

By Vanessa and Dave

Different Types of Leads:

Concept: You can start off a journalism article in many creative and interesting ways, the purpose of a lead is to capture the reader's attention right away and make them interested in what you have to say regarding the article. There are two main types of leads, news and feature, but there are a lot different ways that you start out either of these. Here are some examples:

Question Leads: These are leads use the first sentence of an article to answer one of the "w" questions in journalism, who, what, when, where and why. Another question is how, and question leads can use this too. Basically you use the lead to answer one question to make the reader wonder the answers to the rest.

Summary leads: This kind of lead is mostly used in news stories because of the fact that news stories need to be concise, to the point and put the most information into the least amount of words. That's why with summary leads you summarize the entire article in the lead, or in other words, put the most important piece of information into the first sentence and go from there. Here's an example of a summary lead:

President Bush was aiming to rally U.S. forces encountering tougher resistance in Iraq and warn Americans anew of a potentially long conflict when he was to visit the headquarters of Central Command on Wednesday. The president was getting a pair of briefings from Central Command brass and having lunch with troops. At the Tampa, Fla., facility, he also was to give a speech in which he was reminding military personnel that the United States leads a large coalition in the war to unseat Saddam Hussein, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said.

Blind leads: This is a lead where you start off the article by summarizing but leaving out one essential detail, this is done to catch the interest of the reader. As journalists you want people to read and be interested in your work, and in feature writing especially confusing the reader in the beginning is sometimes a very good way to catch their interest. Right after a blind lead you have to clarify the missing piece of info though. Here's an example:

It was like the scene from the movie "Fast Times at Ridgemont High," only for a wireless generation.

Elena Brooks was incredulous when a pizza deliveryman arrived at Bethel High School one day last spring with an order for a student who was in class.

Finding the culprit was simple enough. "Go into the room, tell everyone to turn their cellphones on and find out which phone has the number stored for the pizza place," said Ms. Brooks, the principal of Bethel High, in Hampton, Va. When identified, the

student said he had ordered the pizza because he had missed lunch. "He didn't see anything wrong with it at all, which was amazing," she said.

For Ms. Brooks and thousands of other teachers and school administrators across the country, the start of a new school year means more incidents like the pizza episode (which ended with its being confiscated). With cellphones and other electronic gadgets playing an increasing role in young people's lives, it is no surprise that they are an increasing presence in schools.

Narrative leads: These leads are another feature type that actually takes you into the mind of the main person in an article. Narrative leads tell a story from a person's specific perspective, it's the most classic and in some instances most effective way to start out a feature. Pick a person and start your article out with their story and tie it into the main point. Here's an example:

Joe Darnaby had his heart set on going to college out East next year. But since Sept. 11, his parents have laid down a new rule: no school more than five hours' drive from home in Deerfield, Ill.

"Part of me says that he has to follow his dreams," says his mother, Maureen, who wants her son to be able to get home in an emergency. "But there must be another place closer to home where he can do that."

Quote leads: This is a lead where you start off the article with a quote that expresses the idea you want to get across well. In some newsrooms quote leads are banned because finding the perfect quote for an article is a very challenging task that most newspapers don't have the time for. Articles are written fast and frequently, and finding a good lead is essential and needs to sometimes be done very quickly. But if you have the time quote leads are very effective if done right.

Exercise: Now why don't you try to write a lead. You can use any one of the leads we talked about, except I'm going to give you the situation you're writing your article about. Your job is to find a good lead for the situation, if you want to experiment you can even write more than one lead using the different types. Here's the situation:

Your best friend had his or her favorite possession in the entire world stolen from out of their book bag. As a journalist you have to report the story and express how bad your friend feels, how something like this could have happened, any detail you can think of. Remember that journalism is objective and unbiased though, so you're just reporting it. Try making up several leads using the methods above.

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