

## Alternative story form ideas and how to grow them

*Read the descriptions below of original suggestions staffers had. Make a list of reasons these are perhaps not the most useful for providing information or clarifying more about the topic.*

*Then suggest ways to improve the first idea or make a completely new and better one. (HINT: Keep in mind ways you can add more info by building on information from expert sources. Think, too, about simplifying complex topics.)*

1. Your staff wants to jazz up a page that is mostly text. The story is about the flu, which is becoming more of a problem in your school this winter. The ASF one student suggests is to ask five or six students what they do to avoid getting the flu. They want a panel of mug shots of the students with their comments below each.
2. Prom is approaching and your staff decides you need graphics to make the spread more appealing. The best suggestion so far is a gallery of girls modeling their prom dresses.
3. Winter weather has created challenges for both bussing runs and those who drive their cars to school. Students say it's the worst winter ever, but they are SURE the school has closed less than ever before. One staffer suggests a collage of snow photos with the depth of the snow marked on each.
4. The school district has announced it must cut the budget for last year. A fact-finding group of board members and teachers are investigating their options. One staff member suggested getting reader input by using a poll where students can indicate if they are in favor of the cuts or not — vote yes or no.
5. The cafeteria will have a new catering service, and students are talking about about it. The editor says, "Let me go to cafeteria." He asks five students their opinion of the service now and what they would rather see. The survey he turns in states 80 percent of the students want a new service and agree it should have more hamburgers and fewer vegetables.

Here are some ASFs others have used. Look at these examples and, in your pairs, create a list of what you see in these examples and other possible resources that would make the original five ideas stronger.

1. Another staff member suggests an infographic that includes more specific suggestions from medical experts. Brainstorm for more ideas. Here's one from the University Health Services at University of California, Berkeley.  
<https://uhs.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/FluPreventionPoster.pdf>
2. A big challenge for Prom is dealing with the cost. The Toledo Blade ran a graphic that gave a range of prices for everything from dresses to tuxes to limos. For a website, this could also work as a [ThingLink](#). What makes it better than simply a display of dresses? What variations could you use?  
<http://www.toledoblade.com/image/2015/04/05/cost05.jpg>
3. David Philips at Environment Canada provided the data and Megan Dinner created the [information-packed graphic about Canada's snowiest cities](#). How do some of these ideas give you a better way to deal with the winter school closing problem? One thing to discuss, though: Is it too "busy" for your audience to grasp the basic messages? Keep that challenge in mind.
4. It does little good to ask how many are for and how many against budget cuts because the district says it definitely must cut costs. A chart or graph could help show some options the board is considering. Although not specifically what things cost in the budget, this graphic shows a way to use images to represent different items in a [Chicago Public Schools budget](#). It's a little more complicated than a simple bar graph but contains images about schools. However, keep in mind this is created as a promotional piece, not a news piece. In what ways are those two different?
5. When doing a survey, be sure to include the number in your sample and how respondents were chosen. This helps readers decide how much faith to put in the results. Check out results of a [survey about fake news](#) from the Pew Research Center uses. How does this put the results in better context?