

Let's talk about ...

News Writing



By Jeanne Acton, UIL & ILPC Journalism Director

News Writing ...

gives the reader information that will impact them in some way. It usually flows from most important to least important.

*“What is news? It is information only.” -
Walter Cronkite, former CBS News
anchor*

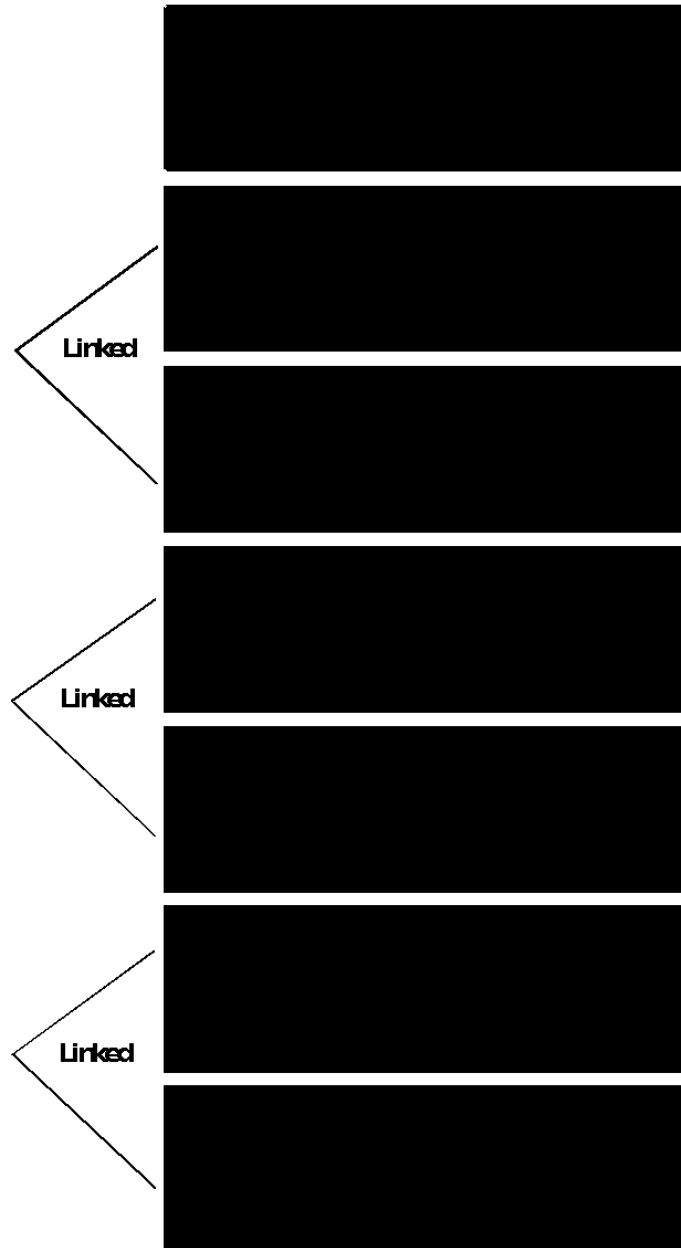
Checklist for News Stories

- ✓ Are the most important and recent facts first?
- ✓ Is the story accurate? Are the sources identified fully?
- ✓ Are the paragraphs short?
- ✓ Is the sentence structure varied in the story?
- ✓ Is the story neat and double-spaced so that it is easy to read?
- ✓ Does your story flow? Did you use the transition/quote formula?
- ✓ Did you use active voice?

Pitfalls to Avoid

- Editorializing - Keep your opinion out of the story
- Using first and second person - Keep yourself out of the story. Common error “our school”
- Missing the news peg
- Messy handwriting, poor grammar and spelling
- Paragraphs too long
- Misspelling names in the story
- Trying to use all of the information

Transition/Quote Formula



Side Notes

- 1) Each box is a new a para-graph.
- 2) Story should flow from most important to least important information.

and so on... until the story is complete

**Let's start at
the beginning
with ... LEADS.**

Let's talk about



Lead:

Most important information. Focus on newest information. Focus on the future.

Question to ask yourself:

What do my readers need to know most???

Leads

Most straight news leads should be summary leads. That means they summarize the 5 Ws and H of the story, starting off with the most important W or H.

Types of News Leads:

Rarely use these...

“Who lead” - begins with a person. The person is usually not the most important fact of the story.

“When lead” - begins with time. Rarely is the time the most important factor.

“Where lead” - begins with the place. Hardly ever is where the most important factor.

Types of News Leads:

Use these often...

“How lead” - begins with the how of the story.
Used often.

“Why lead” - begins with the cause the story.
Used often.

“What lead” - begins with the fact of the story.
Used often.

Who lead

Not so good...

Principal Joe Blow announced Tuesday that students will no longer be allowed to leave campus for lunch due to excessive tardies.

Better...

President Barack Obama will make a brief appearance at the high school Thursday after giving a speech at the County Expo Center.



When lead

Not so good...

On Tuesday Principal Joe Blow announced that students will no longer be able to leave campus for lunch.

Better...

On Saturday President Barack Obama will speak to the senior class about how important community organizing and volunteering are to the country.



Where lead

Avoid where leads

At the school board meeting on Tuesday, Principal Joe Blow announced that he has ended the off-campus lunch policy.

Maybe ... probably yes.

In the principal's office, the senior class dumped 30 pounds of sand to protest the cancellation of the senior trip to Cancun.



How lead

Through a grass roots voting effort, senior Gilbert Castillo won the mayoral election to become the youngest mayor in the city's history.

Why lead

Because they wanted to carry on the tradition, four seniors streaked across the football stadium during the homecoming pep rally wearing a paper leis and tennis shoes.

What lead

The Harry Potter series and Lord of the Rings series will be removed from all school libraries this fall.

Now that we know the type of lead we are looking for, how do we write a good lead?

- read the entire prompt
- find the newest information in the prompt
- beware of older, more controversial news
- write one to two sentences summarizing the “new” news including as many other Ws and H as possible

Let's talk about



Direct Quotes:

- Should be linked to the transition/lead before them. The quote should elaborate on the transition.

For example:

President Barack Obama will make a brief appearance at the high school Thursday after giving a speech at the County Expo Center.

“He is coming as a favor to me,” Principal Ike Sumter said. “We worked together in Chicago as community organizers. I hope he gets a chance to speak to some seniors about what they can do for their country.”

Direct Quotes:

- Should not repeat the transition/lead before them.

For example:

President Barack Obama will make a brief appearance at the high school Thursday after giving a speech at the County Expo Center.

“After speaking at the Expo Center, the candidate will come to the high school for a short appearance,” Principal Ike Sumter said.

Direct Quotes:

- Can be longer than one sentence.
- Should have attribution after the first sentence of the quote.

- Attribution should be: Noun then verb.

For example:

Correct - senior Bob Rodriguez said.

Incorrect - said senior Bob Rodriguez.

(unless you have an unusually long title)

- Do not place two people's direct quotes next to each other without a transition.

Let's talk about



Transitions

□ VERY, VERY IMPORTANT. Hold the story together.
Link the paragraphs together.

□ Can be fact, indirect quote or a partial quote.

For example - **FACT TRANSITION:**

(lead) Former Republican presidential candidate John McCain will speak to seniors Friday about his experience as a prisoner of war.

(Direct Quote)“Seniors will learn a lot about duty and commitment when they hear Sen. McCain,” Principal Ike Sumter said. “We are so excited that he agreed to come.”

(Fact Transition) During the Vietnam War, Sen. McCain was a prisoner of war for five years.

Transitions

- Can be fact, indirect quote or a partial quote.

For example - **INDIRECT QUOTE TRANSITION:**

(lead) Former Republican presidential candidate John McCain will speak to seniors Friday about his experience as a prisoner of war.

(Direct Quote)“Seniors will learn a lot about duty and commitment when they hear Sen. McCain,” Principal Ike Sumter said. “We are so excited that he agreed to come.”

(IQ Transition) Sumter said he was moved after hearing Sen. McCain speak about his imprisonment.

Transitions

□ Can be fact, indirect quote or a partial quote.

For example - **PARTIAL QUOTE TRANSITION:**

(lead) Former Republican presidential candidate John McCain will speak to seniors Friday about his experience as a prisoner of war.

(Direct Quote) “Seniors will learn a lot about duty and commitment when they hear Sen. McCain,” Principal Ike Sumter said. “We are so excited that he agreed to come.”

(Partial Quote Transition) Sumter said he “had tears in his eyes” when he heard Sen. McCain speak about his imprisonment.

What comes next??

(lead)Former Republican presidential candidate John McCain will speak to seniors Friday about his experience as a prisoner of war.

(Direct Quote)“Seniors will learn a lot about duty and commitment when they hear Sen. McCain,” Principal Ike Sumter said. “We are so excited that he agreed to come.”

(Partial Quote Transition) Sumter said he “had tears in his eyes” when he heard Sen. McCain speak about his imprisonment.

The T/Q formula

Sumter said he “had tears in his eyes” when he heard Sen. McCain speak about his imprisonment.

“It is amazing what this man survived,” Sumter said. “He was tortured daily, but every day he told his fellow soldiers to hold their head high. Someone was coming for them.”

Sen. McCain said the experience was a “living hell,” but he never gave up hope.

“I knew I would make it back to American soil one day,” he said. “Hope is always alive, and that was part of my message as a presidential candidate, too.”

Transitions

□ Use transitional words to help with the flow (as needed): After all, Also, Finally, In addition, However, Otherwise, Then

For example:

In addition to speaking about his experience as a prisoner of war, McCain also plans to talk to students about the importance of voting.

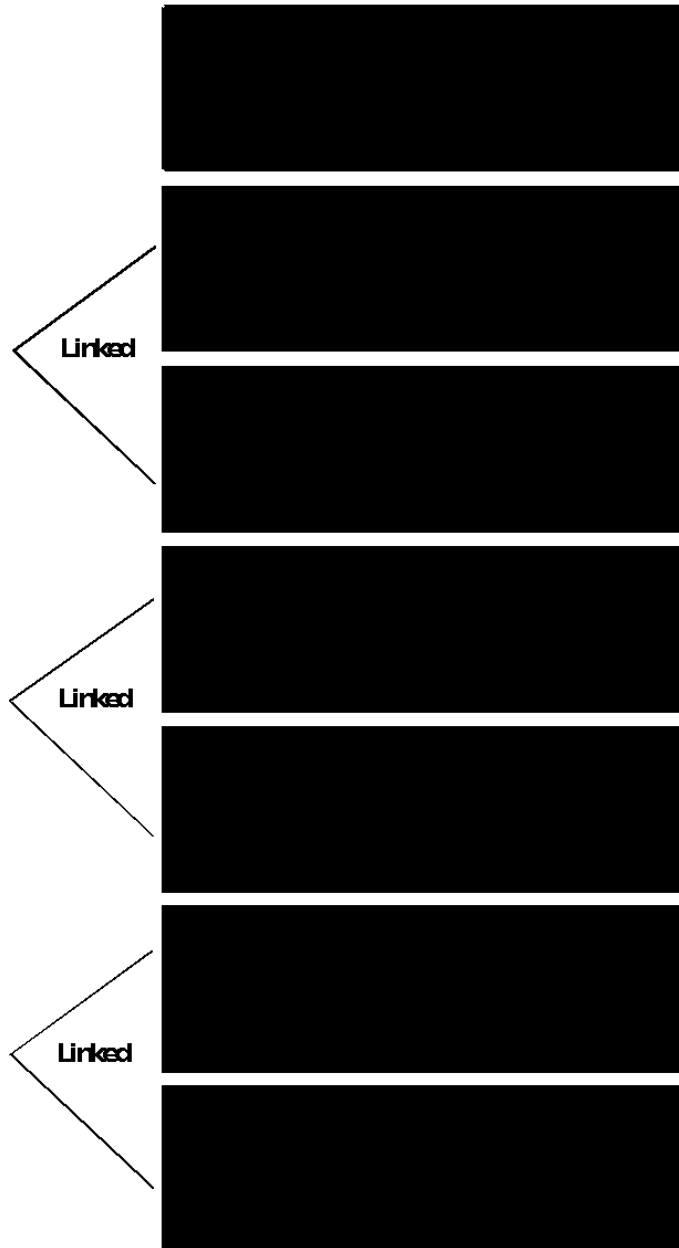
Let's Review ...

What types of leads should you use more?

Where should you place the attribution for a direct quote?

How many sentences can a direct quote be?

Transition/Quote Formula



Following a transition, what should a direct quote do?

Side Notes
1) Each box is a new paragraph.
2) Story should flow from most important to least important information.

What can a transition be?

What is the purpose of the transition?



and so on... until the story is complete