

## LEAD TYPES AND EXAMPLES: A BAKER'S DOZEN

Edited/summarized by Don Bates from <http://cubreporters.org/leads.html>

### Summary Lead

- Traditional .
- To the point, factual.
- Quick summary in 30 words or less, usually one sentence.
- Contains essence of story (i.e., most important of 5 Ws, cites the source of opinions).  
*WASHINGTON -- Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan told Congress yesterday that U.S. economic growth appeared to be slowing, heading off for the moment any need to raise interest rates. Wall Street responded with a cheer, sending stocks and bonds soaring.*

### Single-Item Lead

- Focuses on one or two elements of summary lead for bigger punch:  
*The Philadelphia Phillies are World Champions again.*
- As opposed to traditional lead from Reuters:  
*The Philadelphia Phillies ended their long wait for a World Series title with a short burst of baseball last night as they clinched the crown by completing a rain-suspended 4-3 win over the Tampa Bay Rays.*

### Delayed Identification Lead

- Uses a descriptive pronoun to identify person in lead.
- Provide specific name and title in later paragraph.  
*LINCOLN, R.I. -- A School Committee member has filed an assault complaint against a fellow member, accusing her of grabbing her nose and twisting it following an executive session Thursday night.*  
*Patricia A. Iannelli yesterday alleged in an interview that fellow committee member Lucille J. Mandeville "grabbed my nose and proceeded to twist my nose" following a rancorous discussion during a closed-door School Committee meeting.*

### More Creative Lead

- May be needed if summary lead doesn't work as well. Consider this summary lead:  
*A late spring snowstorm surprised forecasters and drivers Tuesday afternoon, triggering more than 30 accidents, Cleveland police officials said.*
- Instead, you could try...

### Short Sentence Lead

- Uses one word or short phrase as teaser for rest of lead.  
*One-fifth of an inch.*  
*That's all the snow it took to trigger more than 30 accidents on local roads yesterday as a late spring storm snuck up on Cleveland motorists.*

### Analogy Lead

- Makes comparison between issue or event and something more familiar to reader. Works well with complex or foreign matter you must explain in laymen's terms.  
*AMSTERDAM -- The Netherlands is considering anti-terrorism laws that make the United States' Patriot Act look like a civil libertarian's dream come true.*

### Wordplay Lead

- Involves clever turn of phrase, name or word.

*PAWTUCKET, R.I. –*

*Bill Clinton will finally get taken to the cleaners.*

*So will Dracula and a Playboy bunny.*

*The three are among some 6,000 smoke-damaged costumes that will visit dry cleaners in the next few days, because of a fire that broke out Wednesday night at Morris Novelty, a popular costume and novelty store.*

### Scenic Lead

- Begins with description of scene surrounding event.
  - Typically used for stories in which setting is prominent, e.g., festive events, performances, sports. Can be used to strike more appropriate mood for story.
- The lights shine down and the music surrounds her as she spins across the stage into the arms of her partner. The audience roars its approval as the music slows and the curtains begin to close. It's the end of just another workday for teenager Chelsea Rittenhouse.*
- At 18, the Howell resident is the youngest member of the New York Theater Ballet.*

### Storytelling Lead

- Uses a narrative style,
- Begin by introducing main characters, conflict, perhaps story setting. Makes readers feel drama and want to know what happens next.

*DETROIT -- "Get on the ground," a man holding a gun screamed. "I'll blow your heads off if you move."*

*Dennis Grehl and a co-worker complied. Dreamlike, he found himself lying face down on a cold, gritty black-tile floor, a pistol against the back of his head.*

*"Please, mister, don't make me shoot you," a second gunman threatened.*

*A crazy memory: tiny specks of light floating in the tile; that, and the paralyzing weight of helplessness.*

*Mr. Grehl is a pharmacist, unassuming, mild mannered. A family man with a wife and a daughter.*

*He was being robbed.*

### Amazing Fact Lead

- Opens with interesting or amazing fact that arouses reader interest.
- WASHINGTON -- Sixty percent of Americans oppose the U.S. war in Iraq, the highest number since polling on the subject began with the commencement of the war in March 2003, according to poll results and trends released Wednesday. (CNN)*

### Startling Statement Lead

- *LINCOLN, R.I. -- The first thing Elizabeth Moon sees in the morning is the room where her father was beaten to death.*
- It was one year ago yesterday that she and this bucolic town were stunned by the brutal and still unsolved murder of Dr. Alfred C. Moon. The radiologist's naked body was found in his bed, bludgeoned with a lamp.*

### Opposite Lead

- Cites one point of view or observation, then follows with the opposite:  
*Facebook rots the brain, according to a report by a Stansbury University psychology professor. Jim Wallace, honors student and an avid user of the popular website, says that just isn't true.*

### List Lead

- Sometimes you want to impress the reader with a longer list of people involved in the story.  
*Whenever sixth-grader Vasil Evanoff has a day off from school, he hops into a Cessna 152 and takes to the skies.  
On weekends, Sue Sumner likes to fly her grandson around the Valley, just to see the sights.  
There's a special restaurant that funeral director Lincoln Ragsdale Jr. likes to visit for breakfast, but it's 115 miles away from home. He climbs in his Beech Bonanza A-36, and an hour later, he's eating pancakes in Sedona.  
Evanoff, Sumner and Ragsdale are among the growing numbers of Arizonans piloting small airplanes.*

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