

Let's talk about ...

News Writing

By Jeanne Acton, UIL Journalism & ILPC Director

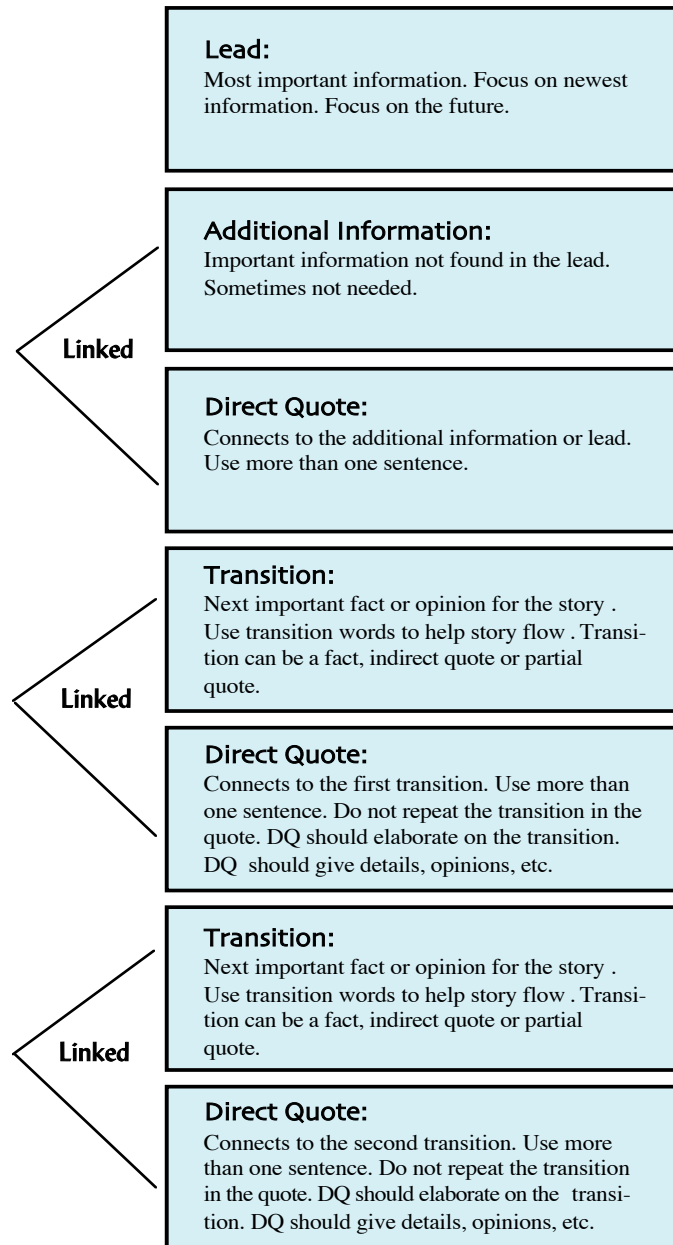
News Writing ...

gives the reader information that will have an impact on them in some way. It 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 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 5 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 wear flip flops to school.

Maybe ... probably, yes.

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.”



When lead

Definitely no!

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

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.

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. 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.

How lead

After months of planning and preparation, the Founder's Day Festival is back this spring thanks to the Student Council, the National Honor Society and several teachers. The festival will be held at Lakeside Park from noon to 4 p.m. on Saturday, March 31.

Why lead

Because they wanted to increase community spirit, the Student Council, the National Honor Society and several teachers worked together to bring back the Founder's Day Festival. The festival will be held at Lakeside Park from noon to 4 p.m. on Saturday, March 31.

What lead

The Founder's Day Festival is back this spring thanks to the Student Council, the National Honor Society and several teachers. The festival will be held at Lakeside Park from noon to 4 p.m. on Saturday, March 31.

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 Meet • 2018



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 (NOT YOUR NAME) on your paper.**

Leaguetown High School, located in South Texas, has 500 students enrolled in grades 9-12. In early March, Principal Joan Eastern and yearbook adviser Libby Mills selected a photographer to take the senior portraits for the 2018-19 school year. Last week, the contract was sent to the new superintendent for approval. After reviewing the contract, Superintendent John Healy, who was hired in January, made one modification — inserting a clause about the dress code. The addendum to the contract states: “All students must be in school dress code when taking senior portraits for the yearbook. Students may not have bare shoulders.”

This clause poses a problem for the photographer because she uses an off-the-shoulder wrap for female senior portraits. The photographer, Mary Goldsmith, shared her concerns with the principal and the yearbook adviser. When questioned, the superintendent said he wanted his amendment added to the contract and said the photographer could either find different wraps to cover the girls’ shoulders, or the yearbook could use a different photograph for the yearbook. Goldsmith said she would not purchase new wraps for the seniors. The wrap portrait is the traditional photo used in the yearbook.

The editors for the 2018-19 yearbook, frustrated with the clause, circulated a petition asking the school board to overturn the superintendent’s decision. Every junior, including male students, signed the petition. The editors will present the petition to the school board at its next meeting Thursday, March 29. You are writing for the issue of the Press to be distributed Tuesday, March 27.

■ JOHN HEALY, superintendent

“In my last school district, our photographer had no problem supplying a wrap that covered our female students’ shoulders. I fail to see what the big deal is. Our dress code is very clear that all students, not just female students, may not wear off-the-shoulder shirts or even spaghetti-strap shirts. Why would we allow and even encourage every female senior to violate that dress code in the yearbook? It makes no sense. If we are going to have a dress code, then it needs to be followed. The female students could simply wear one of their own nice dresses for the yearbook portrait. That is a simple solution.

“If the board feels our dress code is outdated, I am happy to look into it. But revamping a dress code does not happen overnight. We would need to get input from all stakeholders. Then, we would need to share recommendations with the community and students. It takes time to do it right.”

■ GRACE ORTIZ, junior and editor for the 2018-19 yearbook

“I’ve spent my entire high school career wondering exactly why shoulders are so offensive. I never understood why we couldn’t wear spaghetti-strap shirts or a shirt with the shoulders cut out — the ones that are so popular now. Even

■ GRACE ORTIZ, (cont.)

my mom wears those.

“I went back and looked at old yearbooks. Seniors started wearing the wraps in the early 1990s. That’s two and a half decades. The wraps and the tuxedo jackets for the guys create uniformity in the yearbook. If we let people wear whatever they want, the book will look sloppy, and that could hurt us with competitions.

“Plus, it’s not like we are running the halls in the wraps or even coming to school in them. Senior portraits are taken at the photographer’s studio over the summer. We started the petition because Dr. Healy refuses to budge. He even refused to meet with the yearbook editors. Needless to say, we didn’t have any problem getting the signatures. Within two days, we had every signature. I hope the board overturns the superintendent’s decision. If it doesn’t, I don’t know what we will do for senior portraits for the yearbook.”

■ LIBBY MILLS, yearbook adviser

“We were all a little surprised by Dr. Healy’s change to the contract. We’ve used those type of wraps since I was in high school. Most schools across the state use those wraps. I reached out to our journalism organization, and not a single yearbook teacher has ever had a problem like this. I know Leaguetown is a conservative town, but this is a bit ridiculous.

“I am very proud of next year’s editors. Rather than whine and complain about the decision, they took action and created the petition. I’ve had several parents ask if they could sign the petition, but the editors wanted the petition to be from students only. We are encouraging parents to attend the board meeting to support the editors.”

■ SUSAN SIVER, parent of a junior

“I was flabbergasted when my daughter told me about the situation. Who bans senior wraps? It’s a senior tradition. Hasn’t the superintendent looked at a yearbook, from anywhere, for the last three decades? I asked to sign the petition as did several of my friends. Junior parents support the students, and we are going to prove it by showing up to the school board meeting. In fact, we are having a sign-making party at my house Wednesday night. We don’t want to be disruptive, but we want the board to notice us. So far, 20 parents have said they are coming to the sign party. I expect many more at the school board meeting. The board usually listens to the community. I hope they do this time, too.”

■ MARY GOLDSMITH, photographer

“Those wraps are not cheap. I spent \$500 last year buying new ones. I can’t afford to buy more this year just for Leaguetown. I take senior portraits for several area high schools, and no one has asked for a different wrap.

“We can do senior portraits without the wraps. Female students could bring a nice dress or something. The yearbook would lose its uniformity with the photos, though. Senior sections in the yearbook look so much classier when the seniors are in formal wear.”

■ ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The school board members declined to comment for the story.

The yearbook is entered in both state and national journalism competitions annually.

What lead

Superintendent John Healy's decision to prohibit off-the-shoulder wraps for senior portraits is not sitting well with students or parents. On Thursday, the yearbook editors will present a petition, signed by every junior, to the school board requesting it overturn the superintendent's decision.

Why lead

Because yearbook editors are upset over the superintendent's decision to ban off-the-shoulder wraps for senior portraits, they will present a petition, signed by every junior, to the school board Thursday requesting it overturn the new rule.

Let's talk about

Direct Quotes



Direct Quotes:

- Should not repeat the transition/lead before them.

For example:

Option one could hurt the yearbook in state and national journalism competitions, Ortiz said.

“Option one would hurt our book when it competes in other contests,” Ortiz 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.

Direct Quotes:

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

For example:

The yearbook editors started the petition because Healy “wouldn’t even budge” or meet with the editors, Ortiz said.

“Needless to say, we didn’t have any problem getting the signatures,” she said. “Within two days, we had every signature.”

Next transition

Yearbook adviser Libby Mills said most schools across the state use off-the-shoulder wraps for senior portraits.

What comes next?
From whom?

Direct quote – elaborates on previous transition

“I reached out to our journalism organization, and not a single yearbook teacher has ever had a problem like this,” Mills said. “I know Leaguetown is a conservative town, but this is a bit ridiculous.”

What follows this?

More transitions and quotes (linked)

Healy said he banned the wraps because off-the-shoulder tops violate the student dress code.

“If we are going to have a dress code, then it needs to be followed,” he said.

However, seniors have worn the wraps for their yearbook portraits for more than two decades.

“I went back and looked at old yearbooks,” junior Grace Ortiz, the 2018-19 yearbook editor, said. “Seniors started wearing the wraps in the early 1990s.”

Healy offered two solutions: 1) female students could wear their own “nice” dresses or 2) the photographer could buy new wraps that covered shoulders. The photographer, Mary Goldsmith, refused option two.

“Those wraps are not cheap,” she said. “I spent \$500 last year buying new ones. I take senior portraits for several high schools in the area, and no one has asked for a different wrap.”

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:**

However, seniors have worn the wraps for their yearbook portraits for more than two decades.

Transitions

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

For example - **INDIRECT QUOTE TRANSITION:**

(IQ Transition) Siver said she hopes the board will allow the traditional wraps.

Transitions

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

For example - **PARTIAL QUOTE TRANSITION:**

(PQ Transition) The yearbook editors started the petition because Healy “wouldn’t even budge” or meet with the editors, Ortiz said.

Transitions

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

For example:

However, seniors have worn the wraps for their yearbook portraits for more than two decades.

Transitions

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

For example

SUSAN SIVER, PARENT OF A JUNIOR

“I was flabbergasted when my daughter told me about the situation. Who bans senior wraps? It’s a senior tradition. Hasn’t the superintendent looked at a yearbook, from anywhere, for the last three decades? I asked to sign the petition as did several of my friends. Junior parents support the students, and we are going to prove it by showing up to the school board meeting. In fact, we are having a sign-making party at my house Wednesday night. We don’t want to be disruptive, but we want the board to notice us. So far, 20 parents have said they are coming to the sign party. I expect many more at the school board meeting. The board usually listens to the community. I hope they do this time, too.”

Transition

Parents of juniors support the petition, said parent Susan Siver. In fact, Siver is hosting a sign-making party the night before the meeting.

Direct Quote

“Who bans senior wraps?” Siver asked. “It’s a senior tradition. Hasn’t the superintendent looked at a yearbook, from anywhere, for the last three decades?”

For example

- **From the situation:**

Leaguetown High School, located in South Texas, has 500 students enrolled in grades 9-12. In early March, Principal Joan Eastern and yearbook adviser Libby Mills selected a photographer to take the senior portraits for the 2018-19 school year. Last week, the contract was sent to the new superintendent for approval. After reviewing the contract, **Superintendent John Healy, who was hired in January, made one modification — inserting a clause about the dress code. The addendum to the contract states: “All students must be in school dress code when taking senior portraits for the yearbook. Students may not have bare shoulders.”**

Transition

Healy changed the contract to include that all student must be in dress code when taking senior portraits for the yearbook.

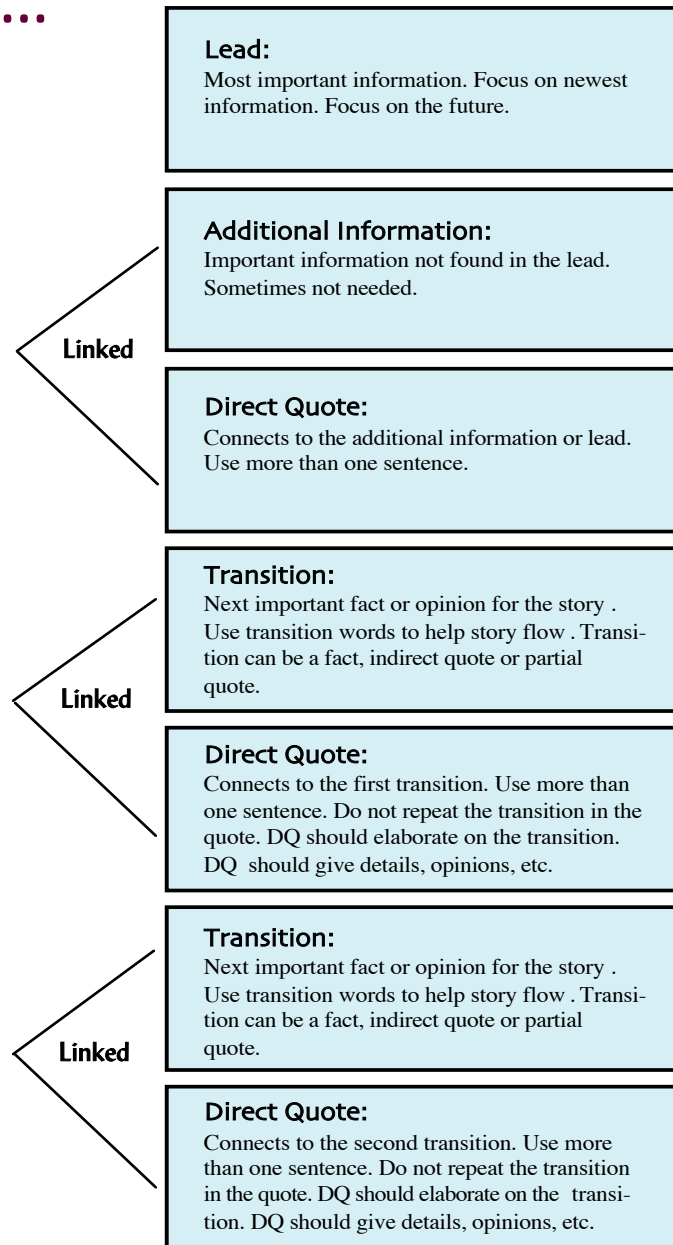
Let's Review ...

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 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?

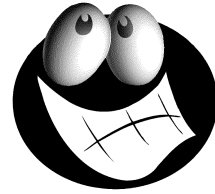
Just say no ...

- 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

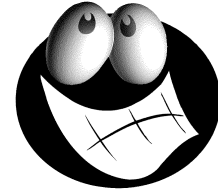
- ✓ Are the most important and recent facts first?
- ✓ Is the story accurate? Are the sources identified fully?
- ✓ Are the paragraphs short?
- ✓ Is the sentence structure varied in the story?
- ✓ Is the story neat and double-spaced so that it is easy to read?
- ✓ Does your story flow?
- ✓ Did you use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

What will make the difference?



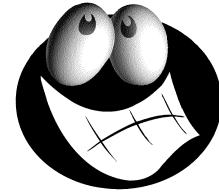
- Getting the news peg in the lead

What will make the difference?



- Using the T/Q formula

What will make the difference?



- Using the “correct” sources
and quotes

What went wrong?

Last year, was a tough year for students. Two students were killed and two were critically injured in three separate car accidents. “There was a lot of heart-ache last year,” Principal Stan Lee said.

In September, the Texas Department of Transportation officials asked Lee if our students would be willing to create driving safety videos for all Texas high schools. Lee spoke with Leaguetown High School broadcast teacher Mena Gallegos and her advanced classes took on the project.

The school will premiere three teen driving safety videos created by the advanced broadcast class next week. Then on March 1, the Texas Department of Transportation will release the videos to the rest of the high schools in the state.

Galegos said, “TxDOT gave us the five risk factors to focus on. My students were on their own after that. These videos are going to save lives. I am sure of it.”

“We’ve never lost so many students in one year,” he said. “When TxDOT approached me, I jumped on the opportunity. I will support anything that keeps our students safer on the road.”

The project includes three four-minute videos focused on speeding, using a cell phone (both texting and talking), driving under the influence, the presence of teen passengers and lack of driving experience.

“Last year, more than 6,000 teens were killed in vehicle crashes,” TxDOT public information officer Ximena Topa said. “That’s 200 more than the previous year.”

The videos are professionally done and will hit home with students.

“They are perfect for students,” said sophomore Sheri Lipman.

The students in the class wrote, directed, starred in and produced the videos.

“I am so proud of the videos, but I was nervous about acting,” said Brown. “One of my best friends was killed in a car accident last year, so I swallowed my fears for him. I can’t wait to watch the rest of the students’ reactions to the videos. I hope they listen to our message — really listen.”

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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