

News Writing

By Jeanne Acton, UIL Journalism & ILPC Director

News Writing ...

gives the reader information — starting with the most recent information/events. It flows from most important to least important.

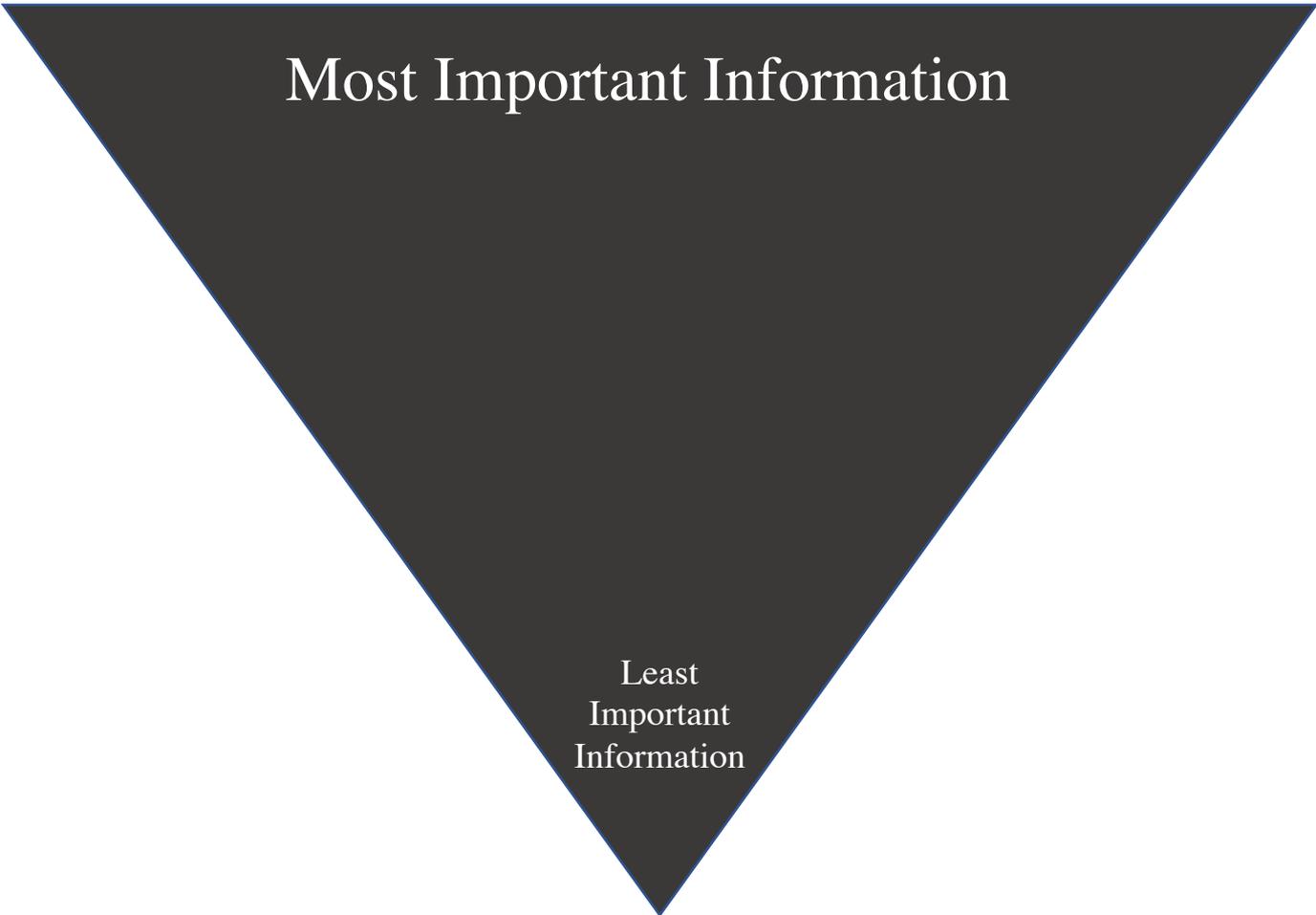
“What is news? It is information only.”

- *Walter Cronkite, former CBS News anchor*

News stories are ...

- Objective (fair/balance and anything that is not an absolute fact must be attributed)
- Written in third person
- Written in the inverted period style (short paragraphs)
- Accurate
- Timely
- Follow T/Q formula
- Concise (active voice)

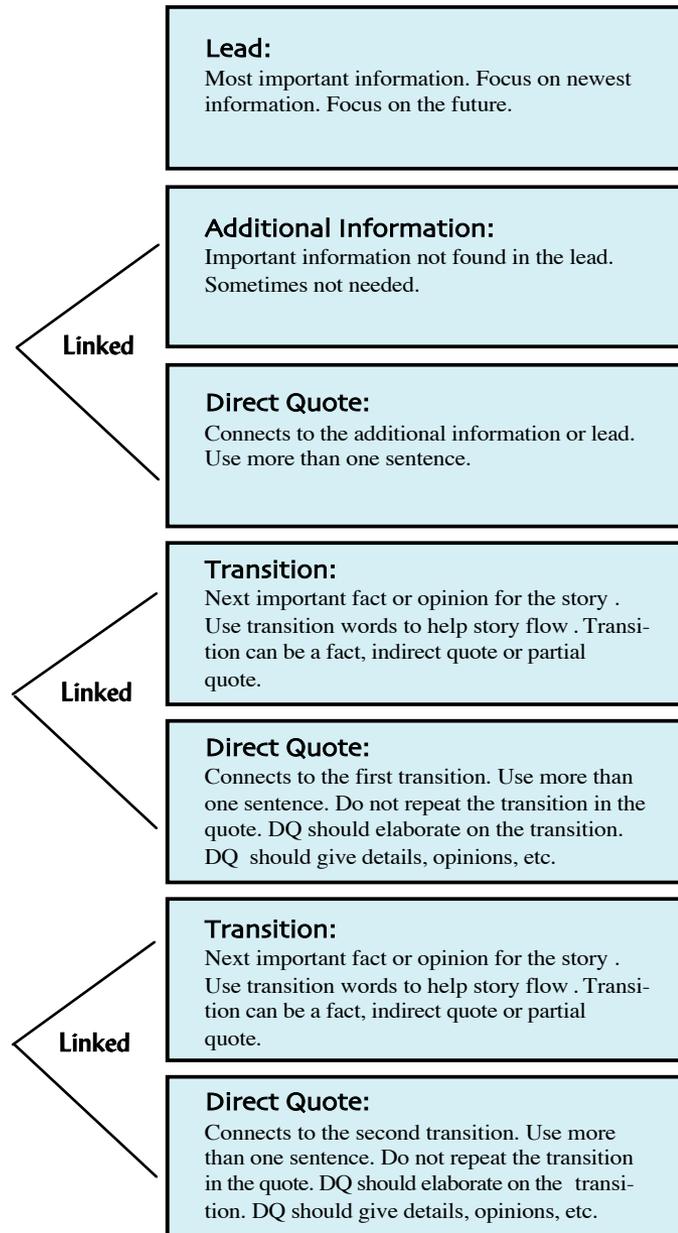
Inverted pyramid



Most Important Information

Least
Important
Information

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.

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 ...” Or if the date is immediate and super important for students.**

Where lead

Definitely no!

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

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 say they might wear the shirts to school Friday, an act that could get them suspended.

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.

Better lead

After four car accidents last month, Principal Stan Lebowski announced Friday that seniors will not be able to leave campus during lunch.

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

District Meet • 2021



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 1,400 students enrolled in grades 9-12. In early March, Luis Corona, the district's groundskeeper, died after an accident involving a tractor mower. Corona was preparing to mow the school's athletic fields when the accident occurred. Police investigated the accident and found no foul play.

Corona, who was 58, had worked for the school district for 31 years. He started as a custodian at the elementary school and worked his way up to head groundskeeper for the district. He was a graduate of Leaguetown and lived here his entire life.

After the accident, the athletic booster clubs and the Parent-Teacher Association donated \$2,000 to help pay for Corona's funeral. Because of the pandemic, the funeral was a family-only ceremony.

When Corona was a student at Leaguetown, he was a first baseman on the baseball team. After he graduated, he attended almost every home game. He only missed a few when he or a family member was ill. The baseball team will hold a Hit-A-Thon fundraiser Friday, April 9, to raise money for a scholarship in Corona's name. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Tuesday, March 30.

■ ROBYN BYRD, principal

"Our community suffered a great loss when Mr. Corona passed. Not only was he an important member of our district staff, he loved this school and the students. Our athletic fields are some of the best maintained in the county because of him. He also was our most dedicated baseball fan. In my 10 years here at the school, I have never been to a baseball game where he wasn't in attendance, and he didn't just watch the games. He knew every single player's name, their stats and their parents' names.

"A scholarship in his name is a great way to honor him. I am proud of the boys for stepping up. I am saddened that we all couldn't attend his funeral. It would have been standing room only."

■ ROGELIO AGUIRRE, varsity baseball coach

"Telling the baseball team that Mr. Corona had passed was the hardest thing I've had to do in my coaching career. Every player was torn up. The boys loved him, and he loved them. He was more than a fan to them. He was part of our family. The scholarship and fundraiser was their idea. I am so very proud of them."

■ **CHARLIE WILLIAMS, senior and varsity baseball player**

“All three teams — freshmen, junior varsity and varsity — will participate in the Hit-A-Thon. Each player will get 10 pitches from the pitching machine. For the fundraiser, people pledge an amount for each hit a player gets, or people can donate a set amount. For example, my dad signed up for \$5 a hit. If I get 10 hits, he will donate \$50. Our goal is to raise \$2,500 for the scholarship, and we hope this becomes an annual event. Since everyone can’t attend the fundraiser because of the pandemic, we are going to stream the Hit-A-Thon live on our team Facebook page.

“We created a link on the school’s baseball website for people to make their pledges. Coach said the player who raises the most money will get one week off from sprints. That is serious motivation, but we don’t need much. We all loved Mr. Corona. His memory is our motivation.

“When I heard that Mr. Corona had died, I didn’t want to believe it. He was like our team parent. He always made sure the field was in perfect condition, and he attended every game. I can’t remember him ever missing a game. Rain or cold. Sleet or snow. He was always there – cheering for us.”

■ **JAYLEE DONATELLI, broadcast journalism teacher**

“When I heard Mr. Corona had died, my heart broke a little. He wasn’t just an amazing groundskeeper and baseball fan. He was a great man who always had a smile on his face. He cared about everyone. His funeral should have been packed with students and teachers.

“My students are working the baseball team to film the Hit-A-Thon so people can watch it on the team’s Facebook page. We will make sure his wife gets a copy of the video, too.”

■ **BRANDON JAMES, junior and varsity baseball player**

“I play first base like Mr. Corona. After every game, he would wait for me to leave the dugout and then tell me what a great game I had. If I made an error during the game, he would give me encouragement and tips for improving. He never yelled at any player and was always such a positive force for the entire team. We will miss him.”

■ **ANGELICA CORONA, wife of Luis Corona**

“The outpouring of love and support has been overwhelming. Luis loved the school, the students and the community.

“This has been a very tough time for my sons and me, but we have been so touched by everything. I know Luis is smiling in heaven at the thought of a scholarship in his name. I can’t think of a better way to honor him.”

■ **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

His two sons, Juan and Roberto, played baseball at Leaguetown High School, and now both are high school baseball coaches in East Texas.

**What is essential for
this lead?**

Must haves ...

- baseball holding a Hit-A-Thon
- April 9
- for the former groundskeeper who died
- scholarship

You ALWAYS want a TIME ELEMENT in your news lead.

Solid lead

To honor former groundskeeper Luis Corona, the baseball team will hold a Hit-A-Thon April 9, to raise money for a scholarship in his name. Corona, 58, died during a tractor mowing accident in March.

Another solid lead

The baseball team will sponsor a Hit-A-Thon April 9, to raise money for a scholarship named for Luis Corona, the groundskeeper who died in an accident in March.

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:

Senior baseball player Charlie Williams said Corona was like a team parent and always ensured that the field was in great condition.

“He was like our team parent,” he said. “He always made sure the field was in perfect condition.”

Direct Quotes:

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

For example:

Corona's wife, Angelica Corona, said the love and support from the school has been "overwhelming."

"Luis loved the school, the students and the community," she said. "This has been a very tough time for my sons and me, but we have been so touched by everything. I know Luis is smiling in heaven at the thought of a scholarship in his name."

Lead and first quote

To honor former groundskeeper Luis Corona, the baseball team will hold a Hit-A-Thon April 9, to raise money for a scholarship in his name. Corona, 58, died during a tractor mowing accident in March.

“Our community suffered a great loss when Mr. Corona passed,” Principal Robyn Byrd said. “Not only was he an important member of our district staff, he loved this school and the students. A scholarship in his name is a great way to honor him. I am proud of the boys for stepping up.”

What comes next?

First Transition

Corona graduated from Leaguetown and was an avid baseball fan. He played first base for the team when he was in high school, and both of his sons, who are now high school baseball coaches, played for the school.

What comes next?

Direct quote - elaborates on previous transition

“In my 10 years here at the school, I have never been to a baseball game where he wasn’t in attendance, and he didn’t just watch the games,” Byrd said. “He knew every single player’s name, their stats and their parents’ names.”

What follows this?

More transitions and quotes (linked)

Varsity baseball coach Rogelio Aguire said telling the team of Corona's death was the hardest thing he's ever had to do.

“Every player was torn up,” he said. “The boys loved him, and he loved them. He was more than a fan to them. He was part of our family. The scholarship and fundraiser was their idea.”

Senior baseball player Charlie Williams said Corona was like a team parent and always made sure the field was in perfect condition.

“I can't remember him ever missing a game,” Williams said. “Rain or cold. Sleet or snow. He was always there – cheering for us. Our goal is to raise \$2,500 for the scholarship, and we hope this becomes an annual event.”

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:**

For the Hit-A-Thon, players will get 10 pitches from the pitching machine. The team set up a link on the school's baseball website where people can select a player and pick an amount to pledge per hit or donate a set amount of money.

Transitions

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

For example - **INDIRECT QUOTE TRANSITION:**

(IQ Transition) Senior baseball player Charlie Williams said Corona was like a team parent and always made sure the field was in perfect condition.

Transitions

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

For example - **PARTIAL QUOTE TRANSITION:**

(PQ Transition) Corona's wife, Angelica Corona, said the love and support from the school has been "overwhelming."

Transitions

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

For example:

In addition, the team set up a link on the school's baseball website where people can select a player and pick an amount to pledge per hit or donate a set amount of money.

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

Charlie Williams, senior and varsity baseball player

“When I heard that Mr. Corona had died, I didn’t want to believe it. He was like our team parent. He always made sure the field was in perfect condition, and he attended every game. I can’t remember him ever missing a game. Rain or cold. Sleet or snow. He was always there – cheering for us.”

Transition

Senior baseball player Charlie Williams said Corona was like a team parent and always ensured that the field was in perfect condition.

Direct Quote

“I can’t remember him ever missing a game,” Williams said. “Rain or cold. Sleet or snow. He was always there – cheering for us.”

For example

- **From the situation:**

Leaguetown High School has 1,400 students enrolled in grades 9-12. In early March, Luis Corona, the district's groundskeeper, died after an accident involving a tractor mower. Corona was preparing to mow the school's athletic fields when the accident occurred. Police investigated the accident and found no foul play.

After the accident, the athletic booster clubs and the Parent-Teacher Association donated \$2,000 to help pay for Corona's funeral. Because of the pandemic, the funeral was a family-only ceremony.

Transition

After the accident, the athletic booster clubs and the Parent-Teacher Association donated \$2,000 to help pay for Corona's funeral, which only family could attend because of the pandemic.

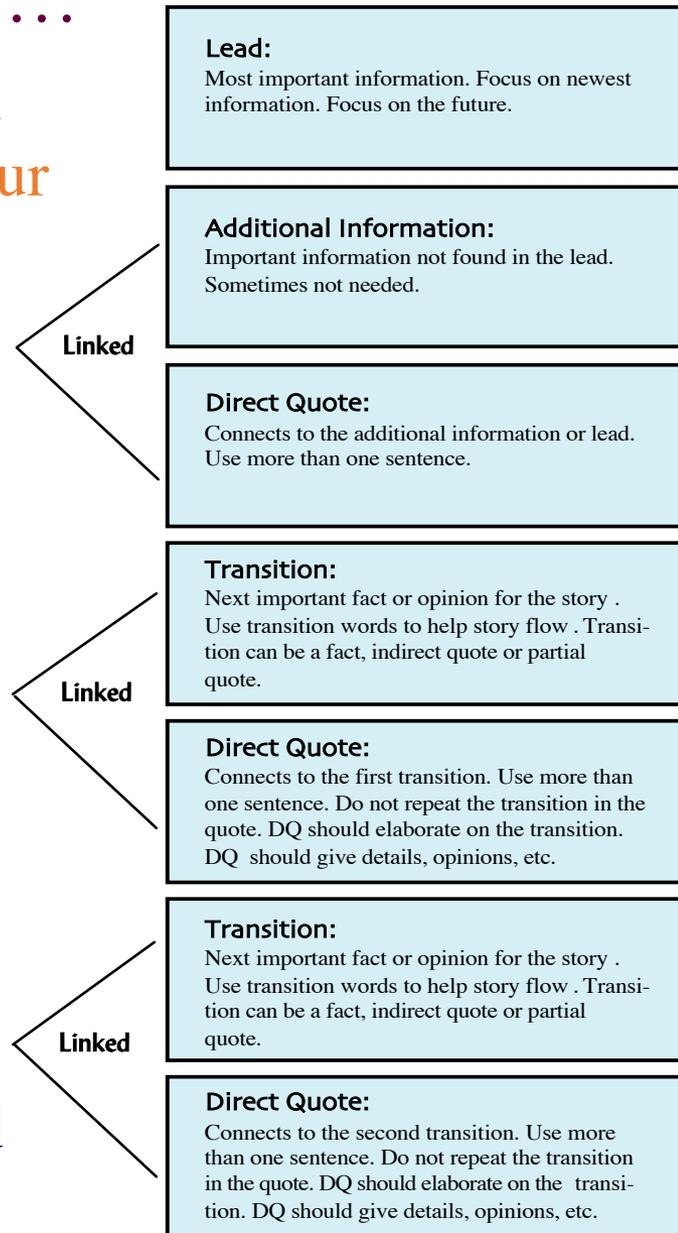
Let's Review ...

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

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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