

## Names - first names only

Building Your Article · By Simon Townsend · 1 min read

---

You're using first (or given) names only. Yes, you see a lot of this in Australian magazines. But many stories which have first names only, are made up. Now if you can identify which magazines are willing to use first names only and won't ask any questions of you, then that's okay. But a lot of more conservative publications will not use first names only for the simple reason that it looks suspicious. Of course sometimes the topic is sensitive and people don't want to be identified, such as in stories about incest, rape or sexually transmitted diseases. In that case you may write:

Mary [not her real name]

or: Mary\* and at the end of the story you put \*Not her real name. Or \*All names fictitious

But editors are much more attracted to articles that contain real names. Why? Because if people are willing for their full names to be used, then they will 99% be sure to agree to have their photos taken for the article. Readers relate much more to stories and pictures about real people than to no pictures and anonymous people. It's your duty to sweet talk your interviewees into their full names being used and their photos being taken while assuring them all their rights will be protected. You owe it to your editor and to your readers to flesh people out. Give each an IDENTITY:

- Bill Smith, 59, a retired coffee shop operator and keen swimmer, of Gympie, Queensland
- Mary Antonides, 36, a process server and avid stamp collector, of Sutherland, NSW
- Bob Gold, 29, father of three and an unemployed plumber, of Broome, WA
- Elsie Jones, 29, a 1.95m basketballer and mother of two sons, of Barossa, SA

---

Reprinted from The Wonderful World of Journalism. Written in the spirit of Simon Townsend's journalism craft advice. Visit [simontownsendjournalist.com](http://simontownsendjournalist.com) for the full archive.