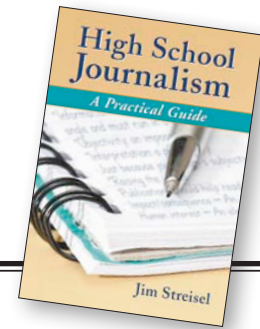


# Gold Coins

Jim Streisel, Carmel (IN) High School

[www.hilite.org/streisel](http://www.hilite.org/streisel)



## Remember the three D's

Description...using the rest of your senses to tell a story

Detail...specific words that help to clarify a person, place, etc.

Dialogue...quotes between/among the source and other people.

## Show, don't tell

And remember, too, that observations by themselves aren't necessarily journalistic stories. You need to add interviews with appropriate sources and conduct relevant research which you should then combine with relevant observations to make solid stories. See below for example.

### THE HUNT FOR GOLD COINS

*Remember first that you need to have a story to tell and a "face" that will connect readers to it. But once you have that, you've got to grab your readers' attention and then keep it throughout the story.*

#### What are gold coins?

Most often, gold coins take the form of details, description and dialogue.

#### • Details

Is your main source a fan of music? What are the specific titles in his music library? What's the CD in his car right now? What kind of car is it? Does your source have a dog? What's that dog's name? How old is it?

#### • Description

What color are your source's eyes? How tall is she? What mannerisms does he display as you interview him?

#### • Dialogue

What does your source say when he's not answering your questions? How does she respond to the people around her? What do they say back?

#### How do I organize gold coins? How many should I have?

That's up to you. Just remember that not all stories are best told chronologically. A good rule of thumb: the longer the story, the more gold coins it should contain. Another rule: Your two most important gold coins are the ones at the beginning (your lead) and at the end.



#### What about the information in between the gold coins?

This is the path of the story. The information in between gold coins brings out the *point* of the story, what you want readers to think *about*. These "spaces" in between the narrative contain relevant facts, quotes from expert sources and solid transitions. The gold coins keep readers' eyes on the path so that they'll be more likely to access the important information there.

#### Why have gold coins?

Without gold coins, readers have no way of entering your stories. Without gold coins, your stories are merely collections of facts and data and quotes. Readers – particularly your visual readers – can't connect with those things. Gold coins provide a "face" for the story and a way to help readers to relate to the information that lies within.

### GOLD COINS IN ACTION

*Need to see it to believe it?  
Check out the story below and notice how gold coins help to keep readers on the "path" of the story.*

#### Gold Coin #1

Introduces readers to Jessica Green, one of many students who is or will be affected by the school's new dress code policy.

#### The Point

Illuminates the main idea of the story, what the reporter wants readers to think *about*.

#### The Path

This is the meat of the story. Shares secondary source (Skelding) as well as expert source (Hawkins). Outlines the specifics of the new policy.

#### Gold Coin #2

Brings the reader back to Green. Lets them know that this policy affects people just like them.

When senior Jessica Green went back-to-school shopping last June, almost three months before this school year began, she thought she would get a jump on the competition. She spent more than \$300 on several outfits, including almost a dozen midriff-revealing shirts.

Just a week ago, she found out that her pre-planning was all for naught.

"I heard about the new policy and my heart jumped in my throat," Green said. "I mean, almost everything I bought doesn't meet the new requirements."

Green is not alone. Many students must reevaluate their wardrobes because of a new policy just passed at last week's school board meeting. Now the dress code rules state that students must wear "tuckable" shirts.

"That's, like, everything I own," junior Mary Skelding said. Skelding, like Green, shopped early to avoid back-to-school store crowding. In addition to shirts, students can no longer wear hats and they can't don pants that reveal undergarments.

"We had to do it," Principal John Hawkins said. "I know there will be some dissention, but students' clothes can certainly be a distraction to the learning environment, and we want to provide the best environment possible."

But this explanation doesn't help Green. "I don't know what I'm going to do with all of these clothes," Green said. "I can't take them back because it's been more than 90 days since I bought them. I guess I'll just have to buy something else and wear these on the weekends."