

Let's talk about ...

News Writing



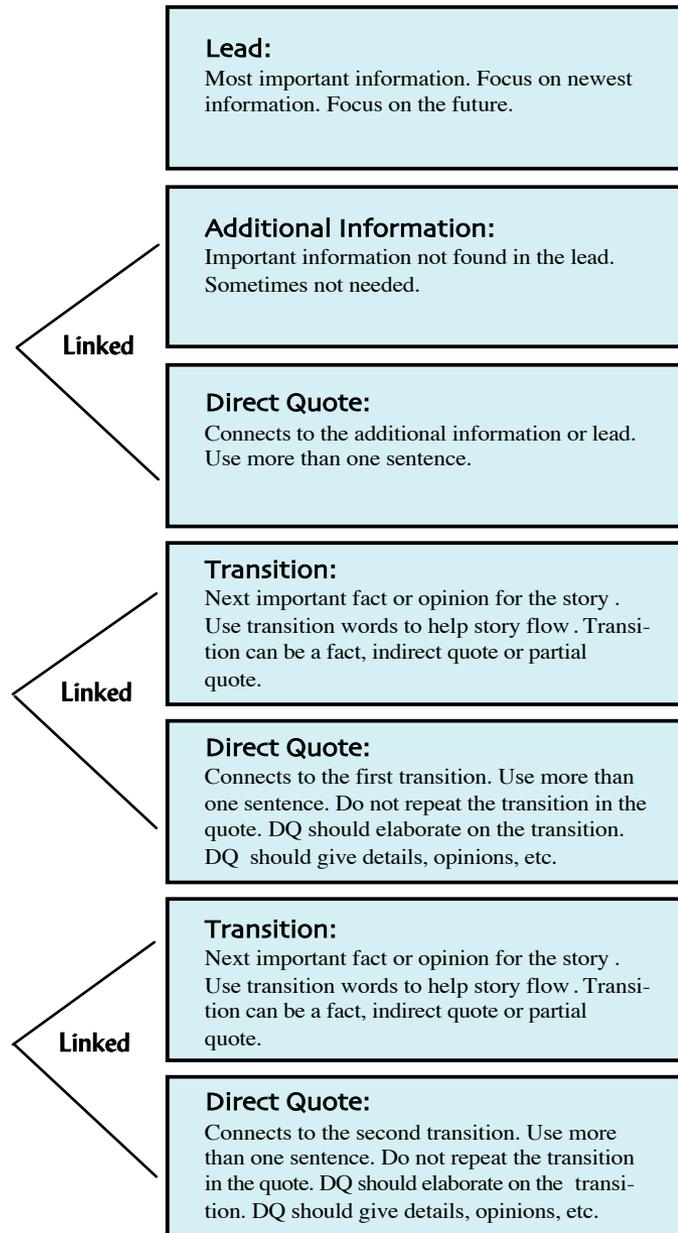
By Jeanne Acton, UIL Journalism & ILPC Director

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 leave campus for lunch due to excessive tardies.

Maybe... probably yes.

American Idol winner Scott McCreery will perform a concert at the high school Thursday after giving a speech at the County Expo Center.



Question:

Do we use this type of lead often? Why?

When lead

Definitely no!

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

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 off-campus lunch policy.

Maybe ... probably yes.

In the principal's office, the senior class dumped 30 pounds of sand to protest the cancellation of the senior trip to Cancun.



Question:

Why is this type of lead rarely used?

How lead

Through a grass roots voting effort, senior Gilbert Castillo won the mayoral election to become the youngest mayor in the city's history.

Why lead

In the wake of the bleacher collapse at the stadium, the location for the district track meet has moved to Southside High School, and the district is looking for an alternate graduation site.

What lead

The community has the chance to speak on the proposed coffee bar at the school board meeting Thursday night.

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

Invitational A Meet • 2011



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 entry. **Put your number on your paper.**

Leaguetown High School is located in rural West Texas and has 900 students enrolled in grades 9-12. District boundaries span 250 square miles. As a result, bus rides for some students can be as long as an hour each way. About 85 percent of high school students depend on the district for their transportation to and from school. In the fall, Superintendent Kelli Putman proposed adding wireless capabilities to all buses. Currently, all juniors and seniors receive a school laptop computer at the beginning of the school year.

After the local newspaper ran a story about the superintendent's proposal in November, a local business made an anonymous donation to equip all of the school buses with Wi-Fi. Starting March 1, all buses will offer the service to students for free.

Superintendent Putman said the bus Wi-Fi will offer the same security features as the school's Internet access. Students will not be able to access social networking sites or sites deemed inappropriate by the district. Dr. Putman also said she is working to get more grants so that every high school student would receive a computer each school year.

You are writing for the issue of the *Press* to be distributed Friday, Feb. 4.

■ DR. KELLI PUTMAN, superintendent

"Because of the size of our district, many of our students have very long bus rides every day. Some of our students sleep on the bus, but most do not use the time wisely. Giving free Wi-Fi to our students will enable them to do research, read the news or even watch educational videos each day. That time will no longer be wasted. This change will positively impact academic productivity.

"I know some students will goof off, but our district computer security severely limits where students can go. Students cannot access any games unless they are educationally-sound, and they can't access social sites or other sites unsuitable for young adults.

"Several of our families cannot afford or choose not to have Internet service at their homes. This can be hard on a high school student who is expected to research or communicate with classmates through a blog in the evening. It puts those students at a disadvantage. Adding Wi-Fi to our buses should level that playing field for our students.

"We are fortunate to have a local business who believes our students deserve every opportunity to learn. I do not know who made the \$25,000 donation, but I am very grateful. That large donation will allow us to continue this service for at least three years. With the tight budget and tough economic times, I thought my Wi-Fi proposal was a pipe dream. I want to thank the donor for being so generous."

■ **MARIAH NUNES, junior**

“My bus ride is about 45 minutes each way. Most of the time I talk with friends or try to read a book. With wireless Internet, I will be able to do so much more. Ms. [Sandi] Deil, my Spanish teacher, gives us extra credit if we do assignments from this Spanish website. I try to do them at home, but our service is so slow. I usually get frustrated and stop before finishing an assignment. I could definitely use some extra credit in that class, so I am excited about this.”

■ **MATT FEDEOR, social studies teacher**

“This will make life easier for some of my students. My seniors in government are required to read newspaper articles dealing with political issues, and they must comment on the articles on our class blog twice a week. Several of my students give up their lunch to do the assignment because they can’t do it at home.”

■ **JEANETTE ROTHER, principal**

“Several of our teachers have been hesitant about giving homework assignments that would require the Internet. Since so many of our students ride the bus, we should have more junior and senior level teachers utilizing the Web. This opens up more resources for our students. The students are lucky to have a superintendent like Dr. Putman. She is always looking for new initiatives to increase opportunities for students. We may be a little, rural town in West Texas, but we have big city technology.”

■ **CALVIN BAKER, bus driver**

“All of the drivers are happy about this. The morning rides are pretty quiet, but the students get restless and rowdy on the way home. I can’t say I blame them, but sometimes it makes for a difficult ride. If the students can get on their computers, I bet the rides will be much quieter and calmer.”

■ **JEROD REYES, sophomore**

“It’s not a bad idea. I just wish I had a laptop. It’s unfair that only juniors and seniors get the computers. Maybe the school can find a way to give sophomores a computer a few days a week. It sure would help me with my homework load.”

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

The router for each bus costs \$200, and the monthly service fee for each bus is \$60. The district has 10 school buses. Leaguetown is the second district in Texas to equip all of its buses with Wi-Fi.

Why lead

Because of an anonymous \$25,000 donation, students who ride a school bus to and from school will have access to the Internet during their commute starting March 1.

What lead

Students who ride the school bus to and from school will have access to the Internet during their commute starting March 1.

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:

Because of an anonymous \$25,000 donation, students who ride a school bus to and from school will have access to the Internet during their commute starting March 1.

“Giving free Wi-Fi to our students will enable them to do research, read the news or even watch educational videos each day,” Superintendent Kelli Putman said. “This change will have a positive impact on academic productivity.”

Next transition

Superintendent Putman first proposed this plan in November, but the district did not have the funding to go forward. The city newspaper published an article about the proposal, and the anonymous donation followed.

What comes next? From whom?

Direct quote – elaborates on previous transition

Superintendent Putman first proposed this plan in November, but the district did not have the funding to go forward. The city newspaper published an article about the proposal, and the anonymous donation followed.

“With the tight budget and tough economic times, I thought my Wi-Fi proposal was a pipe dream,” she said. “I want to thank the donor for being so generous.”

What follows this?

More transitions and quotes (linked)

Not all families can afford or choose to have Internet services in their home, Putman said.

“This can be hard on a high school student who is expected to research or communicate with classmates through a blog in the evening,” she said. “It puts those students at a disadvantage. Adding Wi-Fi to our buses should level that playing field for our students.”

Principal Jeanette Rother said that several teachers have been reluctant to give assignments that require Internet access.

“This opens up more resources for our students,” Rother said. “We may be a little, rural town in West Texas, but we have big city technology.”

Direct Quotes:

- Should not repeat the transition/lead before them.

For example:

Principal Jeanette Rother said that several teachers have been reluctant to give assignments that require Internet access.

“Several of our teachers have been hesitant about giving homework assignments that would require the Internet,” Rother 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:**

(lead) President Barack Obama will speak on Friday to seniors about getting involved in community service work.

(Direct Quote)“Seniors will learn a lot about duty and commitment when they hear President Obama,” Principal Ike Sumter said. “We are so excited that he agreed to come.”

(Fact Transition) Before becoming president, Obama worked as a community organizer in Chicago.

Transitions

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

For example - **INDIRECT QUOTE TRANSITION:**

(Lead) President Barack Obama will speak on Friday to seniors about getting involved in community service work.

(Direct Quote)“Seniors will learn a lot about duty and commitment when they hear President Obama,” Principal Ike Sumter said. “We are so excited that he agreed to come.”

(IQ Transition) President Obama said he believes community service is more important than college in building character.

Transitions

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

For example - **PARTIAL QUOTE TRANSITION:**

(Lead) President Barack Obama will speak on Friday to seniors about getting involved in community service work.

(Direct Quote) “Seniors will learn a lot about duty and commitment when they hear President Obama,” Principal Ike Sumter said. “We are so excited that he agreed to come.”

(PQ Transition) President Obama said he believes community service is “extremely valuable lesson” for every teen to have.

What comes next??

(Lead) President Barack Obama will speak on Friday to seniors about getting involved in community service work.

(Direct Quote)“Seniors will learn a lot about duty and commitment when they hear President Obama,” Principal Ike Sumter said. “We are so excited that he agreed to come.”

(IQ Transition) President Obama said he believes community service is vital for America’s success.

(Direct Quote) “Our nation was built from the givers, and the doers,” he said. “To keep this nation moving forward, we need more giving and less taking.”

The T/Q formula

Sumter said Obama plans on honoring 25 seniors who performed more than 200 hours of community service last year.

“I bet those seniors never thought the President of the United States would honor them for their community service,” Sumter said.

Senior Darryl Butler, one of the seniors who will be honored, volunteered more than 300 hours at the Capital Area Food Bank last year.

“I learned so much working there,” Butler said. “I am excited the President is honoring us, but my real reward is helping people in our community.”

Transitions

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

For example:

In addition to speaking about community service, Obama plans to talk to students about the importance of voting.

Transitions

➤ Use parts of the direct quotes to create the transition. And then use the rest of the quote as direct quote.

For example

- **JEANETTE ROTHER, PRINCIPAL**

“Several of our teachers have been hesitant about giving homework assignments that would require the Internet. Since so many of our students ride the bus, we should have more junior- and senior-level teachers utilizing the Web. This opens up more resources for our students. The students are lucky to have a superintendent like Dr. Putman. She is always looking for new initiatives to increase opportunities for students. We may be a little, rural town in West Texas, but we have big city technology.”

The Transition

Principal Jeanette Rother said that several teachers have been reluctant to give assignments that require Internet access.

Direct Quote

“This opens up more resources for our students,” Rother said. “We may be a little, rural town in West Texas, but we have big city technology.”

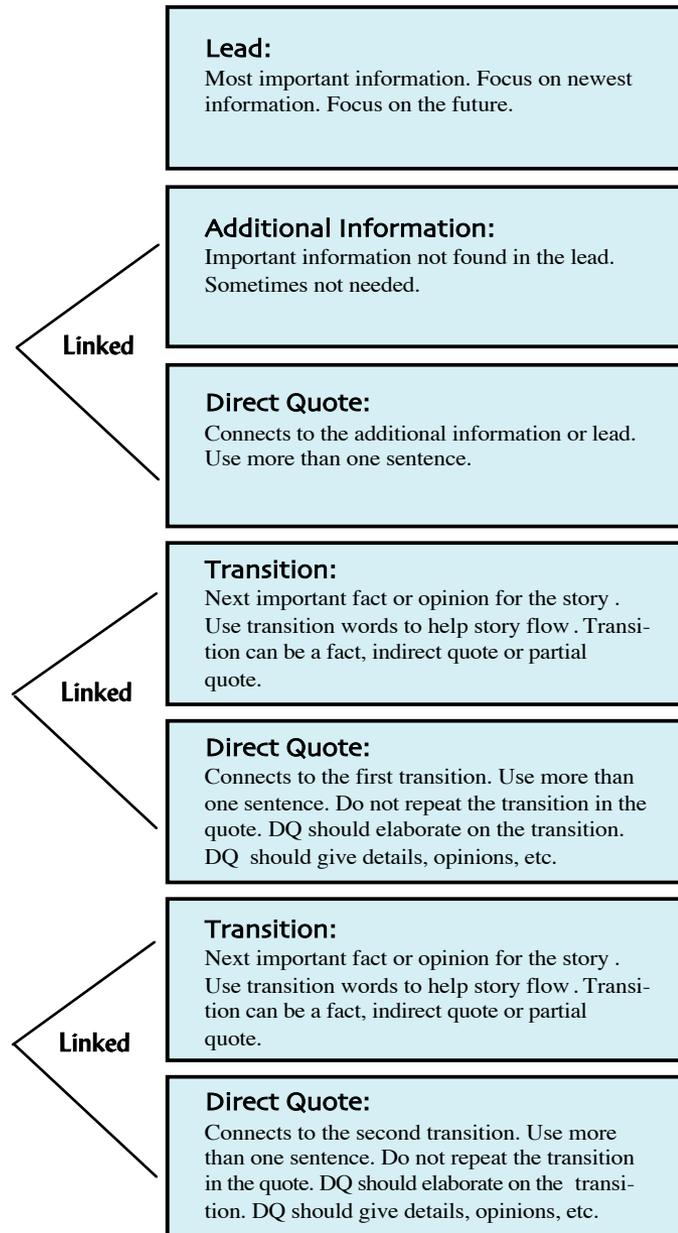
Let's Review ...

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

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?

During the 2010-11 school year, our school has reported 22 fights so far. Last year, the school had 18 total fights.

“One of my friends got in a fight, but he didn’t start it. He was defending himself,” said freshman Andy Opel.

In response to the escalating fights, the school district hired the Teen Conflict Resolution Team to help students solve disagreements through non-violent solutions.

After March 23, any student caught fighting on campus must complete a TCRT non-violence workshop, in addition to normal disciplinary actions.

“Students have to learn how to solve life’s problems without violence, and this program will teach our students just that,” said Mr. Brown.

“Now students will get suspended and be forced to attend this program,” Opel said. “That’s just too much.”

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!



- Get in groups of four to five
- Follow the steps from “Contest Day”
- Write as much as you can. Edit. Write. Edit.

**Did you get the
news peg?**

