



Digital Media Virtual Learning

Grades 9-12/Writing a Good News Story

April 16, 2020



9-12/Digital and Advanced Digital Media
Lesson: April 15, 2020

Objective/Learning Target:

Students Will Be Able to Identify and Write Good News Story

Let's Get Started:

Review the notes on the next few pages about newspaper stories as you prepare to write some of your own in the practice section.

Fundamentals For Writing a News Story

Reporting - One of the most fundamental differences between journalism and other forms of writing is the way journalists obtain the information they write about. Journalists obtain information through a variety of reporting techniques, which can include interviewing sources, looking through government documents, researching old articles, and observing events firsthand. Good news writing begins with good, accurate reporting. Journalists perform a public service for citizens by presenting truthful facts in honest, straight-forward articles.

News Values - Journalists commonly use six values to determine how newsworthy a story or elements of a story are. Knowing the news values can help a journalist make many decisions, including:

The six news values are:

- Timeliness- Recent events have a higher news value than less recent ones.
- Proximity- Stories taking place in one's hometown or community are more newsworthy than those taking place far away.
- Prominence- Famous people and those in the public eye have a higher news value than ordinary citizens.
- Uniqueness/oddity- A story with a bizarre twist or strange occurrences. "Man bites dog" instead of "dog bites man."
- Impact- Stories that impact a large number of people may be more newsworthy than those impacting a smaller number of people.
- Conflict- "If it bleeds, it leads." Stories with strife, whether it's actual violence or not, are more interesting.

The newsworthiness of a story is determined by a balance of these six values. There is no set formula to decide how newsworthy a story is, but in general, the more of these six values a story meets, the more newsworthy it is.

Fundamentals For Writing a News Story

Lede - The lede (or lead) of a news article is the first sentence, usually written as one paragraph, that tells the most important information of the story. When writing a lede, it is helpful to use the “tell a friend” strategy. Imagine you had to sum up to a friend, in one sentence, what your story is about. How would you sum up quickly what happened? A story’s lede answers some or all of the “Five W’s.”

For example: The Atlanta Police Department will hold a memorial service Wednesday at Holy Christ Church in Buckhead for fallen officer Lt. James Montgomery.

WHO: The Atlanta Police Department

WHAT: will hold a memorial service

WHEN: Wednesday

WHERE: Holy Christ Church in Buckhead

WHY: for fallen officer Lt. James Montgomery

Other Examples:

Gwinnett County Public Schools was awarded \$250,000 early Wednesday as a finalist for what’s considered the Nobel Prize of public education.

A man beat an Army reservist in front of a Morrow Cracker Barrel, yelling racial slurs at her as he kicked her in the head, Morrow police said.

Fundamentals For Writing a News Story

Inverted Pyramid - News articles are written in a structure known as the “inverted pyramid.” In the inverted pyramid format, the most newsworthy information goes at the beginning of the story and the least newsworthy information goes at the end. After you have written your story’s lede, order the information that follows in terms of most important to least important. There is NO formal conclusion in a journalism article the way there is in an essay or analysis paper.

Attributing information - ALL information in a news article MUST be attributed to the source where the reporter got his/her information. The reporter must indicate in his/her article where material was obtained from – from an interview, court documents, the Census, a Web site, etc. Direct quotes and paraphrasing can be used to attribute information obtained in an interview with a source.

For example:

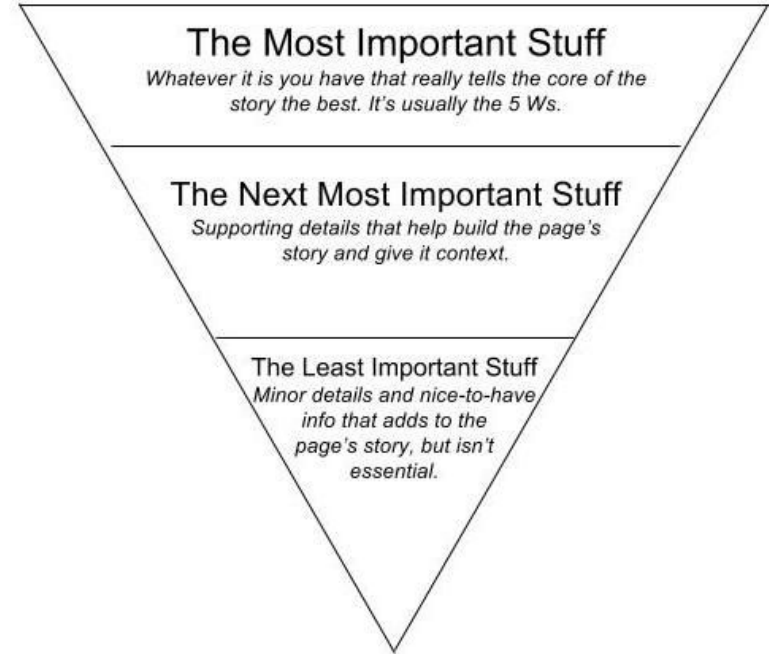
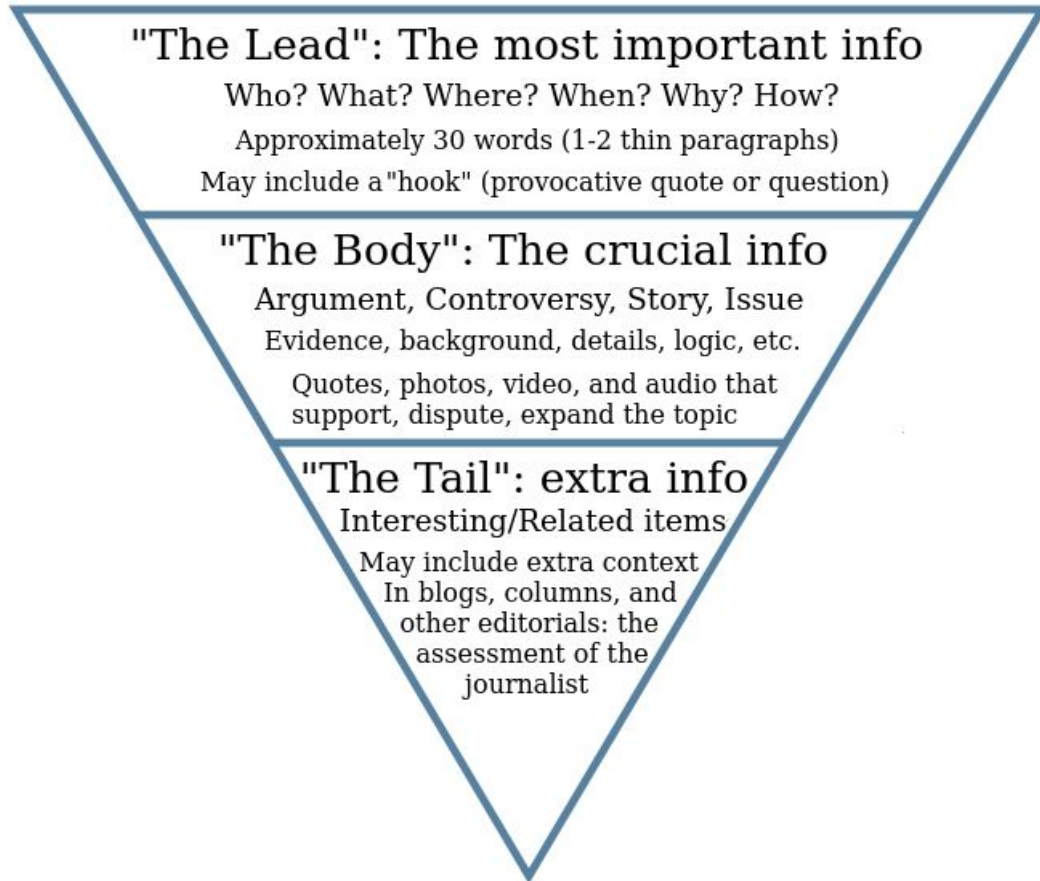
- According to a police report, the suspect threatened the cashier with a gun before running away with the money.
- In a 500-page government report, investigators reported evidence that the army had committed crimes against humanity.

Integrating quotes - The first time a source is introduced in an article, you should use that source’s full name and title. After this initial reference, use the last name only.

For example: “The swine flu vaccine is an incredible advance in modern medicine,” said Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius.

When attributing a direct quote, always use the verb “said” and never any other verbs such as “explained,” “whispered,” etc. It is also more common to use the format “XXX said” instead of “said XXX.” Even when information from a source is not used in a direct quote and is paraphrased instead, it still must be attributed to that source.

Inverted Pyramid Examples



Writing Practice

Using the info below, write a lead and as much of the news story as possible for each set of information.

Story 1

WHO: Amtrak train called the Colonial

WHAT: Collided with three Conrail locomotives on a switch that merges four tracks into two

WHEN: 1:30 p.m. yesterday

WHERE: Baltimore, Maryland

WHY: Larry Case, Amtrak spokesman: The Conrail diesels, like the Amtrak, were northbound. The Conrail had apparently run a stop sign.

OTHER: At least 15 dead, 175 injured. Worst accident in Amtrak's 132-year history.

Story 2.

Who: a nuclear weapon with a yield equivalent to 150,000 tons of TNT

What: detonated

Where: 40 miles from a meeting of pacifists and 2,000 feet beneath the surface of Pahute Mesa in the Nevada desert

When: Tuesday

Why: to test the weapon

How: not applicable

Other information: Department of Energy officials are the source; 450 physicians and peace activists were gathered to protest continued nuclear testing by the United States.

Writing Practice

Using the info below, write a lead and as much of the news story as possible for each set of information.

Story 3

Who: 7-year-old boy missing for three years.

What: found

Where: in Brick Township, N.J.

When: Monday night

Why: not applicable

How: A neighbor recognized the child's picture when it was shown after the movie Adam: The Song Continues and called police.

Other information: Police arrested the boy's mother, Ellen Lynn Conner, 27; she faces Oregon charges of kidnapping and interference with a custody warrant.

Story 4

Who: 40 passengers

What: evacuated from a Northwest Airlines jet, Flight 428

Where: at the LaCrosse, Wis. Municipal Airport

When: Monday following a flight from Minneapolis to LaCrosse

Why: A landing tower employee spotted smoke near the wheels

How: not applicable

Other information: There was no fire or injuries; the smoke was caused by hydraulic fluids leaking onto hot landing brakes, according to Bob Gibbons, a Northwest spokesman.

Resources/Other Important Articles on the Subject

[Importance of the Inverted Pyramid Style](#)

[More Lede and Story Writing Exercise](#)