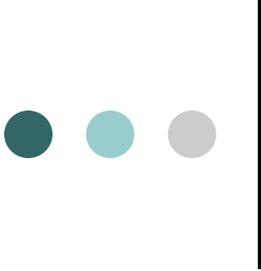


Basic News Writing

“Hard News”

“Writing is easy; all you do is sit staring at a blank piece of paper until drops of blood form on your forehead.”

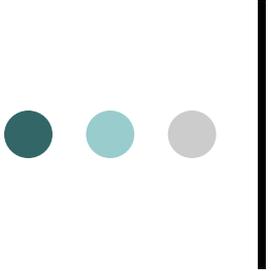
- Gene Fowler, author



What is news?

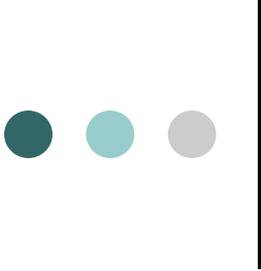
- Fiction creates information
- News recreates what happened (non-fiction)

- Information lists facts
- News puts facts in context
 - Sifts & sorts
 - Incorporates experience of facts



NEWS: Inverted Pyramid

- Print & online news utilize for quick info relay
- 69% of stories in US newspapers use inverted pyramid (<http://readership.org/content/editorial/feature-style.main.htm>)
- Attributed to introduction of telegraph in Civil War when communication was paid for by word

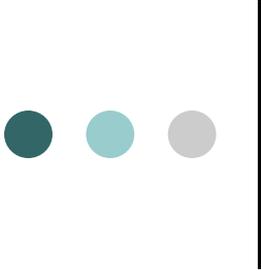


What makes inverted pyramid unique?

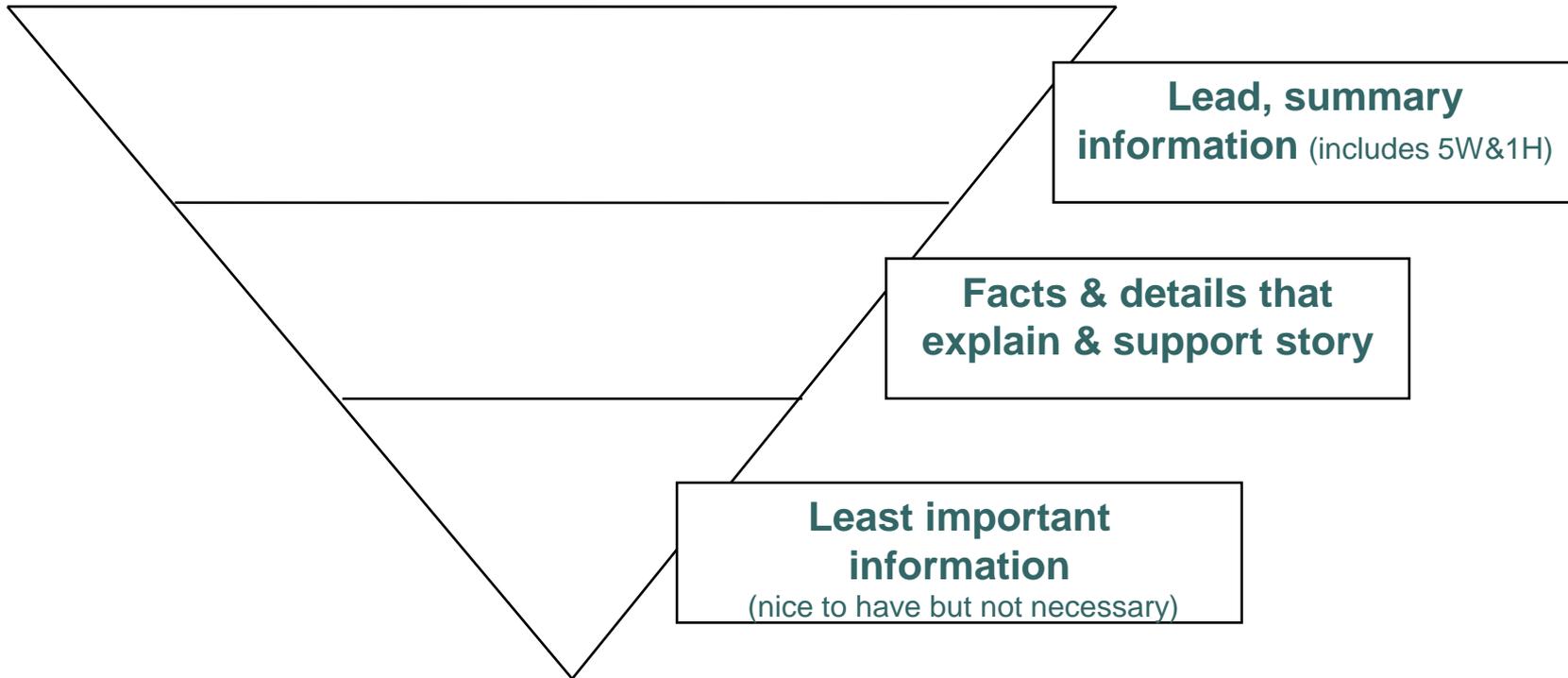
"An example of a regular pyramid story might be an old-fashioned mystery where the reader is introduced to more and more important clues as he or she reads on. It is only after collecting all of those clues that the reader can finally begin to solve the mystery.

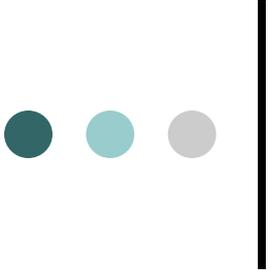
With an inverted pyramid story we give away the solution (or in our case a summary) at the very beginning. The rest of the story contains less and less important information until we just stop."

- Rich Cameron, the chair of the journalism department at Cerritos College in California



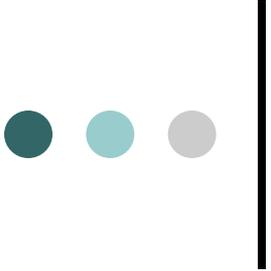
Inverted Pyramid Diagram





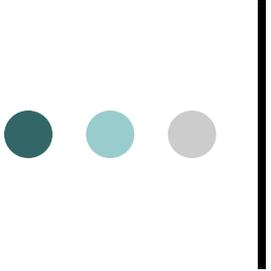
Characteristics

- Puts information in **logical order**
- Arranges information from most to least important...**descending order of importance**
- Story **starts with a climax**...sets tone
- Info that follows **explain & support lead**



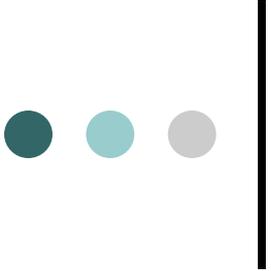
Advantages

- Advertises what is coming in story
- Conveys most important info upfront
- Saves readers time & editors space
- Allows editors to shorten stories from bottom
- Quick means of info delivery
- Readers can leave whenever their info needs are met



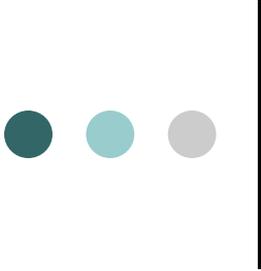
Shortcomings

- Does not encourage people to read entire story
- Stories don't end—they just stop
- No suspense—Interest diminishes as story progresses



Deciding what part of the story to tell...

- Often stories are unfolding...
 - What do readers need to know?
 - What is not already common knowledge?
 - What needs to be verified? Myths cleared up...

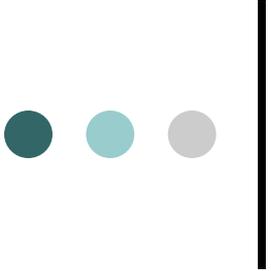


The **Lead**...

- The opening of a story & summary of the most important information

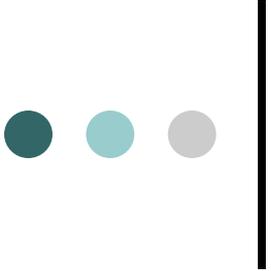
“The lead should be a promise of great things to come, and the promise should be fulfilled.”

-Stanley Walker, City Editor



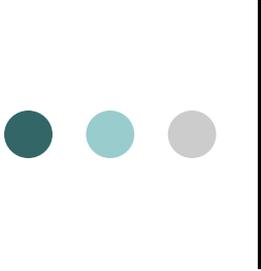
Purpose of the Lead

- Attention getter
- Simple clear statement constituting the 1-2 paragraphs of the story
 - Paragraphs can be as short as one sentence



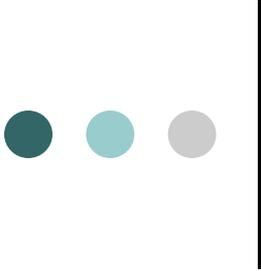
Characteristics

- Info should be relevant, useful and interesting
- It should answer question:
SO WHAT? or WHO CARES?
- Most important & crucial info summed up
- No cookie-cutter formula



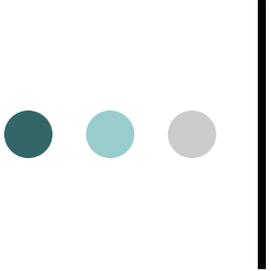
Writing the Lead

- Research the 5 Ws & H
- Determine most crucial info
 - (irrelevant info can be omitted)
- Ask yourself...
 - What is most **interesting** about this story?
 - What aspect is **most important** for readers to know?
- Keep it to 25 words or less
 - (unless more than one sentence)



Types of Leads

- **Immediate-identification**
 - focuses on & reveals the “who” or key players
- **Delayed-identification**
 - general reference to the “who” because person(s) have little name recognition
- **Summary**
 - incorporates important elements rather than highlight a specific aspect into a synopsis
- **Multiple-element**
 - incorporates several themes
- **Leads with Flair**
 - unique display of information



Sample Leads

Men hold suspect until law arrives

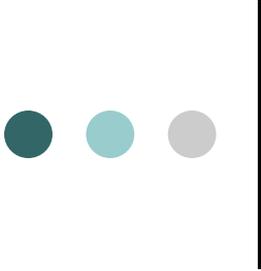
WILDWOOD -- Three men held down a man until sheriff's deputies arrived to arrest him after the suspect allegedly broke into a sports bar, Sumter County sheriff's officials said. Robert Jeffery Shinn, 41, of Fort Pierce has been charged with two counts of burglary, two counts of criminal mischief and one count of theft, deputies said.

Mount Dora council loses benefits to budget cut

MOUNT DORA -- City council members will no longer be eligible for medical benefits after voting unanimously at a workshop meeting to eliminate the expense from next year's budget.

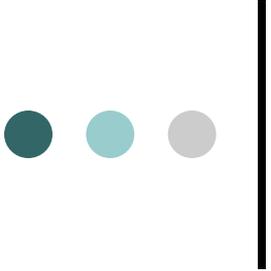
More Floridians seeking help for gambling

ORLANDO -- With more and more opportunities to wager their money — from the Florida Lottery to slot machines to Internet cafes — Floridians are looking for help with gambling problems in record numbers. Calls to a statewide gambling help line have increased 12 percent over the past year and 17 percent over the past two years with nearly 5,000 calls received in the fiscal year that ended June 30.



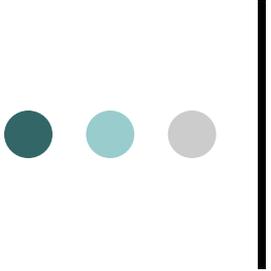
Summary: NEWS STORY ORGANIZATION

- Start with the Lead
- Body introduces & expounds important info
 - Elaborate on info from lead with details
 - Use important info not able to be included
 - Introduces new info in order of importance
 - Develop ideas in same order introduced
 - Uses only one new idea in each paragraph
 - Indicate significance or SO WHAT? factor
- End with summary
 - Wrap-up
 - Be prepared to have it edited



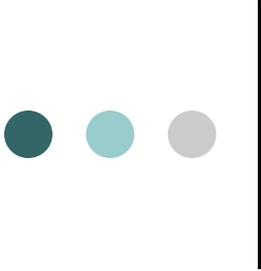
Activity: Writing your 1st Story

- Review your research
 - What are 5 Ws?
 - What was interesting or said uniquely?
 - What information is missing?
 - Where can you get it?
- Write Lead
 - Summarize story



Activity

- Select a news story.
- Consider:
 - Lead
 - What are the 5 Ws? Why are they the most important facts?
 - Body:
 - Why did the reporter organize the info like he/she did?
 - What is the background info? Where is it found?
 - Ending
 - How did the reporter end the story? Why?



SAMPLE: UCF football player Ereck Plancher dies after conditioning drills

By KYLE HIGHTOWER and ILIANA LIMON | Sentinel Staff Writers

University of Central Florida football player Ereck Plancher died today after collapsing after a workout in preparation for the opening of the Knights' spring practice.

Plancher, a redshirt freshman receiver from Naples, died shortly after being taken by ambulance to Florida Hospital, where he was pronounced dead at 11:51 a.m. The cause of death will be determined by an autopsy.

Players were leaving the Knights' indoor practice facility, Nicholson Fieldhouse, when Plancher collapsed, UCF associate athletic director Joe Hornstein said. He said the incident did not occur during the workout. UCF postponed the start of spring practice. It was scheduled to open Wednesday.

UCF Coach George O'Leary met with the team after it was learned that Plancher had died. O'Leary was not available for comment but UCF Athletic Director Keith Tribble and a police official will speak at a news conference at 4 p.m. today on campus...