

TRUE / SLANT

Using the True/Slant Story Grab Tool

This is a document about fairly using our story grab function to make the most of your blog. It contains examples of good and bad uses of True/Slant's story grab function.

Though eight pages long, this document is shorter than it looks – it's mostly filled with screen shots of uses of the Story Grab tool that are correct and those that are incorrect.

We want you to create original content on our website. But we equally value your reactions to and re-framing of other people's content on our website - it's just as important to be a part of the conversation about news as it is to make news.

While you riff on other people's content, be fair. Bloggers who steal too much source material from other news outlets are increasingly getting scuffs on their reputations. Don't let this happen to you.

While these tips don't cover every scenario, we think they're a fair representation of what should be done in most situations.

If you follow these tips, you'll stay safely within the boundaries of fair use.

1. Write original headlines

The first thing is that you should always always always write your own headline. The story grab vacuums in the headline from your source, and you should not steal it. If you're struggling with writing a good hed, you can always ask for help from True/Slant's Mountain Lair.

Wrong:

Mar **19** 2009 — 1:13 pm | 0 views

Duke Coach to Obama: Worry About the Economy, Not NCAA Picks - Presidential Politics | Political News - FOXNews.com

It's debatable whether or not President Obama should be on TV talking about his March Madness bracket. But shouldn't Coach K. be minding his own business, i.e. his team?

“ Of course, the president's choice drew a reaction from the Tar Heels' most intense rival.

“Somebody said that we're not in President Obama's Final Four, and as much as I respect what he's doing, really, the economy is something that he should focus on, probably more than the brackets,” Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski said from the Blue Devils' first-round site in Greensboro, N.C.

via [Duke Coach to Obama: Worry About the Economy, Not NCAA Picks - Presidential Politics | Political News - FOXNews.com](#).

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Is Coach K. running for office?

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via [Duke Coach to Obama: Worry About the Economy, Not NCAA Picks - Presidential Politics | Political News - FOXNews.com](#).

2. Don't grab too much text from your source

Next, the amount of text you grab should be limited. A great story grab takes two paragraphs from its source. An acceptable riff takes three to four, especially if it involves shorter paragraphs with quotations.

If there is a lengthy amount of a story you want to refer to, it's better to use your powers of exposition to recount what has been written elsewhere, rather than grabbing a long chunk of the story. That way it doesn't look like you're discouraging people from ultimately clicking through to the source material.

Wrong:

Mar **19** 2009 — 1:21 pm | 0 views
Wanna work at Wal-Mart?

Apparently they're not rolling back bonuses:

“ CHICAGO (Reuters) - Wal-Mart Stores Inc is awarding approximately \$2 billion to its U.S. hourly employees through financial incentives, including handing out \$933.6 million in bonuses on Thursday, after the world's largest retailer gained market share amid a recession.

In a memo to Wal-Mart employees obtained by Reuters, Wal-Mart CEO Mike Duke said the retailer is awarding roughly \$2 billion to U.S. hourly employees, which includes \$933.6 million in bonuses, \$788.8 million in profit sharing and 401(k) contributions, millions of dollars in merchandise discounts, and contributions to its employee stock purchase plan.

“While economic challenges forced others to step back, we moved forward,” Duke stated in the memo.

Duke said Wal-Mart now needs to “accelerate and broaden all of our efforts.”

As consumers seek to stretch limited budgets, they are increasingly heading to Wal-Mart's U.S. stores for discounts on everything from food to televisions. Wal-Mart is also aggressively touting its low prices to attract shoppers, and the retailer said on Thursday that it is cutting prices on contact lenses and children's glasses.

The efforts are helping Wal-Mart gain market share while other U.S. retailers see sales fall as shoppers avoid splurging on nice-to-have items, like sweaters or jewelry.

For its fiscal year ending January 31, 2009, Wal-Mart's total sales rose 7.2 percent to \$401.24 billion. Sales at its U.S. stores open at least a year, or same-store sales, rose 3.3 percent, excluding fuel, in its recently completed fiscal year, up from a 1.4 percent gain in the previous fiscal year.

A year ago, Wal-Mart said it awarded almost \$1.2 billion in financial incentives to its U.S. hourly employees, including more than \$636.4 million in bonuses, which are based on store performance.

via [Wal-Mart awards \\$2 billion to U.S. hourly employees](#) | U.S. | Reuters.

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via [Wal-Mart awards \\$2 billion to U.S. hourly employees](#) | U.S. | Reuters.

The report adds that Wal-Mart basically doubled its bonuses compared with last year. It's a bummer that the only sure thing for work these days appears to be an hourly wage at Wal-Mart.

3. Story grabs/Riffs must say something original

Every story grab should have something original to it. If you don't have anything to say about a story you grabbed from, just click on the headline grabber instead.

Your unique take on the content you're grabbing transforms the material sufficiently to show that you are using it in reference to a point you want to make, not simply repurposing content from its creator.

Your "transformation" doesn't need to be long. You can ask a question, express an opinion about the veracity of what you've grabbed, or add something that you think was missed.

Wrong:

Mar 19 2009 — 1:34 pm | 0 views

This is really scary

“ So we are watching as our own ghosts materialize. Smaller cities like Minneapolis; Charlottesville, Va.; and Sacramento, Calif.; are all dealing with half-finished hotels or shopping centers, boarded up as developers' rationale and cash evaporated. There are, of course, acres of vacant homes all over Florida's swamplands and Las Vegas' deserts. These exurban projects could easily become ghost towns if credit to save them is not freed up. And the same credit crunch is making the prospect of ghost towers in our major cities very real.

New York, Boston, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Chicago all have at least one major skyscraper in some stage of development death. New York—with major new towers in Lower Manhattan, Midtown, and Brooklyn on hold—has at least 30 sites where work has stopped. Boston has a 21-acre, \$2.5 billion harbor development in limbo and a \$700 million redevelopment of Filene's Tower into downtown condominiums in financing purgatory. The Chicago Spire, designed by starchitect Santiago Calatrava as one of the tallest buildings in the world, has been a hole in the ground since October. Waterview Tower, the Windy City's other stalled super-tall skyscraper, is stuck at the 26th floor.

via [Zombie Banks Build Ghost Towers](#) | [The Big Money](#).

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I'm terrified that we find ourselves seriously worrying whether or not American cities will end up like post-Asian financial crisis Bangkok or Jakarta:

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I live near Long Island City in Queens, New York. The waterfront-area experienced a residential boom because of the Citibank tower that was built in the area, and you know what happened to Citibank. Now a lot of the real estate brokers are renting instead of trying to sell apartments in the fancy deluxe residences that were built. I wonder if they'll end up turning into ghosts.

Do you know of any zombie ghost buildings in your neighborhood?

4. Format your riffs/story grabs correctly

Finally, make sure your grabs are properly formatted and sourced. Sometimes the grabbed text doesn't include the source of whatever you're riffing on, so make sure you refer to it in your post:

Right:

Mar **19** 2009 — 1:48 pm | 0 views

If you prayed Madoff would go to Gitmo

You may have almost gotten your wish. The New York Daily News is officially obsessed with the conditions of Bernie Madoff's imprisonment (prior to his June sentencing):

“ The squalid conditions are enough to make blood-stained tough guys cry - never mind a pampered ex-billionaire.

Bonanno crime family capo Vincent (Vinny Gorgeous) Basciano was moved off 10 South in 2005 after his lawyer complained of “subhuman” conditions.

Junior Gotti said his hard time in the MCC's most infamous section was brutal.

“I was in 10 South, and it almost broke me,” Gotti famously roared.

via [Bernie Madoff's hellhole: Ponzi schemer is caged 23 hours a day, gets bad food and few visitors.](#)

Now that they've set us up for Madoff's hard time inside, I suppose it's inevitable he'll get moved to some kind of Club Fed and he'll become famous for his letters or e-mails from prison that make him sound like he's doing OK.

Also, make sure that you differentiate the grabbed text from what it is that you're writing:

Wrong:

Mar 19 2009 — 1:56 pm | 0 views

How far can this populism go?

“ Affidavits filed with New York’s Department of Buildings show Citigroup expects to pay at least \$3.2 million for basic construction such as wall removal, plumbing and fire safety. By the time architect’s fees and expenses such as furniture are added, the tally for the offices at the bank’s Park Avenue headquarters will be at least three times as high, according to a person familiar with the project who declined to be identified because he’s not authorized to comment. Citigroup said the project will help it save money over time.

Pandit, criticized by lawmakers over Citigroup’s use of U.S. bailout capital, canceled an order for a company jet in January and told Congress on Feb. 11 that, “I get the new reality and I’ll make sure Citi gets it as well.” Of the biggest U.S. banks that received federal aid, only Citigroup has turned to the government three times for rescue. The company, once the biggest U.S. bank by assets and market value, has agreed to limit perks and restrict executive pay.

“In this environment, it absolutely sends the wrong message,” said Charles Elson, director of the Weinberg Center for Corporate Governance at the University of Delaware, referring to the office renovations. “Timing in life is everything.”

via [Citigroup May Spend \\$10 Million for Executive Suite \(Update1\) - Bloomberg.com](#).

This week it was AIG hearings in Congress; next week I guess it will be Citibank.

It’s kind of sad that Bloomberg News is turning into a bunch of traffic-crazy bloggers. Should their reporting really focus on Citibank’s \$10 million renovation when there’s so much more trouble out there?

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Last, be careful to make sure that the big quotation mark that sets your grabbed text apart from other text only appears at the start of the quote, not in multiple paragraphs.

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If this happens to you, place the cursor at the start of the offending paragraph, and hit backspace so that the paragraph merges with the previous paragraph. Then hit enter and create a new paragraph. The quotation mark will be gone.