

NEWS LEADS

Definition

"A lead is an opening paragraph that gives the audience the most important information of the news story in a concise and clear manner, while still maintaining the readers' interest." (Northern Michigan University Writing Center)

"The lead, or opening paragraph, is the most important part of a news story. It summarizes the information and establishes the voice and direction of the article." (Purdue University Online Writing Lab OWL)

"The lead is the first sentence or two of a news story. It is designed to grab the reader's attention and make them want to read more."

Types of News Leads

Summary Lead

This is the most common type, immediately summarizing the most important information in the story (who, what, when, where, why, how).

* Example: "A fire destroyed a vacant apartment building downtown early Tuesday morning, causing an estimated \$500,000 in damage."

Impact Lead

Focuses on how the event or issue affects the reader or a specific group of people.

* Example: "Local taxpayers will see a slight increase in property taxes next year to fund a new school construction project."

Anecdotal Lead

Begins with a short, engaging story or anecdote that illustrates the main point of the article.

* Example: "Eight-year-old Emily clutched her teddy bear as firefighters rescued her from her burning home Tuesday morning."

Descriptive Lead

Uses vivid language and sensory details to paint a picture for the reader.

* Example: "The acrid smell of smoke filled the air as firefighters battled a raging inferno that engulfed a historic downtown building."

Question Lead

Starts with a provocative question to grab the reader's attention.

- * Example: "Are you ready to pay more for a gallon of gas?"

Direct Address Lead

Speaks directly to the reader, using "you" or "your."

- * Example: "If you're planning to travel this summer, be prepared for higher airfares."

Quotation Lead

Begins with a striking or memorable quote from a source.

- * Example: «'This is the worst disaster I've ever seen,' said Mayor Jones as she surveyed the damage caused by the tornado."

Important Note: The best lead will depend on the specific story and its intended audience.

Key Characteristics of a Good News Lead:

- * Concise and to the point: Get to the main information quickly.
- * Engaging and attention-grabbing: Capture the reader's interest immediately.
- * Accurate and informative: Provide essential facts without being overly wordy.
- * Relevant and newsworthy: Focus on the most important and interesting aspects of the story.

Key Characteristics of Weak Leads:

- * Vague and general: They lack specific details and important information.
- * Passive and wordy: They use weak verbs and unnecessary phrases.
- * Boring and predictable: They fail to capture the reader's attention.
- * Biased or sensationalized: They present information in a way that favors a particular viewpoint.

Activity 1

Find the type of news leads for each of the following;

- "A powerful earthquake struck Southern California early Wednesday morning, shaking residents awake and causing significant damage to buildings in downtown Los Angeles."
- "Commuters faced hours-long delays this morning after a major train derailment near the city center, disrupting travel for thousands of people."
- "Will the city council approve the controversial budget proposal that includes significant cuts to education funding?"

- "Little Timmy clutched his teddy bear as firefighters pulled him from the burning building, his eyes wide with fear. The blaze, which engulfed a row of apartments early this morning, left dozens homeless."
- «'This is a devastating blow to our community,' said Mayor Johnson, reacting to the news of the factory closure that will leave hundreds of residents unemployed."
- "Smoke billowed from the charred remains of the historic theater, a once-grand landmark now reduced to rubble. Firefighters battled the blaze for hours, but the building was ultimately destroyed."

Activity 2

True Or False?

- "President Biden on Tuesday signed into law a sweeping climate, health care and tax bill, a landmark achievement for his administration that Democrats hope will energize voters ahead of the midterm elections."**Summary Lead**
- "For decades, the American dream of homeownership has been elusive for many Black families, a legacy of racist housing policies that have limited their access to wealth and opportunity. Now, rising interest rates are making that dream even harder to reach."**Question Lead**
- "In the summer of 2021, a group of teenagers in Baltimore, inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement, decided to start a newspaper. They called it The Baltimore Banner, and their goal was to tell the stories of their community in a way that the mainstream media often did not."**Impact Lead**
- "Can artificial intelligence help us understand the universe? That is the question that a team of astronomers is now exploring, using a powerful new A.I. system to analyze vast amounts of data from telescopes."**Summary Lead**
- "The air in Phoenix was thick with a haze of dust and smoke on Tuesday, as temperatures soared above 110 degrees Fahrenheit for the 19th consecutive day, a record-breaking streak that has pushed the city to the brink." **Anecdotal Lead**

References

<https://nmu.edu/universitymedia>

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