

VIDEO NEWSWRITING



A LEAD IS...

- the first sentence
- a sales pitch
- short
- short on facts
- conversational

BEFORE WRITING...

- Read wires, background, research, interviews
- Make sure you understand the story
- Identify the 5 W's and the H

ACTIVE NOT PASSIVE



PASSIVE: A degree in journalism was earned by the USC student.



ACTIVE: The USC student earned a degree in journalism.



Leave these OUT of the lead

- Yesterday, last night, last week etc.
- Unfamiliar names of people, places, things
- TMI Too Much Information
- TMN Too Many Numbers
- To be verbs (is, are)
- Age (unless newsworthy)
- Questions: Did you ever wonder why....

Put these IN the lead

- Verbs with verve
- One idea per sentence
- General rather than specific (cancer hospital not Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center)

KEEP IT SIMPLE

- Simple sentences: Subject + Verb + Object
- Don't start with a phrase: "In spite of.." or "Holding her nose before she jumped.."
- Grab the viewer's attention.
- Simple doesn't mean easy!

NUMBers

- Identify the essential numbers
- Round them off unless precision is important-- as in the number dead or injured
- In most cases, a number must be compared to another number to make sense
- Analogies help: 22 tons of cocaine would fill two school buses

More Numbers for Video

- Avoid symbols. Instead of \$ write: dollar
- Use the words “more than” or “less than” with numbers. The words “over” and “under” relate to height

CLICHES

- Avoid them like the plague
- Examples: clinging to life, parent's worst nightmare, cautiously optimistic, up in arms, at the end of the day

TYPES OF VIDEO LEADS

- SET THE RIGHT TONE: SERIOUS? SAD? SURPRISING? FUNNY? TOUCHING
- BREAKING NEWS/HARD LEAD: MUST ANSWER AT LEAST ONE OF THE W'S
- Six students were killed when a balcony tore away from a Berkeley apartment building.

TYPES OF VIDEO LEADS

- Soft/Feature
- It's 5am and Mr. Winston pulls into his parking space and clocks in just as he has every work day for the past 70 years.

ATTRIBUTION

- Tell viewers the source of the information at the beginning of the sentence.
- Do you know why?



Los Angeles teachers deserve a 20 percent raise, according to the union.



The Los Angeles teachers union says members deserve a 20 percent raise.

A WORD IS A TERRIBLE THING TO WASTE

- at this point in time (now)
- in the near future (soon)
- due to the fact that (since/because)
- for the purpose of (to)
- Don't start with "The school board met today..." Boards always meet. What's the news?

AVOID OPINION WORDS

- tragic, unthinkable, etc.
- Tell viewers what happened. Let them decide how they feel.

Accentuate the POSITIVE eliminate the NEGATIVE

- Don't start with a negative. Start with a positive. Less confusing.



The Trojan men's basketball team didn't win the first game.



The Trojan men's basketball team lost the first game.

AVOID FALSE TITLES

- Race car driving grandmother Molly Moon
- Harvard-educated billionaire Les Moore
- Reminder: write the way you talk.

AVOID FALSE PRESENT

- There's no tense like the present
- But don't fake it



A shopper is struck by a hit-and-run driver in Old Town Pasadena

- (better) A shopper was struck by a hit-and-run driver in Old Town Pasadena
- (best) Pasadena police are looking for a hit-and-driver who struck a shopper in Old Town.

More Tips

- Full names first time. Last name only after that. 1) Taylor Swift 2) Swift
- 1) Beyonce 2) Beyonce
- Use hyphens for numbers and letter to be read individually: C-I-A I-R-S

NO INVERTED PYRAMID

- Video stories have a beginning, middle, and end.

TEXT vs VIDEO LEAD

LA TIMES EARTHQUAKE LEAD

The little-known West Napa Fault shook for about 20 seconds early Sunday, enough to leave the San Francisco Bay Area with its biggest earthquake in 25 years — wrecking historic wine country buildings, buckling streets, emptying store shelves, rupturing gas and water lines, and sending about 170 people to the hospital.

CBS EVENING NEWS LEAD

The ground began shaking at 3:20 this morning — especially fierce near the town of

READ YOUR WRITING OUT LOUD

- To make sure it sounds conversational
- To catch mistakes
- Is this how you would tell a friend what happened?



