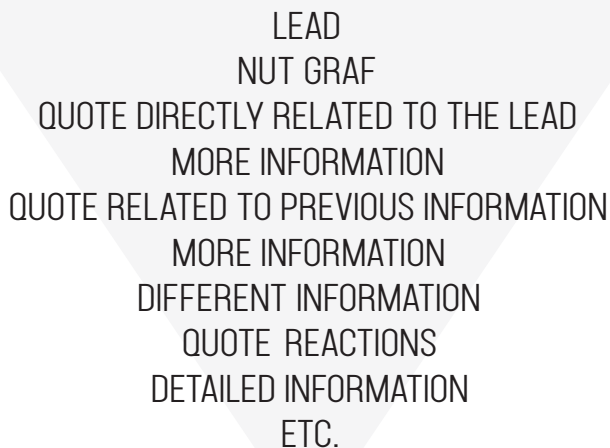


THE INVERTED PYRAMID

News stories follow what is called an “inverted pyramid.” This means that the story presents the most general information first, and then gets down to the finer details. In addition, the information should be presented in a way that prioritizes what is important first, rather than in chronological order.



LEAD
NUT GRAF
QUOTE DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE LEAD
MORE INFORMATION
QUOTE RELATED TO PREVIOUS INFORMATION
MORE INFORMATION
DIFFERENT INFORMATION
QUOTE REACTIONS
DETAILED INFORMATION
ETC.

There does not need to be a conclusion or a summary to wrap up the piece. You can end whenever you are done presenting the information. Alternatively, you can end on a quote or a “looking forward” piece of information (i.e. “The committee’s next meeting will be at 4 p.m. on Wednesday at City Hall.”).

LEADS

Your lead is a little bit like a thesis statement - but with a newsy twist. It should include the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the story, but it should also tell us what is the news. Essentially, what is the change or what is something that your audience did not know before? Ideally, this news should be presented in a way that grabs your reader’s attention, without sensationalizing.

Example: The Boston University (*where*) Board of Trustees (*who*) has raised the tuition (*what*) next year (*when*) by 3.8 percent, equating to a total of \$48,438 per year (*how*).

NUT GRAF

A nut graf follows either directly after the lead or after a quote that comes after the lead. This gives your reader the background of the story - the relevant information that the reader needs to know immediately for the rest of the article to make sense.

Example: For the past five years, BU has increased tuition and fees by an average of 3.8 percent each year. Rising electrical costs and student health care are some of the reasons listed for this increase. This decision was announced at Monday’s Board meeting.

TRANSITIONING

Think of your information like nuggets of information and you are stringing those together for your reader to digest in a meaningful way. There doesn’t need to be a transition, such as in an essay, however, there should be enough of a correlation from graph to graph to make sense.

WRITING STYLE

News writing is short, concise, non-repetitive, and filled with action verbs. If a sentence looks too wordy, it probably is. Keep your paragraphs short; aim for no longer than two to three sentences. Use everyday language, without being too casual, and write directly. One good way to think about your language use is by imagining your audience as readers who are at an 8th grade level.

News writing also uses AP Style, which regulates how certain things are written. There are specifications on everything from dates, locations, titles, abbreviation, numbers, and even certain spellings. The Writing Center has a copy of the AP Style Book available and there are also sources online. Check whenever you are unsure.

QUOTES

Before using a quote, introduce your source with information that elaborates on the quote you are going to use. Be mindful not to use a "stutter quote," where the introduction of your source says almost exactly what the quote says. Additionally, quotes are their own paragraph.

When using sources, give the full name and title on the first reference. On the second reference, use only the last name and without honorifics (i.e. Dr., President, Father). Place the attribution either at the end or in the middle of the quote, not at the beginning. Always use "said," "stated," or "added," in attributions because they are neutral terms that do not display bias.

Example:

Eric Levin, Midway Channel studio artist, said he'd love to see art grow in Boston.

"There should be more funding for the artists and for projects - big projects,"
Levin said.

The ellipses (...) should be used when taking two different parts of a person's response, but sometimes you can cover it up. Also, if you start or end in the middle of a sentence, you do not need to indicate it with an ellipsis.

Example:

"I can't wait for spring... I plan on going to the Charles River Boathouse every day,"
Smith said.

"I can't wait for spring," Smith said. "I plan on going to the Charles River Boathouse every day."

Lastly, quotes should convey emotion, opinions, desires, or a reaction. As the reporter, you can give us the facts; your source should tell us what those facts mean/why it matters/show they feel about it. Make sure your quote adds to the story; don't just use it to have a source.

OBJECTIVITY

A big part of news writing is the need to remain objective at all times. This means presenting two sides of a story, but it also means watching your language. You want to make sure that it does not sound as though you are promoting someone or an organization, and that the reader cannot guess your own stance through your writing.

Another thing to be careful of is making sure your words say exactly what you mean and you do not make assumptions. You don't know that an organization is great at what it is trying to do, but you can write that the leader of the organization said that. Try reading through your work a couple of times to make sure what you have written cannot be interpreted in another way.