

Let's talk about ...

News Writing

By Jeanne Acton, UIL Journalism & ILPC Director

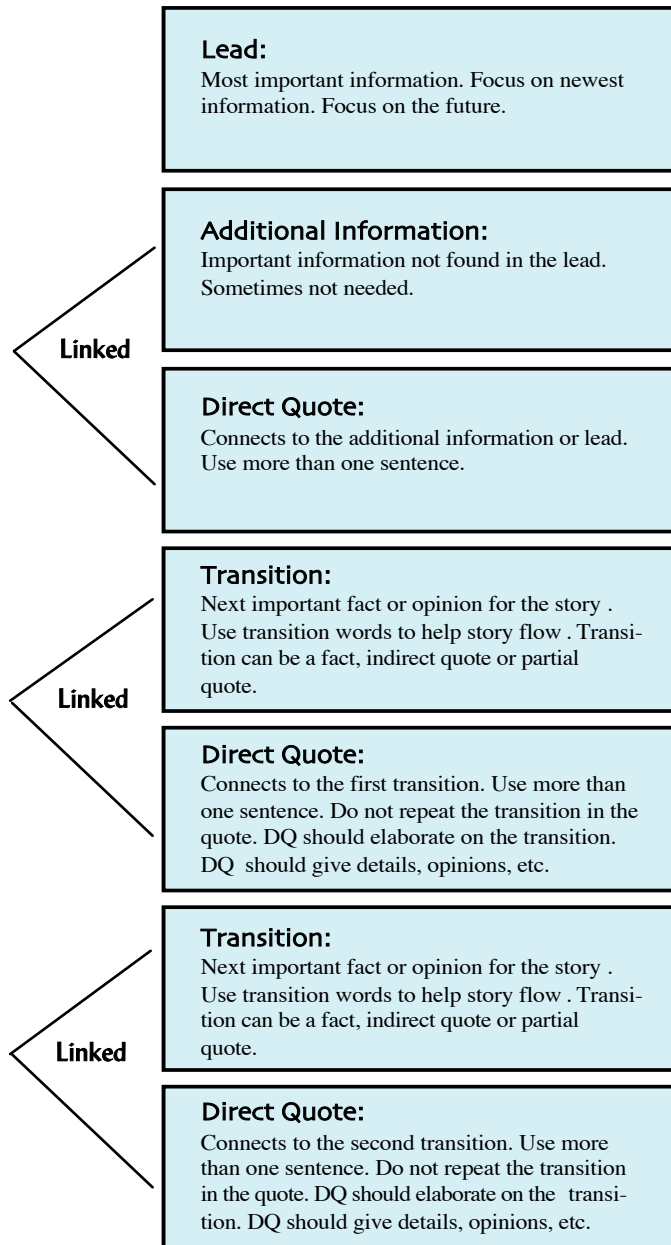
News Writing ...

gives the reader information that will have an impact on 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*

Transition/Quote Formula



Side Notes:
1) Each box is a new a paragraph.
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

Leads



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 leads for the News Writing Contest 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

Definitely NO!

Principal Joe Blow announced Tuesday that students will no longer be allowed to wear flip flops to school.

Maybe... probably yes.

Actor George Clooney will speak at the high school Thursday after giving a speech at the County Expo Center.



When lead

Definitely no!

On Tuesday, Principal Joe Blow announced that students will no longer be able to wear flip flops to school.

Maybe (probably not)...

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



Question:

How often do we use this type of lead?

Where lead

Definitely no!

At the school board meeting on Tuesday, Principal Joe Blow announced that he has ended the reign of flip flops on campus.

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

Running through rain and sleet, senior Jessie Campuzano won the first Cross Country State Championship in the school's history.

Why lead

Because of a three-week shutdown of all district computers, yearbook adviser Rodney Stephens asked the district to rent computers for his class to finish the yearbook, whose final deadline is Feb. 27. The school board will hold an emergency meeting this Friday to vote on the request.

What lead

Students may get to sleep a little later next year if the school board on Thursday approves the superintendent's proposal requesting that school start at 9:30 a.m. rather than 7:30 a.m.

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
- write in third person, concise and to the point — just the facts, ma’am
- leave out the word ‘Leaguetown’ unless necessary for understanding

News Writing

District 1 Meet • 2016



You are a reporter for the Leaguetown **Press**, the student newspaper of Leaguetown High School. From the given information, write a **news story** as you would for the high school newspaper. You may use statements attributed to individuals as **direct or indirect quotes**. You may not change the meaning of a statement. You have **45 minutes**. Do not write your name or the name of your school on this sheet or your entry. **Put your number NOT YOUR NAME on your paper.**

Leaguetown High School, located in South Texas, has 1,200 students enrolled in grades 9-12. At the Feb. 19 boys' varsity basketball game, the 25-member dance team performed during halftime to a recent Drake song. The song was edited to omit profanity. During the performance, a group of students sang some of the words as the dance team performed. One week after the performance, Principal Heath Dover and Superintendent Connie Lipo met with dance teacher Tara Wilcox and suspended her from her duties as the dance team coach. Superintendent Lipo, who attended the performance, said numerous parents and community members complained that the music as well as some of the dance moves were inappropriate.

Wilcox continues to teach her five dance classes. The dance team, however, now meets with the cheerleaders and cheerleader coach Penya Stiles. During the dance team class period, Wilcox works in the In-School Suspension room.

The dance team is registered to compete in the regional contest in San Antonio in mid-April. Last year, the team swept regionals and won a spot at the national competition in Nashville, Tenn. Wilcox was hired in 2013 as the dance teacher and coach. Before she was hired, the dance team had only five members and did not perform in public or competitions.

This week Kelly Ly, the dance team captain, drafted a petition asking for the district to reinstate Wilcox. All dance team members and their parents signed the petition. Ly will present the petition to the school board at its next meeting, Tuesday, March 29. You are writing for the issue of the *Press* to be distributed Monday, March 28.

■ CONNIE LIPO, superintendent

"The dance team has every right to present its petition to the school board, but those girls do not know the whole story. Ms. Wilcox's suspension as the dance coach was appropriate and consistent with all district protocols. We will continue to investigate the situation."

■ TARA WILCOX, former dance coach

"Both the superintendent and principal asked me not to discuss this matter with students or parents, but that seems absurd. I did nothing wrong. I have no idea how many parents or community members complained. I don't know what moves they are upset about or what lyrics angered the parents and community. I don't even know how long I am suspended for. Is it a month? A year? Forever?"

"If the administration is upset about the students who sang the words, then they should deal with them. Suspend them. Not me."

■ **TARA WILCOX, (continued)**

“When I started at Leaguetown, the dance program was in shambles. I have built a first-class program, and in two years we placed third at a national competition. I want my job back as the dance coach. I hope the school board listens to the girls. Our regional competition is only a few weeks away.”

■ **KELLY LY, senior and captain of the dance team**

“We were shocked when Mr. Dover told us that Ms. Wilcox wasn’t going to be our coach anymore. She’s incredible. We have a legitimate dance program, a winning dance team, because of her. I know Mr. Dover is upset about those girls singing during the performance, but we didn’t have anything to do with that. Neither did Ms. Wilcox.

“Ms. Wilcox lets us choose the music, and then she is very, very careful about editing it. She is a real stickler on that. As far as inappropriate dance moves, that is bull. We are so much more conservative than any other dance team. Heck, the cheerleaders are more risqué than us. Ms. Wilcox always preaches to us about being ‘ladies’ and presenting ourselves as real dancers and not street tramps.

“I hope the school board listens to us. We love Ms. Wilcox, and we need her. We have a competition in just a few weeks, and without her guidance we don’t stand a chance at advancing to nationals.”

■ **CATHY HUFFHOUSER, parent of dance team sophomore Cindi Huffhouser**

“Ms. Wilcox is a positive role model for our girls. She sets incredibly high standards, and the girls rise to meet those challenges. My daughter loves dance team, and it’s because of Ms. Wilcox. I was at the so-called controversial performance, as was the superintendent and principal. The performance was stellar. The song was edited. Most of the time, it was just instrumental. The girls did nothing inappropriate. I would have been proud to have my preacher watch that performance. I don’t know what is really going on here, but I support Ms. Wilcox 100 percent.”

■ **LESLIE WILSON, parent**

“I saw the half-time show, and I didn’t care for it. It’s true that the music was edited, but it didn’t matter. There was a big group of girls sitting behind me, and they sang out all of the edited words really loudly. That dance coach had no business allowing that song for young ladies. She should have known the kids would sing the missing words. She was irresponsible, and she has no business leading our students.”

■ **PATRICK PARKER, senior basketball player**

“The basketball team missed most of the dance because we went to the locker room to talk. The dance team helps us. They pumped up the crowd. We won that game by three points, and the crowd cheering for us made the difference.”

What lead

The dance team will present a petition signed by every team member and parent to the school board tomorrow night requesting Tara Wilcox be reinstated as the coach. Wilcox was suspended after complaints about the dance team performance to a Drake song during a Feb. 19 basketball game.

Why lead

After Tara Wilcox was suspended as the dance team coach, the team collected signatures from all members and parents requesting her reinstatement. The girls will present the petition to the school board tomorrow night.

Let's talk about

Direct Quotes



Direct Quotes:

- Should be linked to the paragraph before them. The quote should elaborate on the previous paragraph.

For example:

Superintendent Connie Lipo received complaints about the music choice and inappropriate dance moves. Wilcox's suspension was "appropriate" and followed district protocol, she added.

"We are continuing to investigate the situation," said Lipo, who attended the performance.

Next transition

For the basketball half-time show, Wilcox said she edited all profanity from the Drake song, but students in the crowd sang the deleted lyrics.

What comes next? From whom?

Direct quote – elaborates on previous transition

“If the administration is upset about the students who sang the words, then they should deal with them,” Wilcox said. “Suspend them. Not me.”

What follows this?

More transitions and quotes (linked)

Wilcox said the administration asked her not to discuss this matter, but she finds that request “absurd.”

“I did nothing wrong,” said Wilcox, who still teaches her dance classes.

Ly said Wilcox constantly preaches to the team about being ladies and presenting themselves as “real dancers and not street tramps.”

“We are so much more conservative than any other dance team,” she said. “Heck, the cheerleaders are more risque than us.”

Since Wilcox was hired in 2013, the team has grown from five to 25 members. Last year, it swept regionals and won a spot at the national competition.

“Ms. Wilcox is a positive role model for our girls,” dance parent Cathy Huffhouser said. “She sets incredibly high standards, and the girls rise to meet those challenges. I was at the so-called controversial performance. The performance was stellar. I would have been proud to have my preacher watch that performance.”

Direct Quotes:

- Should not repeat the transition/lead before them.

For example:

But not every parent is as proud of the performance. Parent Leslie Wilson said the dance team should have never performed to that song.

“The girls should have never performed to that Drake song,” Wilson 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



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:**

The dance team's regional competition is in two weeks.

Transitions

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

For example - **INDIRECT QUOTE TRANSITION:**

(IQ Transition) With the regional competition just weeks away, Wilcox said she wants her job back.

Transitions

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

For example - **PARTIAL QUOTE TRANSITION:**

(PQ Transition) Wilcox said the administration asked her not to discuss this matter, but she finds that request “absurd.”

Transitions

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

For example:

In addition, Wilcox constantly preaches to the team about being ladies, Ly said.

Transitions

➤ Use parts of the direct quotes and information from the situation to create the transition.

For example

- **KELLY LY, senior and captain of the dance team**

“Ms. Wilcox lets us choose the music, and then she is very, very careful about editing it. She is a real stickler on that. As far as inappropriate dance moves, that is bull. We are so much more conservative than any other dance team. Heck, the cheerleaders are more risque than us. Ms. Wilcox always preaches to us about being ‘ladies’ and presenting ourselves as real dancers and not street tramps.”

The Transition

Ly said Wilcox constantly preaches to the team about being ladies and presenting themselves as “real dancers and not street tramps.”

Direct Quote

“We are so much more conservative than any other dance team,” she said. “Heck, the cheerleaders are more risque than us.”

For example

- **From the situation:**

The dance team is registered to compete in the regional contest in San Antonio in mid-April. Last year, the team swept regionals and **won a spot at the national competition** in Nashville, Tenn.

Wilcox **was hired in 2013** as the dance teacher and coach. Before she was hired, the dance team **had only five members** and did not perform in public or competitions.

- **CATHY HUFFHOUSER, parent of dance team sophomore Cindi Huffhouser**

“Ms. Wilcox is a positive role model for our girls. She sets incredibly high standards, and the girls rise to meet those challenges. My daughter loves dance team, and it’s because of Ms. Wilcox. **I was at the so-called controversial performance**, as was the superintendent and principal. **The performance was stellar.** The song was edited. Most of the time, it was just instrumental. The girls did nothing inappropriate. **I would have been proud to have my preacher watch that performance.** I don’t know what is really going on here, but I support Ms. Wilcox 100 percent.”

The Transition

”

Since Wilcox was hired in 2013, the team has grown from five to 25 members. Last year, it swept regionals and won a spot at the national competition.

Direct Quote

“Ms. Wilcox is a positive role model for our girls,” dance parent Cathy Huffhouser said. “She sets incredibly high standards, and the girls rise to meet those challenges. I was at the so-called controversial performance. The performance was stellar. I would have been proud to have my preacher watch that performance.”

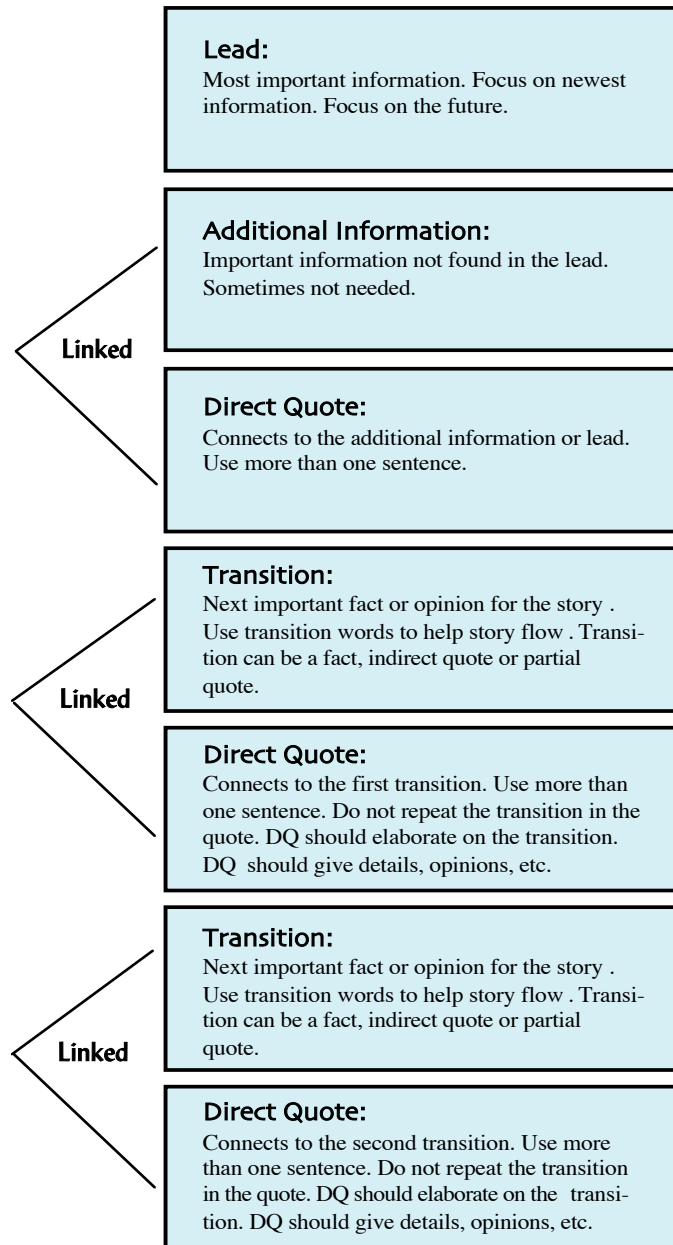
Let's Review ...

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



and so on... until the story is complete

Following a transition, what should a direct quote do?

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

What can a transition be?

What is the purpose of the transition?

What can you use to create transitions?

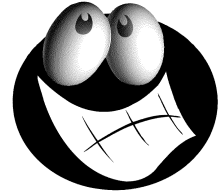
No-nos for News Stories

- Using the word “Leaguetown”
- Starting with “The School Board ...”
- Writing a feature lead
- Adding facts
- Putting attribution before the quote
- Missing the news peg
- Missing important information and people
- Stacking quotes
- Forgetting to use student quotes
- Start your transition with “Most students” or “Some students”

Checklist for News Stories

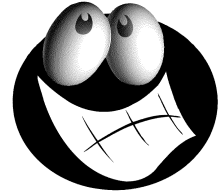
- ✓ Are the most important and recent facts first?
- ✓ Is the story accurate? Are the sources identified fully?
- ✓ Are the paragraphs short?
- ✓ Is the sentence structure varied in the story?
- ✓ Is the story neat and double-spaced so that it is easy to read?
- ✓ Does your story flow? Did you use the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

What will make the difference?



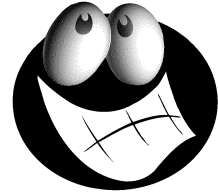
- Getting the news peg in the lead

What will make the difference?



- Using the T/Q formula

What will make the difference?



- Using the “correct” sources and quotes

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”
- Messy handwriting, poor grammar and spelling
- Paragraphs too long
- Misspelling names in the story
- Trying to use all of the information

What went wrong?

To complete his doctoral degree at the University of Texas at Austin, Principal Grey wrote a dissertation in 2016.

After studying and researching the benefits of a four-day school week for his dissertation, Grey has proposed implementing the shortened week for Leaguetown High School. The superintendent and the majority of the faculty support the proposal, however our athletic staff opposes it.

Parents, freshmen and sophomores will be given the opportunity to vote on the proposal through an online voting portal opening Monday.

“When I started researching the four-day high school week, I had no intention of ever bringing the idea to Leaguetown,” Gray said. “But then, I started to see all of the advantages of a four-day week, and I am not talking about just the money saving part. It was the positive impact on students that I was most impressed with.”

Grey visited schools in Wyoming and Minnesota to study the four-day week and found that student attendance improves and student discipline incidents decrease by 40 percent.

Grey said, “Not a single student had anything negative to say about the schedule. Most said the longer weekend made it easier to get homework completed.”

If implemented, our school hours would change from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., to 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

“Our coaches do not support the shift to a four-day week,” Rodd Rooster said. “First, our after school practices would have to run until 6:30 p.m. And, while a four-day week would give us flexibility on the time of Friday practices, that wouldn’t help many of our athletes because they don’t have transportation to get to the school.”

Most students like the idea of a four day week.

“I think it’s awesome,” said freshmen Sarah Brown. “I would love to have Fridays off.”

“I love the idea of a four-day school week,” sophomore Leesa Perkins said. “I am voting for it.

Contest Day

1. Read the entire prompt.
2. Review it again, looking for the newest information. Underline that information.
3. Highlight or underline the 5Ws and H.
4. Highlight or underline the most important people interviewed. Highlight or underline the most essential quotes.
5. Scratch out stupid, inane quotes.
6. Pay attention to the “Additional Information.”
7. Write your lead. How, why or what lead.

Contest Day

8. Write an additional info. paragraph if needed.
9. Use a direct quote (more than one sentence is okay).
10. Write a transition about the next most important thing.
11. Use a direct quote directly related to the transition above. If it's an indirect quote transition, use a direct quote from that same person.
12. Write another transition about the next most important thing.
13. Another direct quote.
14. Keep going.

Let's practice!

- Follow the steps from “Contest Day”
- Write as much as you can. Edit. Write. Edit.

**Did you get the
news peg?**

