

# **News Writing**

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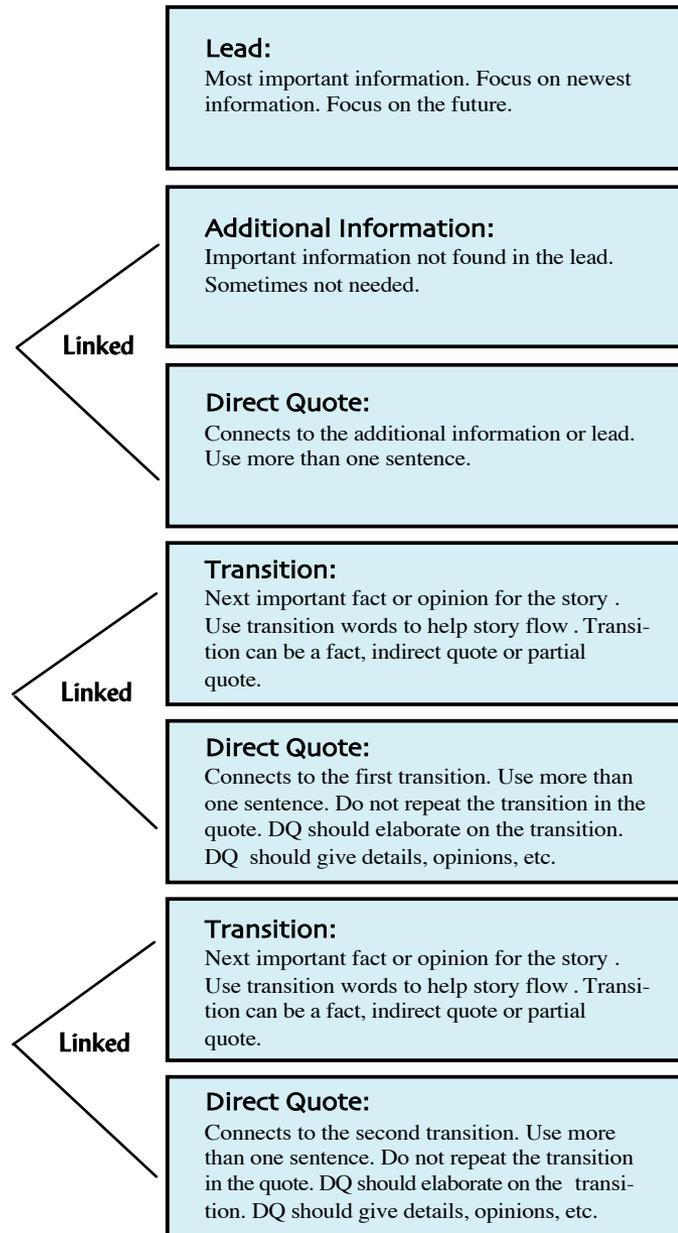
# News Writing ...

gives the reader information — starting with the most recent information/events. It 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.**

# Leads

It's the most important information. Focus on the 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 five Ws and H of the story, starting off with the most important W or H.

# **Types of News Leads (5W and H)**

**Rarely use these ...**

- Who lead\*
- When lead\*
- Where lead\*

\*Unless this is the most significant information of the story or the most unique information of the story.

# **Types of News Leads (5W and H)**

**Use these more often ...**

- What lead
- How lead
- Why lead

# Who lead

## **Definitely NO!**

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

**\*\*TIP: The who leads we want to avoid are: “Principal Joe Blow” or “Superintendent Jane Blow” or any other boring administrator who regularly appears in news stories.**

# **Who lead is OK when it's someone super important ...**

Actor Chris Hemsworth, who plays Thor in the Marvel movies, will visit the high school Thursday to talk to students about the importance of being a “real-life superhero.”

**\*\*TIP: Who leads are  
also OK when they are  
talking about a group —  
“Students” or  
“Teachers,” etc.**

# When lead

## Definitely no!

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

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## Still a no ...

On Thursday, actor Chris Hemsworth will speak to the senior class about how students can become “real-life” heroes through community service.

**\*\*TIP: A very specific, unique “when” may be OK. For example, “During a school pep rally ...”**

# Where lead

## Definitely no!

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

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## Yes. Because it's specific and relevant.

In the principal's office, the senior class built a mini go-cart to protest the cancellation of parking on campus.

**\*\*TIP: Avoid the boring places, typical places to start the lead – “At a school board meeting” or “In Leaguetown.”**

# Better lead

If a group of parents can't change Principal John Roberts' mind about his ban on the 2019 class T-shirts, seniors are considering wearing the shirts to school Friday, an act that could get them suspended and cost them the right to walk at graduation.

# Better lead

After driving a sick student to an urgent care clinic in his personal car, varsity football coach Ned Winter faces possible termination for violating district policy. But one school board member says he does not support terminating Winter and will not do so at Thursday's termination hearing.

# Better lead

Teachers and staff will receive a two-day training on active shooter situations if the school board approves Superintendent Raul Leal's proposal Wednesday. The training, provided by Blanket Security, would cost \$42,000 for all campuses and would take place when faculty and staff return to school in late summer.

# **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. Avoid starting with a “who,” “where” or “when.”
- Write in third person, concise and to the point.
- Leave out the word “Leaguetown” unless necessary for understanding.
- Do not editorialize.

# News Writing

Invitational A Meet • 2019



You are a reporter for the League-town **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 on your paper.**

Leaguetown High School has 800 students enrolled in grades 9-12. In November, National Honor Society president Nick Stuess, a senior, pitched a community service project to NHS members. He suggested the organization team with local businesses to provide weekend food backpacks for students who live in poverty in the school district. Stuess said they would need to make about 40 backpacks each week. The NHS voted to take on the project.

Over the past two months, NHS officers have made partnerships with the local grocery store and two business leaders to provide the food each week. The superintendent and school board members donated the 40 backpacks.

This week, the club will meet to fill the backpacks for the first time, and each backpack will get two cans of chicken, noodles, spaghetti sauce, a four-pack of pudding, four cans of soup, a bag of apples, four cans of vegetables, a box of cereal, a loaf of bread and a jar of peanut butter. The food will vary each week depending on donations.

On Fridays, counselors from the elementary, middle and high school will distribute the backpacks to the students at the end of the day. On the following Monday, the students will return the bags so the NHS can refill them for the next weekend.

The NHS will meet in the library at 6 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 7, to assemble the backpacks. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Wednesday, Feb. 6

## ■ NICK STUESS, NHS president

“I got the idea for this project from my cousin’s church. His church partners with the local school district, and together they provide more than 1,000 food backpacks each weekend. I thought it was a cool idea and something we could definitely do here — on a much smaller basis.

“Our members embraced the project, and our goal was to have backpacks ready for students before spring break. We are definitely blowing that goal away. People’s grocery store is donating some of the food, and then two local business people, who want to remain anonymous, are donating money to cover the rest of the food.

“The three pillars of the National Honor Society are service, character and leadership. This project demonstrates those qualities quite well. I was a little worried that we wouldn’t have enough interest, but every member has signed up to be there Thursday.”

■ **NYSSA MUÑOZ, high school counselor**

“Poverty is hidden in Leaguetown, but we definitely have it. Last month, two of our students were temporarily homeless when their parents lost their jobs. I know we have children who go hungry each week because they don’t have enough food at their home, but that is not something we broadcast to all students. I am so proud of the NHS for taking on this initiative. It’s huge, and it’s not a one-time commitment. It’s an every-week commitment that will make a difference in our town.

“I have contacted all of the high school students who will receive backpacks, and I wish I could have taken pictures of their faces when I told them. They were all so grateful.”

■ **BOB QUARLES, school board member**

“When school board members heard about this project, we wanted to pitch in, too. I couldn’t be more proud of our NHS members. This is a project our community should have taken on years ago. You can bet that I will be at the library on Thursday evening giving those students a hand. Our board wants to ensure that this project continues for many years to come.”

■ **ANNIE SMITHE, senior**

“At least two of my little brother’s friends will get the backpacks. Their parents were laid off from work, and there aren’t many jobs in our community. I hope these backpacks make their lives a little easier. When Nick first proposed the project, I thought it was a great idea, but I wondered how we would get the food each week. That was the easy part. The grocery store owner and a few community members stepped up as soon as they were asked. That was so awesome.”

■ **ANONYMOUS, junior**

“I will get one of the backpacks each week. It’s embarrassing being poor in this town. We have so many rich kids, but honestly, no one has ever made fun of me because I was poor. The backpack thing is pretty cool. My mom can’t always afford groceries. She works two jobs, but neither pays much. She was so relieved when I told her. She said she won’t have to go to the food pantry on the weekends anymore.”

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

Franks Burns, the manager at People’s grocery store, will deliver the groceries each week to the school.

**What is essential for  
this lead?**

# Must haves ...

- 40 students who live in poverty will receive food backpacks.
- Backpack delivery starts this Friday.
- This is a National Honor Society initiative.

You ALWAYS want a TIME ELEMENT in your news lead.

# **Solid lead**

Forty elementary, middle and high school students who live in poverty will receive weekend food backpacks starting Friday as part of the National Honor Society's latest community service project.

# **Another solid lead**

As part of its service project, this Friday, the National Honor Society will distribute weekend food backpacks to 40 students who live in poverty.

Let's talk about

# Direct Quotes



# Direct Quotes

**The KEY is ...**

to find the people and the quotes that matter to the story.

# Direct Quotes:

- Can be longer than one sentence.
- Should have attribution after the first sentence of the quote.
- Attribution should be: Noun then verb.
  - 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.

# Direct Quotes:

- Should not repeat the transition/lead before them.

For example:

Muñoz said she believes this project will make a difference for students.

“This program will definitely make a difference for these students,” Muñoz said.

# Direct Quotes:

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

## **For example:**

High school counselor Nyssa Muñoz said poverty is not obvious here, but it exists.

“Last month, two of our students were temporarily homeless when their parents lost their jobs,” she said. “I know we have children who go hungry each week because they don’t have enough food at their home.”

# **Next transition**

Students will return backpacks to their counselors the following Monday, so NHS members can refill them for the next weekend. NHS president Nick Stuess suggested the project after seeing a similar campaign at his cousin's church.

**What comes next?**  
**From whom?**

# **Direct quote - elaborates on previous transition**

“His church partners with the local school district, and together they provide more than 1,000 weekend food backpacks each week,” Stuess said. “I thought it was a cool idea and something we could definitely do here — on a much smaller basis.”

**What follows this?**

## **More transitions and quotes (linked)**

The backpacks, which NHS will assemble for the first time Thursday, will contain items such as canned goods, fruits and bread. Items will vary every week based on donations.

“My mom can’t always afford groceries,” a junior, who will receive a backpack, said. “She works two jobs, but neither pays much. She was so relieved when I told her. She said she won’t have to go to the food pantry on the weekends anymore.”

High school counselor Nyssa Muñoz said poverty is not obvious here, but it exists.

“Last month, two of our students were temporarily homeless when their parents lost their jobs,” she said. “I know we have children who go hungry each week because they don’t have enough food at their home.”

**Who is important to your story? Which quotes are essential to your story?**

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 backpacks, which NHS will assemble for the first time Thursday, will contain items such as canned goods, fruits and bread. Items will vary every week based on donations.

# Transitions

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

For example - **INDIRECT QUOTE TRANSITION:**

(IQ Transition) Muñoz said she believes this project will make a difference for students.

# Transitions

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

For example - **PARTIAL QUOTE TRANSITION:**  
(PQ Transition) School board member Bob Quarles said he was “blown away” by the amount of food donated to the program.

# Transitions

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

For example:

Also, the superintendent and school board members donated the 40 backpacks for the project.

# Transitions

- Use parts of the direct quotes and information from the situation to create the transition.
- Beware of “weak” words like “some” or “most” leading your transitions. For ex: Some students think ...

# For example

NYSSA MUÑOZ, HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELOR

“Poverty is hidden in Leaguetown, but we definitely have it. Last month, two of our students were temporarily homeless when their parents lost their jobs. I know we have children who go hungry each week because they don’t have enough food at their home, but that is not something we broadcast to all students. I am so proud of the NHS for taking on this initiative. It’s huge, and it’s not a one-time commitment. It’s an every-week commitment that will make a difference in our town.

## Transition

High school counselor Nyssa Muñoz said poverty is not obvious here, but it exists.

## Direct Quote

“Last month, two of our students were temporarily homeless when their parents lost their jobs,” she said. “I know we have children who go hungry each week because they don’t have enough food at their home.”

# For example

- **From the situation:**

This week, the club will meet to fill the backpacks for the first time, and each backpack will get two cans of chicken, noodles, spaghetti sauce, a four-pack of pudding, four cans of soup, a bag of apples, four cans of vegetables, a box of cereal, a loaf of bread and a jar of peanut butter. The food will vary each week depending on donations.

## **Transition**

The backpacks, which NHS will assemble for the first time Thursday, will contain items such as canned goods, fruits and bread. Items will vary every week based on donations.

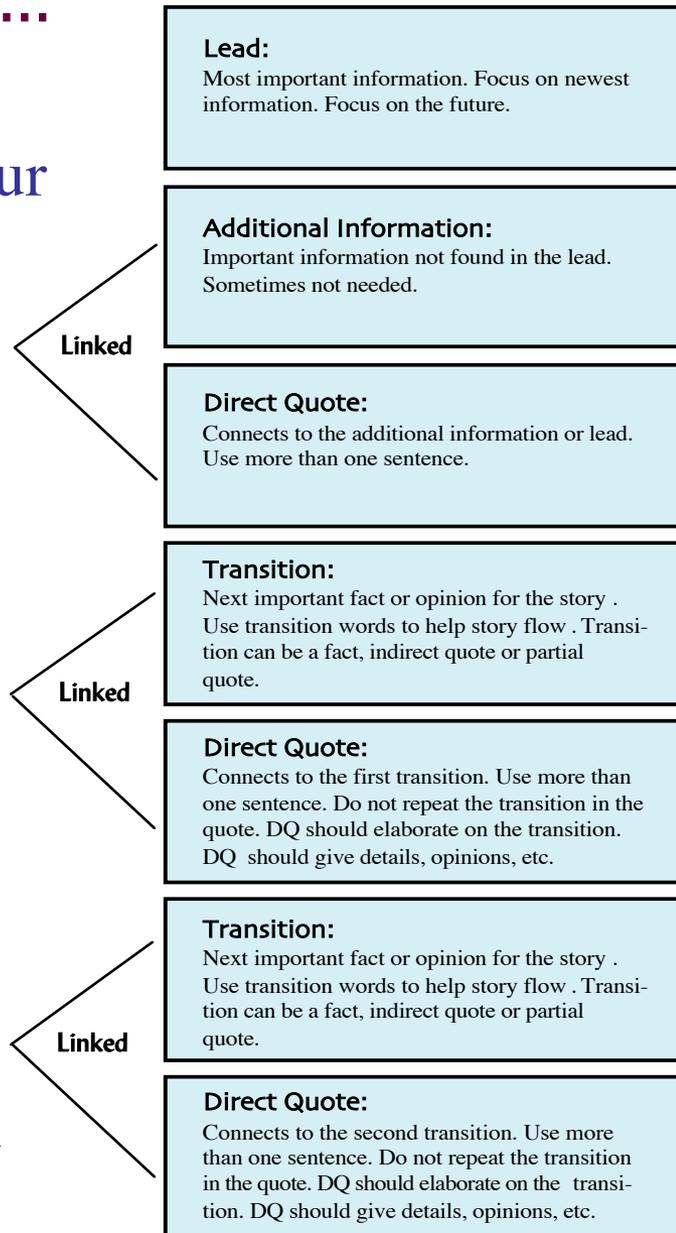
# Let's Review ...

What should you avoid starting your lead with?

What is attribution?  
What needs attribution in a news story?

Who should always be quoted in your story?

## 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 a “must-have” for your lead?

What can you use to create transitions?

# Just say no ...

- Using the word “Leaguetown”
- Writing a feature lead
- Adding facts
- Editorializing - Keep your opinion out of the story
- Using first and second person. 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
- Stacking quotes
- Forgetting to use student quotes
- Start your transition with “Most students” or “Some students”

# Checklist for News Stories

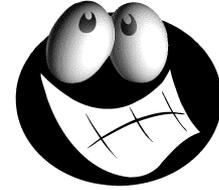
- ✓ Are the most important and recent facts first?
- ✓ Is the story accurate? Are the sources identified fully?
- ✓ Are the paragraphs short?
- ✓ Is the sentence structure varied in the story?
- ✓ Is the story neat and double-spaced so that it is easy to read?
- ✓ Does your story flow?
- ✓ Did you use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

# What will make the difference?



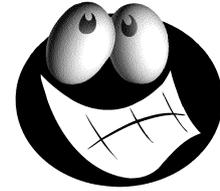
- Getting the news peg in the lead

# What will make the difference?



- Using the T/Q formula

# What will make the difference?



- Using the “correct” sources  
and quotes

# What went wrong?

In the last 10 years, there have been 288 school shootings. In 2018, 10 people — two teachers and eight students — were killed in the Santa Fe High School shooting. School shooting are on the rise.

Because of this, Leaguetown teachers and staff will receive a two-day training on active shooter situations if the school board approves Superintendent Raul Leal's proposal Wednesday. The training, provided by Blanket Security, would cost \$42,000.

Leal said, "Blanket Security has been endorsed by the FBI. Yes, it is expensive, but can we put a price tag on our students' lives?"

The local police department offered to do training at the schools for free, but Leal declined the offer. Police chief Weiss said his officers participated in Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) last year.

"We wouldn't charge the district anything," Weis said. "Several officers, including myself, have attended the training twice so that we could become trainers."

"We always are told, 'There's no money,'" senior Bo Reynolds said. "If there is no money, where is the superintendent getting the money for this training?"

Most teachers think they need the training.

"I am glad our town is safe and peaceful, but I don't think our officers are the best to train our staff," Leal said.

# 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.

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