

Tips for Writing Your News Story Lead

What is a lead? A lead is the first paragraph of your story.

- Most of the leads we will write in this course will be **Summary News Leads**.
- In a **Summary News Lead**, the lead should answer *most important* of the five W's and the one H: who, what, when, where, why and how. You probably cannot and should not answer all of these questions in your lead, just those that will be most important to your reader.
- Your lead must be a complete sentence, with a subject and verb. It is NOT a headline.
- Write your lead as a simple sentence, using subject–verb–object word order.
- Write simple, direct sentences.
- Your lead should get right to the point. Don't waste words.
- A 20-word lead is ideal, but make sure your lead is no more than 30 words. (See pg. 152 in our text.)
- Don't back into your story with a long qualifying clause or phrase.
- Be specific. Avoid generalities (See top of pg. 153 in our text.)
- Use strong, active verbs. Avoid the passive.
- Don't begin with the attribution.
- See Checklist on pg. 160 of our text for more information.
- Visit <http://newswriting.wordpress.com/writing-leads-nut-graphs/> for more.

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