coming to Radford, your research should gather specific facts for the advance story. (In real life it also would help you come up with ideas for an interview with him, in case you had a chance to talk to him after his speech.)

The “advance” story should let students know why they might want to hear this campus visitor, along with all the basic who-what-when-where-why information below. Length: 175-225 words -- no more than one double-spaced page. Save your story as “yourlastname-gartnerprecede.doc”

- a. When: 2-3:30 p.m. March 27, Wednesday
- b. Where: Bondurant Auditorium in Preston Hall.
- c. Who: Michael Gartner, journalist, executive (find more about him online).
- d. What & Why: The invitation from Radford Student Media and the School of Communication asked Gartner to speak about “The Fun of Writing.”
- e. How did we get him? Gartner will be visiting several universities in Virginia while on his way to a meeting at the Newseum in Washington, D.C., where he is a trustee. He hopes to meet with faculty to discuss ways the Newseum can contribute to journalism education.
- f. Extra info: You interviewed Joe Staniunas, a Radford journalism instructor, who told you Gartner’s career is a good example for today’s students because it illustrates that “You shouldn’t expect to spend your entire career with one news organization, or even one news medium.” (Your background research should make it clear what Joe was talking about.)

g. Deadline: Tuesday March 26 in Desire2Learn before class.

The speech Gartner will “give at Radford” is in the textbook, but DO NOT read it before you write this “precede” story. (If you *have* read it, pretend you haven’t. Write only what you would know before the event.)

2. Next, READ Gartner's speech in the Morgue section of the textbook.

FOR THURSDAY: Write a 525 to 650 word "after the speech" story as if you covered the speech. (About three double-spaced pages; no more than four.)

You have some extra notes below about what people in the audience said later. Pretend you interviewed them yourself. Don't make up any additional quotes or people. Save your story as "yourlastname-gartnerspeech.doc"

- * Read the Chapter 5 "covering speeches" and "covering meetings" pages, for help on how to focus a story. Also see the earlier chapters on handling quotations, attribution and story structure.
- * **The speech itself starts on page 300 of your textbook.** Enjoy it! It's full of good advice about writing and reporting. Read it more than once. If you have a friend who is a theater major, ask him or her to read the speech to you, and practice taking notes as if you were hearing it from Gartner.

Additional facts for the after-the-speech story

You counted more than 50 Radford students and about a dozen faculty members at Gartner's talk. You join in. By the end of the speech you also have these facts in your notebook:

- * About a dozen students lingered afterward to ask him questions.
- * You notice one student asking him to autograph her journalism textbook. "He was so full of good advice on writing," she tells you. You ask her name; she says she is Janet Mangiapagne, a junior media studies major with a journalism concentration.
- * You overhear another student, a sophomore named Ed Rodgers, telling Gartner he hopes to get an internship as a copy editor at The Wall Street Journal. Later, Rodgers tells you, "I liked the way he talked about the best advice he ever got when he was a young editor, especially that it came from the editor of the Journal."
- * You catch Bob Stepno at the end of the talk, and he mentions that most of the students staying to ask questions are in his class. He says: "I'm glad I assigned them to cover the speech. It was as good as the best chapters in our textbooks. Even if today's students will be writing for computer screens or iPhones, his career advice is as true today as it was when he started working for newspapers."

Writing tips:

A speech or meeting story should not look like chronological secretarial minutes of a meeting. DO NOT start with “First, he said...” and end with “to conclude, he said...”

Instead, lead with an interesting summary or alternative lead; then pick parts of the speech that you think would be most interesting to **readers of The Tartan**.

- Suggestion: Take notes as if you were listening to the speech. What statements would make good full-sentence quotes?
- Even though he shared his ideas as a numbered list of 12 “steps” or tips, you don’t have to go through them in order. In fact, you won’t have room to explain them all.
- What parts could be grouped and paraphrased?

The textbook also uses Gartner’s text for a “test yourself” exercise at the end of chapter 5, but with different made-up “facts” about the school and event.

Because of that “test yourself” exercise, there is an “answer” in the back of the book – an acceptable version of a story about Gartner’s original speech. If you haven’t stumbled on it already, do not look at it until after you write your first draft. Think of the textbook’s version as a story by “your competition.” In your final draft, make sure your story doesn’t look too much like “the competition” in focus or choice of quotes, even if it means rewriting your lead to avoid having exactly the same focus.