



NEWSHOUR

A NewsHour with Jim Lehrer special for students

EXTRA

LESSON PLAN: BE the Press: Local Interviews, National Issues

Handout #1

Notes/criteria for “**straight news**” articles:

- 5 W’s and H: Students need to be able to identify the following elements within their assigned news topic. In a straight news article, the lead will contain as many of these elements as is necessary to communicate what the issue is:
 - the **who**: who did it, who is responsible, who is charged?
 - the **what**: what is the situation, what is the issue here?
 - the **when**: when did this event or situation happen?
 - the **where**: where did this event or situation occur?
 - the **why**: why did this event or situation happen or occur?
 - the **how**: how did this happen? This usually requires some explanation or analysis.
- Inverted pyramid
 - A way of writing daily news articles that presents the most important information to the busy reader first. This form was created to allow the reader to read only the first part of the story and understand the gist of the article if he didn’t have time to finish.
 - This structure allow stories to be cut to fit space requirements easier; editors would cut from the bottom up, since the most important information was presented from the top down.
 - Inverted pyramid is becoming less and less important to daily papers because of the increased presence of 24-hour news sources. Written articles must present more analytical and substantial articles to compete with the deluge of constant information on breaking news.
- Length of paragraphs
 - In a straight news article using inverted pyramid style, the paragraphs tend to be shorter rather than longer. Sometimes they are only three sentences in length. Remember that the reader is busy and hurried and that providing information quickly and clearly is the focus of this style of writing.
 - In-depth news articles tend to have longer paragraphs, since the assumption is that the reader has more time to read an article like this.

- News leads
 - The news lead that contains the 5 Ws and the H is called a summary lead.
 - Often a summary lead may also be called a “hard news lead.” The emphasis here is still on the facts of the story.
 - A “soft lead” is a more creative lead. It can employ creative writing strategies to grab the reader’s interest and encourage them to read more. It is often used on “softer” stories like features, human interest stories, profiles, sports stories, and sometime in-depth news articles.

- Sources
 - All types of articles require sources to be identified and titled.
 - Use first and last name, along with a descriptive phrase that explains what that person does that would allow him or her to have this opinion or knowledge on this topic. The reader must understand why this person quoted has knowledge in this area.
 - Examples:
 - “The murder is solved,” said Captain Joe Smith of the Forestville Police Department.
 - “Prices for medication are exploding,” said Spokane CVS pharmacist Jane Jones.
 - After the first mention of a source, refer to that same source any other time by last name only.
 - Don’t rely on anonymous sources. If a source doesn’t want his or her name printed, don’t promise that you won’t. Explain your assignment. Consult your teacher.
 - For news articles, whether straight news or in-depth, try to stick with using attribution words like “said” or “stated” or “declared” or “reported.” Avoid more descriptive attribution words that belong in feature articles, like “sing-songed” or “whispered” or “shouted” or “laughed.”
 - Even short news articles need direct quotes to give them life and believability. The longer the article, the more direct quotes you need. For a short news article (five paragraphs), you should try to have at least two or three strong direct quotes. Add in more as your article grows.
 - You should also include indirect quotation, where you attribute information to the source who said it, but you don’t use their exact words. You are attributing the ideas, the substance of what they said.