

## DOING NEWS!

### The Structure

<b>Lede</b>	→	<b>Most Important</b>
<b>Body</b>	→	<b>Important</b>
<b>Extra Info</b>	→	<b>Least Important</b>

Details are given in order of importance, with the least important details at the end of the article. The most important information should be up front, so readers can skim the start of the article to gain the essential facts of the story before deciding to read on.

**THE LEDE:** This opening paragraph of one or two sentences tells readers what is newsy and exciting that has happened. It provides enough information to give readers a good overview of the entire story and hooks them into wanting to read more. It answers who, what, where, and when. (How and why are often reserved for later).

**THE BODY:** Further short paragraphs elaborate on the lede. Each paragraph has a main idea and different fact. Ideally the second or third paragraph contains a quote.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** Complementary or background information is often included at the end of the piece, after the most important and timely information has been discussed.

Ask yourself this question: Will the story still work if you cut everything except the first few paragraphs? If not, re-arrange it so that it does. If the first few paragraphs say it all, perhaps no further elaboration is needed. Be tough on the story and cut out anything that is not necessary.

### The Writing: Clear, Concise, Precise

- Assume that readers have no prior knowledge of the event.
- Make sure the writing is clear, concise, and straightforward.
- Show, don't tell.
- Remove any words that aren't completely necessary. Usually you'll find a lot of adjectives that can be pruned, repetition that can be knocked out, points that are not central to the story that can be eliminated, and long words that can be replaced with simple equivalents that convey the same meaning more forcefully and clearly.
- Sentences should be short, and paragraphs should be one or two sentences.
- Avoid complex or fancy punctuation—do not use colons and semicolons to add additional clauses to full sentences.
- Avoid contractions (e.g., *can't*, *won't*)
- Avoid academic and activist jargon.

- Make sure the story is written in the third person. Author should not insert themselves in the story.
- Avoid language that is gendered, raced, etc. (e.g., use *councillor* instead of *alderman*)
- Avoid “it is...,” “there is...,” “there are...” structures. They are passive and vague.
- Use the past tense, not the present.
- All major information should be attributed unless it is commonly known or unless the information itself strongly implies the source.

### **The People: Introducing and Quoting ‘Em**

- Introduce people when their names are first mentioned, so that readers know who they are right away (e.g., “Glenda Lajoie, a spokesperson for Ministry of Magic” or “Westboro resident Kevin Lao”)
- When a title is placed before a name, do not separate them with a comma. The following are correct: (1) “Prime Minister Elizabeth May said...,” (2) “Elizabeth May, the prime minister, said...,” and (3) “The prime minister, Elizabeth May, said...” The latter, however, is a weaker construction and not recommended.  
Include quotes, comments, opinions, statements, and observations from the people affected by the issue, others involved, and experts on the topic.
- Direct quotations should be no more than two sentences long. To improve the readability of longer quotes, break them up.

### **The Facts: Check ‘Em**

- Names—people, organizations, events, policies, etc.
- Remember to double-check names, as people often make major mistakes or minor errors with spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and spacing.
- Remember to check for the placement of apostrophes in official names of associations and unions.
  - For example, the GSA stands for the Graduate Students’ Association—**not** the “Graduate Students Association” (no apostrophe, no possession) or the “Graduate Student’s Association” (apostrophe indicates possession for one student)
- Job titles/positions
- Dates
- Quotes