

Journalistic writing is different from traditional essay writing. But by following a template, the process of writing a journalism story can become much easier. Here is a five-step process for beginning journalists. *This is not meant to be a formula for every journalistic story, but rather a starting point to grasp the concepts of journalistic writing. Once you have mastered this method, you can begin to infuse your own creativity.*

1. **LEAD.** One sentence. Focus on the “who” and “what” rather than the “when.”
2. **LEAD QUOTE.** The quote that sums up the story best, usually from your lead source. A two-sentence quote is preferred, with attribution in the middle.
3. **NUT GRAF.** The “who,” “what,” “when,” “why,” “where” and “how” of the story.
4. **BODY.** Let quotes drive the story. At least two sources.
5. **CLOSING.** Close with a quote that best wrap up story, offers a call to action and/or ties the story back to the lead.

### On par for mental health: Donovan attributes golf success to therapy

By Damyon Traylor • Dec. 6, 2024 • Piedmont Roar

Best Sports Story from the Georgia College Press Association, 2025

Seven individual tournament championships, two-time USA South champion, NCAA Tournament qualifier ... Erin Donovan is undoubtedly one of the best women’s golfers in the nation. Being at the top of your game comes at a price — the pressure and expectations associated with being the best. When on the course, Donovan tries to block out the noise, but sometimes “the voices” still break through the deafening silence.

“I’m very self-critical of myself,” said Donovan, who just capped off her junior year fall season by winning the Chick-fil-A Invitational, besting 81 other women for the crown. “I struggled with mental health off the golf course, which impacted me negatively on the golf course.”

Donovan grew up in a golf family, with both her father and grandfather playing competitively. So it seemed like a natural fit for her to join in her family’s legacy, but when she first picked up a golf club at the age of 10, she wasn’t impressed. “I hated every experience on the golf course,” she said. “I did not want to be there.”

But after a brief stint with dance, Donovan eventually succumbed to her fate and decided to fulfill her parent’s requirement that she do something extracurricular by going back to golf. “Once I figured out how to get better and surround myself with supportive players, I began to enjoy it,” she said.

Donovan began playing competitively at 14 and quickly made a name for herself in the Mississippi junior circuit, earning three county medals, two district medals, and finishing 3rd at the girls’ high school golf state tournament. But as her accomplishments stacked up on the course, Donovan’s extreme competitiveness began to impact her off the course.

“My parents have always had high expectations for me growing up,” she said, adding that she began to internalize those expectations. “I made those expectations higher than they needed to be.”

During her junior year of high school, Donovan broke down to her parents about her struggles and asked to seek therapy. “Thankfully, they were really supportive and provided all the help I needed,” she said.

The therapy helped Donovan, both on and off the course. “Once I figured out how my brain worked and what I could do to ease my personal struggles with anxiety, I was able to tackle it on the course,” she said.

Donovan carried that emphasis on taking care of her mental health into college and, as a team leader at Piedmont, promotes it to her teammates. “We’re out there on the course for five hours. And it’s just you and your thoughts. After you hit a shot you have three minutes to think about the shot that you just hit before you have to think about your next shot again. And that cycle keeps repeating. Mentally, it’s really daunting”

Donovan is an advocate for therapy for all college athletes. “I think mental health, especially for athletes, has to be talked about more because there’s so much internal and external pressure on us,” she said. “Being able to talk to someone outside of my sport has been very helpful because they are unbiased.”

In addition to taking care of one’s own mental health, having a strong support system is critical for success. Donovan has found that at Piedmont, starting with her coach, Hannah Satterfield, who has helped guide Donovan to numerous awards, including two conference championships and becoming Piedmont’s first-ever qualifier for the NCAA Division III Women’s Golf Championship. Satterfield praises Donovan, not just for her athletic accomplishments but also her successes off the course, noting that the junior is also a two-time Academic All-Conference athlete.

“Erin is pretty intrinsically motivated,” Satterfield said. “What gets her going is the fact that she wants to be the best she possibly can be, so she works hard to maintain that success.”

Donovan learned that “intrinsic motivation” is the key to quieting the critical “voices” in her head. She understands that she can’t carry on expectations of others, but only the expectations she places on herself.

“Therapy really turned my life around,” she said. “I think the physical foundation of an athlete’s mental health is the key to succeeding on the field. I finally have confidence in myself as a person, so I can carry that confidence onto the course now. Being able to play golf and enjoy it has been a huge turning point for me.”