



# Feature this.



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UIL Feature Writing // Session 115  
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# Feature Writing

Tells the reader a story. It has a beginning (lead), middle and end. It uses quotes liberally and allows the reader to see the story through detailed description and vivid writing.



**Feature format on next slide:**

# LQTQ

But it's all about the lead.

End with a kicker quote that connects to the lead or takes us into the future.

LQTQ and so on until the story is complete.

Linked

**Lead:** Most interesting information. Something that will grab the reader's attention and drag them into the story.

**Nut Graph:** A summary of what the story is going to be about. Why the story is important.

**Direct Quote:** Connects to the nut graph. Use more than one sentence. Direct quotes should show the emotion of the story.

Linked

**Transition:** Next important fact. Use transition words to help the story flow. They can be facts, indirect quotes or partial quotes.

**Direct Quote:** Connects to the first transition. Do not repeat the transition in the quote. DQ should elaborate on the transition.

Linked

**Transition:** Next important fact. Use transition words to help the story flow. They can be facts, indirect quotes or partial quotes.

**Direct Quote:** Connects to the second transition. Do not repeat the transition in the quote. DQ should elaborate on the transition.





**Let's talk  
about leads.**



# Leads...



## Grab the reader's attention.

Use specific words that tap into the reader's interest.



## Word choice matters.

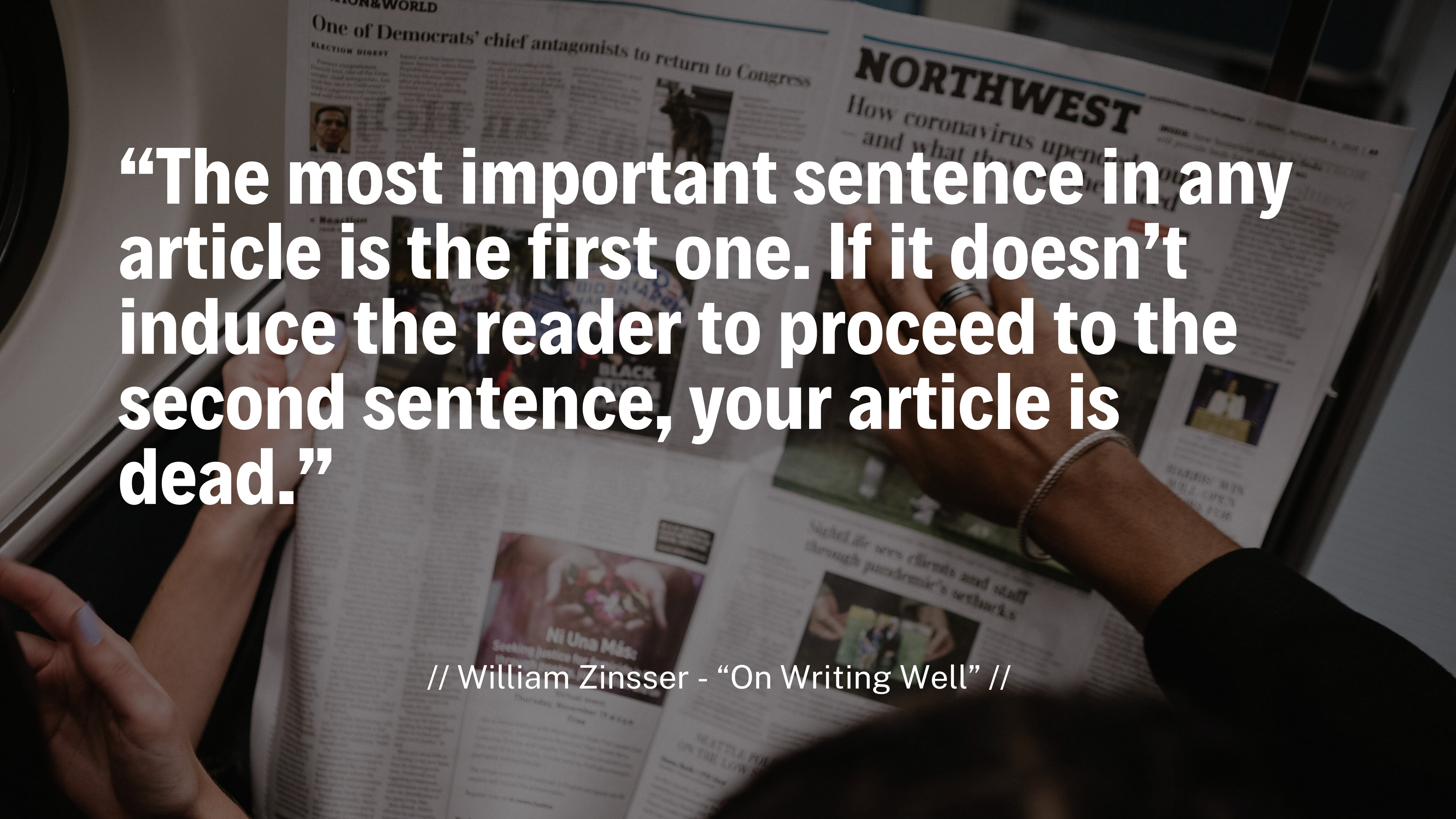
Use active verbs and specific nouns.



## Eliminate filler.

Avoid generic adverbs and adjectives.





**“The most important sentence in any article is the first one. If it doesn’t induce the reader to proceed to the second sentence, your article is dead.”**

// William Zinsser - “On Writing Well” //



# The Lead

Winning feature stories have winning leads.

- Can be and often are longer than one sentence
- Your chance to grab the reader's attention
- Should be specific to your story
- Should not be filled with clichés
- Should be in third person
- Must fit the mood or tone of the story



# Types of Leads

Winning feature stories have winning leads.

- Narrative – tells a story
- Descriptive – describes a scene, person or subject
- Startling statement
- Compare and contrast
- Twist

# Narrative

Tells a story

On New Year's Eve, Charles Curzio stayed later than planned at his small TV repair shop to make sure his customers would have their sets in time to watch the King Orange Jamboree Parade.

His kindness cost his life.



# Narrative

Tells a story

For 27 minutes, sophomore Kate Tiedke lay on the floor, her gray Nike sweatshirt cut in pieces at her side.

For 27 minutes last December, it didn't matter that the sophomore was ranked first in her class or that she was one of the best soccer midfielders in Texas. It didn't matter that she was funny and kind.

All that mattered was that her heart wasn't beating.

# Narrative

Tells a story

On senior Alicia Brigg's two-hour trip with her parents to church, she turned around and noticed that in the back of the Suburban all her bags were packed.

"All of a sudden, I realized I wasn't going to church," she said. "I was on my way to the airport. I started screaming, crying and swearing at my dad, trying to figure out what was happening."

That's when her dad told his 17-year-old daughter he had put her up for adoption.



# Narrative

Tells a story

The man she loved slapped her face. Furious, she told him never, ever to do that again.

“What are you going to do, kill me?” he asked, and handed her a gun.

“Here, kill me,” he challenged.

She did.

# Narrative

Tells a story

At 14, Ashlee Thomas was in the grips of anorexia.

She weighed 85 pounds. She was hospitalized. Her heart stopped twice. Doctors thought she would not survive.

But she did. And now the resident of New South Wales, Australia, is dedicating her life to helping other girls. Her first warning to parents and children is about the dangers of Instagram, where, Thomas says, her journey to near death began.

# Descriptive

Of a scene or person

It's 2 a.m. and junior Carter Wade stumbles through his front door. He's hours past his curfew, and 20 milligrams of Xanax past what his body can sustain.

Wade doesn't remember being driven to a rehab center in a cop car. He wasn't aware his body was being loaded into an ambulance after he became unconscious in the backseat. He couldn't process that his heart was about to stop.



# Startling Statement

His last meal was worth \$30,000, and it killed him.

# Fun twist

When they heard screams, not one suspected the rooster.

# Fun twist

Dechardonae Gaines, 2, was toddling down the sidewalk Monday lugging her Easy Bake Oven when she became the victim in one of the weirder animal attack cases police can recall.

In the cluster of beige houses at Lime Street and Safford Avenue where Dechardonae lives, man and chicken have coexisted peacefully for years in quiet defiance of city ordinance.

That ended Monday afternoon, when authorities apprehended the offending rooster, named Rockadoodle Two, and its sister, named Hen.



# Fun twist

At 21, he is a grizzled thing. Sparse black hair barely covers his liver spots and flaking skin. Glaucoma and cataracts plague his eyes. Flattened hooves slow his gait to an almost crawl.

But in just two days, Potsie will be ready to party.

On Tuesday, assuming he survives that long, Potsie will win the Guinness World Record title as the oldest Vietnamese potbellied pig.

**Show.**

**Don't tell.**

It works.



# Writing Devices

- Repetition
- Short, punchy sentences
- Using dialogue
- Mixing sentence length to set a rhythm
- Breaking the rules
  - Starting with “And”
  - One word sentence

# Use Dialogue

The end of a simple phrase changed the 13-year-old boy forever.

“Yes it does last the rest of your life,” the doctor said.

On the day of his diagnosis, James Mapes was in the waiting room, grasping his mother’s hand tight, hoping and praying the blood test results would be in his favor.

The physician then broke the news that James had been fearing. He would be stuck with his condition for life. Immediately, questions rushed through his head.

“Why did this happen? What will people think? What will people say?”



Leads should open with  
the **specific**, then go to  
the general.

# Rather than this:

With America engaged in a war in Iraq, many students know U.S. military men who have lost their lives.

Leaguetown lost one of its own last month when Nicolas Barrera was killed in Iraq.

# Try this:

When Briana Barrera didn't hear from her son, Nicolas, for a week she knew something was wrong. Maybe it was mother's intuition, but she knew.

And when she saw two officers walking toward her door, her worst fear was confirmed.

“The officers said they were sorry to deliver the news, but Nicolas died with honor,” she said. “Dying with honor? How does that help? My heart was breaking. My boy was gone.”



# Basic Info

- When senior Patrick Manubay was 10 years old, his mother was diagnosed with Stage 4 pancreatic cancer. She died four months later.
- Patrick didn't talk about his mother's death and was a quiet and withdrawn child. When Patrick was a sophomore, his aunt gave him a letter from his mother. In the letter, she wrote how she knew he would change the world for the better one day.
- Motivated by the letter, Patrick designed a website for a fundraiser project — Five for Life asking people to donate \$5 for the Pancreatic Cancer Research Fund.
- To promote the fundraiser, Patrick made a video — using old videos of his mother and interviewing his sisters and dad. The video went viral with more than 1 million views. So far, Patrick has raised \$500,000.

Death is a tragic event — especially when you lose someone close to you. Patrick Manubay understands this better than most. He lost his mother to cancer several years ago.

**What went wrong?**

Everyone can imagine what it would be like to lose a parent to cancer. You would be lost, sad and withdrawn. You would probably be jealous of your friends who have both parents. You might cry yourself to sleep every night. You might shut down completely.

That is what Patrick Manubay did until he got a letter from his mother that she wrote before she died.

# **What went wrong?**



After his mother's death from pancreatic cancer, senior Patrick Manubay was lost. "I was sad," he said. "I was angry. I was jealous of my peers who had moms."

So he lived his life withdrawn, speaking only when he had to. Then, when he was 15, his aunt gave him a letter from his mother, and "everything changed."

"Her words woke me up," he said. "I knew I was wasting my life, and that she would have been disappointed in me."

Disappointing his mother was the last thing Patrick ever wanted to do, so after talking with his father, he jumped into action. Patrick created a website and started a fundraiser project — Five for Life — with a goal that 5,000 people donate \$5 each to the Pancreatic Cancer Research Fund (PCRF).

# Better!

# Things to Avoid

- **News or editorial leads**
- **First and second person**
- **Stating the obvious**
- **Using clichés**
- **Imagine ...**
- **Description that is not relevant. Too much drama.**
- **Rambling**

Patrick Manubay raised \$500,000 for the Pancreatic Cancer Research Fund.

**What went wrong?**



We are proud of Patrick Manubay for raising \$500,000 for the Pancreatic Cancer Research Fund. Way to go, Patrick!

**What went wrong?**

Every day, millions of people wake up, go to work or go to school. But some days, they don't.

**What went wrong?**

Before the sun even rises, 17-year-old senior Raymond Buster pushes back the his checkered comforter on his twin bed and drags himself to the shower. He quickly washes his light brown hair and puts on his shorts, black running shirt and neon green running shoes.

As he walks out the door to head to his cross country practice, he grabs a strawberry Pop Tart and waves goodbye to his mother.

# What went wrong?

5 a.m. The alarm blares and senior Raymond Buster drags himself out of bed after only a five-hour slumber.

The mornings come early for this 17-year-old cross country competitor, but he says it's worth it.

“I want to get to the State Meet this year,” he said. “And that means, I run early and I run often.”

**Better!**



**Here's a great one.**

# Feature Writing

District Meet • 2023



You are a reporter for the **Leaguetown Press**, the student newspaper of Leaguetown High School.

From the given information, write a **feature 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 **one hour**.

Do not write your name or the name of your school on this sheet or your entry. **Put your number on your paper.**

Leaguetown High School has 867 students in grades 9-12. Longtime district bus driver Louis Plimpton announced to students right before Spring Break that he would retire at the end of the month after 43 years in the district. Plimpton not only worked in Leaguetown ISD for 43 years, but he also attended Leaguetown schools and graduated from Leaguetown High School in 1978. While in high school, he played baseball and received a scholarship to play at Southside Junior College. However, after three semesters at SJC, he was forced to return home when his mother was injured in a car accident and needed full-time care. He began driving a school bus in 1980 and has been doing so ever since, driving the elementary and high school route every day. During summers, Plimpton works in the district maintenance department. Plimpton is one of the longest-serving employees ever to serve the district.

When he submitted his retirement paperwork to administrators, Plimpton asked for a special request. Instead of a retirement party or gift, he asked to celebrate with the students on his high school route and pick them up like normal, but instead of taking them to school, he'll drive them to Leaguetown Lanes for a round of bowling, followed by lunch at Plimpton's favorite restaurant, Golden Corral. Superintendent Maxine Wabasha agreed and even distributed and collected parent permission slips on his behalf.

On March 31, Plimpton will pick up 36 students for the last time and celebrate his retirement with them. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Tuesday, March 28.

## ■ LOUIS PLIMPTON, bus driver

"I didn't plan to drive a bus for 43 years. I didn't even plan to drive a bus for one year, but after my mom's accident I had to stay home in Leaguetown, and I needed work fast to help us pay the bills.

"The people in this district have been so good to me over the years. Before my mom died in 2001, my schedule even allowed me to go home and check on her sometimes in the middle of the day. After she died, every single kid who got on the bus wrote me a sympathy note. I think one of the principals organized it, but still. Those kids put a lot of thought into those cards. I don't think I would have made it through that period of my life without the support and company of these kids. They're my second family.

"When a kid rides my bus, they see me every morning and afternoon from kindergarten through high school. Since we live in such a rural area, we don't get a lot of people moving in and out, so I've been able to get to know these kids. We celebrate birthdays and holidays on the bus. We celebrate graduations on the bus and college acceptance letters. Now we'll celebrate my retirement on the bus. I'm so grateful to the district administration for letting me take them bowling and out to lunch during the school day. I wanted to

■ **LOUIS PLIMPTON, bus driver (continued)**

surprise them, but then the admin told me I needed to get permission slips. I used to eat at Golden Corral every Friday night with my mom, and after she died, I kept going. I have so many memories there, and now I'll get to make the biggest memory of my life there with my kids."

■ **JENNA VAN LEER, junior**

"Lou is such a good person. He remembers our birthdays and at Christmas time, he paints snow and lights on the bus windows and dresses as Santa Claus during the bus ride, and we sing. He helps us start our school day on the right note. No matter what."

■ **JAMAR EL HINDI, senior**

"I first met Lou when I started riding the bus in kindergarten. I remember my first day of school. I got on the bus with my brother and started to cry. I was so scared. I sat in my seat and looked up to see this big hand wrapped around a stuffed purple bunny. Lou handed me the bunny and told me he was scared to go to school for the first time and asked if I would take care of the bunny for him. I still have the bunny on my desk at home. Almost every kid I know has some sort of story like that about Lou. Even when I got my car last year, I would take the bus once a week or so, just because I liked being there. He's amazing. We're all going to miss him so much."

■ **DR. MAXINE WABASHA, superintendent**

"We have some incredible employees in Leaguetown, but I have never seen this kind of outpouring of emotion for a retiring bus driver. It really speaks to his character. Louis knows that each child has an opportunity to learn every day and how they start and end that day can be the difference between success and failure. He has worked his whole career to make sure our kids succeed."

■ **TRAVIS KELLER, owner of Golden Corral in Leaguetown**

"We are honored that Louis plans to celebrate his retirement at our restaurant. He comes in every week. We haven't told him yet, but we plan to cover the expenses for his party with his kids. After so many years of supporting the community, that's the least we can do for someone who does so much for others."

■ **DOLLY CRAVENS, parent of a freshman**

"I have always known that when I put my kids on Bus 3, they're in good hands with Lou. Some of my friends thought it was a little weird that I was letting my kid go on a field trip with the bus driver, but I totally trust Lou. He deserves a happy retirement. The PTA has collected enough money to give him an airline gift card. He has been in Leaguetown all his life, and we know he's always wanted to travel. Now is his chance."



Bus driver Louis Plimpton recently announced his retirement and will work his last route on March 31.

**What went wrong?**



Bus 3 knows how to party. Holidays. Birthdays. College acceptance letters. For 43 years, bus driver Louis Plimpton has celebrated these milestones with the students on his bus route. And he has one more party to throw. His party.

**Better!**

**What's next?**

**A strong nut graph.**

# Nut Graph

**Basically, it is a summary of what the story is going to be about. It's the 5 W's and H that you didn't answer in the lead.**

**It's the thesis sentence of your story.**

**The news peg!**

Plimpton has announced his retirement and has one special request for his last day on March 31: pick the kids up from his bus route and celebrate with them.



# What's next?

## Quote / Transition formula.

“I’m so grateful to the district administration for letting me take them bowling and out to lunch during the school day,” Plimpton said. “I wanted to surprise them, but then admin told me I needed to get permission slips.”

Before Plimpton’s career at Leaguetown ISD started, he was also a student and athlete in the district, graduating in 1978. He received a scholarship to play baseball at Southside Junior College, but after three semesters he returned home to take care of his mother after a car accident.

“I didn’t plan to drive a bus for 43 years,” Plimpton said. “I didn’t even plan to drive a bus for one year, but after my mom’s accident I had to stay home in Leaguetown, and I needed work fast to help us pay the bills. My schedule even allowed me to go home and check on my mom sometimes in the middle of the day, before she died in 2001.”

Louis took care of his mother full time for over 20 years before her death, after which, every single student on his bus wrote sympathy notes for Plimpton.

“Those kids put a lot of thought into those cards,” Plimpton said. “I don’t think I would have made it through that period of my life without the support and company of these kids. They’re my second family.”

# Transitions

## Where do they come from?

### **Louis Plimpton, bus driver**

“The people in this district have been so good to me over the years. Before my mom died in 2001, my schedule even allowed me to go home and check on her sometimes in the middle of the day. **After she died, every single kid who got on the bus wrote me a sympathy note.** I think one of the principals organized it, but still. Those kids put a lot of thought into those cards. I don’t think I would have made it through that period of my life without the support and company of these kids. They’re my second family.”

**What's next?**

**End with a powerful  
quote.**



Superintendent Maxine Wabasha said Lou will be deeply missed by his colleagues, students and parents at the district.

“We have some incredible employees in Leaguetown, but I have never seen this kind of outpouring of emotion for a retiring bus driver,” Washaba said. “It really speaks to his character. Louis knows that each child has an opportunity to learn every day and how they start and end that day can be the difference between success and failure. He has worked his whole career to make sure our kids succeed.”

# Yes, you can...

- **Use the first name on the second reference if the story is about a student**
- **Have a lead longer than one paragraph**
- **Put quotes and dialogue in your lead**

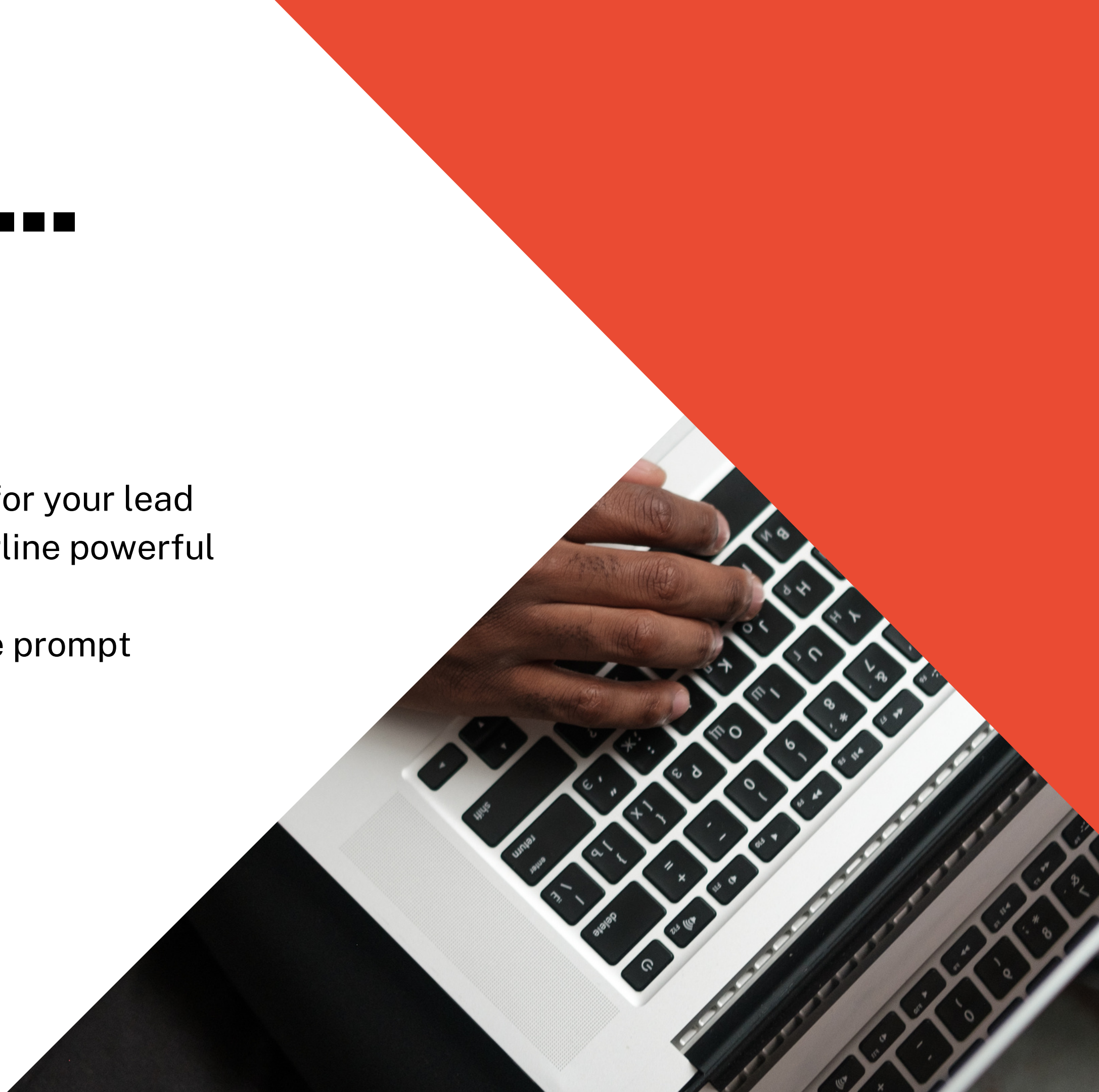
# No, you shouldn't...

- **Use a news lead**
- **Write in passive voice**
- **Use too many adverbs and adjectives instead of specific nouns and powerful verbs**
- **Have messy handwriting**
- **Stack quotes**
- **Avoid using quotes**
- **Make things up to make your story more exciting**

# On Contest Day...

## Read the prompt.

- See what stands out to you and use that for your lead
- Reread the prompt and highlight or underline powerful quotes
- Mark your nut graph (the news peg) in the prompt
- Cross out unnecessary quotes or people
- Write





# Happy writing!

Contact me any time.  
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