

## What is **News**?

News is about people and anything that is associated with the human being, for instance, accident, Olympics, presidential election, oil spill, bomb blast by Boko haram armed group.

From the very beginning of humanity, the concept of news has always existed but in its simplest forms, for example by simple interactions at public space such as friends exchanging pleasantries on the way to the farm, discussing about products in the market squares, village head palace meeting or even by the town crier activity in the village. Indeed, the death of a village head, who had four wives was a big ‘thing’ in the village.

Why? Is it because no chief has died before? Is it because he is a man? Is it because he had four wives? In the death of the village head, prominence is what makes it particularly important to indigenes and possibly neighboring villages. That is one factor that comes to play when the concept of news is defined.

Thus, not all events make news, only those that are considered important and interesting events do. Importantly too, some events may be important and interesting, they do not ,however become news unless they are reported, making an event that has taken place known to its audience

News is therefore a kind of history. The difference is that while history is an account of a past event, news is an account of a current event. News of today eventually become valuable documents for historians of tomorrow, just as historians of today consult newspapers of the past

From the foregoing an attempt can be made to define news.

1. “News is an account of a recent event or opinion which is important and interesting (Shrivastata, 2007).

For an event to be news, it must fulfil at least three of the 6 “**5Ws and 1 H**” pillar of a news story.

**Who:** Who are the person(s) involved or will be involved

**What:** What has happened or will happen?

**When:** When did the event take place or will take place?

**Where:** Where exactly did the event occur will take place?

**Why:** Are there reasons for the event that has taken place or what are the reasons for the event that will happen?

**How:** How did the event happen or how will it happen?

Human interest is the dimension that arouses that greatest interest in news gathering, namely that any news that affects people directly are always considered as news worthy.

But again news worthiness is determined not just by the value and importance of the news item but also by editorial policy of the media organization e.g. the editorial style, policies and preferences.

Recently, however, news has increasingly become not just an account of what has happened but also of an event that has not happened, this is strictly determined by the news value of the future event. It must be very important and interesting to the audience to become news. For example, the planned visit of US president to Tanzania is news even if it will happen in a month's time.

## **Types of News**

There are two types of news: **Hard news** and **Soft news**

### **Hard News**

Hard news are news constitute the critical function of journalism. They are accounts of events that have just happened or about to happen e.g. crime coverage, meetings, law and order issues, speeches, demonstrations, acts of war, traffic accident, elections, etc.).

Hard news are very informative and emphasize facts and not opinions or analysis. They deal with current and time-sensitive events, e.g. Political, economic, or social issues which in turn have political, economic and social implications.

### **Soft News**

Soft news are human interest stories which Centre on lifestyles, entertainment, sports, celebrity gossip and society pages.

They place less emphasis on facts although it must be founded on facts as well, only that the aim is to entertain. They are less time-sensitive, less serious and with less societal impact.

Most soft news are derived from hard news but are not “breaking”. They, however, contain more information than the original hard news they were taken from or generally written about an aspect of a hard news story. E.g. when you read that an accident has occurred and there are many casualties, that is hard news but when you read about the personal stories of first responders and rescuers rescuing people with their bare hands that is soft news.

## Elements of News

Some Authors refer to elements of news as news values and there are several of them.

1. **Proximity:** People are generally interested in news. But more important, people are interested in news about their environment, their local community, their neighborhood, their Local council, their state, and their country than elsewhere in that order.

A market woman is more interested to hear that the government is giving loans to small business owners like herself than an European aid coming to Tanzania for research purposes.

Proximity refers to “**where**” or the place and this is one of the key components of news. The audience needs to know where the news is coming from.

2. **Timeliness:** Old news is not news. People want to get information as it is happening. This is the reason why the concept of “**breaking news**” remains always attractive because there is a sense of “**happening right now**” in it.

News is a highly perishable item and therefore the quickly it gets to its destination and is consumed, the higher the value. (Shrivastava, 2007).

3. **Prominence:**

The personalities involved in a story determine what value is attached to that story. Journalists look for such personalities, such personalities will include, for example the president of a country

4. **Drama:** Issues that arouse suspense will naturally have a high news value such as a murder trial
5. **Conflicts:** Conflicts and wars always bring about change and therefore arouse suspense and increase its news value. Bad news is good news.
6. **Human Interest:** Almost all news relates to the human being but when it evokes emotions, it has a higher news value. Such events touch the feelings of people and therefore become important stories that's move up the ladder in terms of selection.
7. **Consequence:** Most events have consequences. The higher and immediacy of an event the higher the news value. A possible nuclear war because of the potential consequences makes news. An oil spill in the Ruaha river of Tanzania has consequences because land and means of livelihood of indigenes will be affected. The sack of 21,000 teachers by state Government is news because of its consequences.
8. **Currency:** Some events are more on people's mind than others. In 2020, for instance, the presidential elections became the most dominant item of news. The outbreak of Ebola or Corona virus was news, now its monkey pox.
9. **Progress:** Technological breakthroughs are items that have high news value because they show progress in human existence. Iphone 10 will be news, Samsung galaxy S11 will be news. People are interested in the knowing how the world is advancing.
10. **Novelty:** New things and strange things will fall under the category of novelty. If a 6 year old boy is doing a PhD, it's new and novel and will form an important value for gate keepers. (Ekhareaho, 2016)

## Structure and Components of News Story

News is generally made up of two parts:

- i. The lead (introduction)
- ii. The body.

# LEAD

Lead is an opening paragraph that gives the audience/reader the most important information of the news story in a concise and clear manner.

## Writing a lead

- Before writing a lead, you need to ask the fundamental questions of news writing; *who, what, when, where, why and how*.
- **Keep it simple;** the best lead is one that is concise and clear. Think about your story and then write a simple but powerful to reflect it. Don't bog your reader down with overly complicated language or extra words. You must be clear and concise
- **Don't bury your lead;** your lead is your hook (The thing that makes the reader interested in your story). If you bury it, then their interest might be buried along with it. They shouldn't have to ask themselves what the story is about, you should be telling them upfront
- **The ABCs of Journalism;** Remember your ABCs which are Accuracy, Brevity and Clarity. Through these should be incorporated throughout your news story/article, they are especially important in the lead

## Types of Lead

- Summary Lead:** This is the most common and traditional lead in Journalism. It is meant to give quick summary of the story in as few words as possible (Should be 30 words or less), usually in one sentence. It contains most but not necessarily all of the 5Ws and H  
**Example;** *Two children at play were killed today when a sports car jumped the curb outside Prospect Park and ran them down. Twelve in the group were injured*  
**Example 2;** *President Kennedy was slain by an assassin today in a burst of gunfire in downtown Dallas.*  
**Example 3;** *President Samia Suluhu Hassan has sworn in three ambassadors today at the occasion held at state house in Dodoma*
- Single-Item Lead;** This lead focuses on just one or two elements of a summary lead. The purpose is to pack a bigger punch than a summary lead. For instance, when the

Philadelphia Phillies won the 2008 World Series, their first Championship since 1980, a story began with this Single-Item lead: ***The Philadelphia Phillies are World Champions again.***

As opposed to this typical summary lead, which Reuters used: *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*

- c. **Delayed Identification Lead;** The ‘who’ is not identified right away in this lead because it isn’t deemed as important (For example, a member on the school board punched the president). Instead a descriptive pronoun is used to describe the person and his title and specific name is revealed in a later paragraphs

**Example 1:** *The increasingly rate of WiFi users has said to be a root cause to the current distances of the service at DSJ, ICT Officer revealed*

**Example 2:** *Mwanaume mmoja mkazi wa Mbagala Makuka jijini Dar es Salaam anatumia kumnyonga hadi kufa mke wake hapo jana majira ya saa mbili na nusu usiku kwa kile kinachodaiwa ni kutokana na wivu wa mapenzi*

*Aiyola Shamte (28), ambaye ni mke wa mtuhumiwa huyo anayetambulika kwa jina la Shabani Kilunda (36) anadaiwa kufanyiwa kitendo hicho cha kikatili mara baada ya kurudi nyumbani akitokea katika mihangaiko yake ya biashara ya matunda na mbogamboga*

- d. **Creative Lead;** Unless you're writing hard news for a daily newspaper or regularly-updated website, the summary lead just doesn't reel in readers. You need to take a more creative approach. Consider this summary lead:

*A late spring snowstorm surprised forecasters and drivers Tuesday afternoon, triggering more than 30 accidents, Cleveland police officials said.*

- e. **Short Sentence Lead;** This lead uses one word or a short phrase as a teaser for the rest of the lead. Readers may find this gimmicky, so use this approach sparingly. Here's an example:

*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.*

- f. **Analogy Lead;** This lead makes a comparison between an issue or event you're writing about and something more familiar to the average reader. This approach can work well when you have a complex or foreign matter you want to explain in laymen's terms. Consider:

*AMSTERDAM -- The Netherlands is considering anti-terrorism laws that make the United States' Patriot Act look like a civil libertarian's dream come true.*

- g. **Scenic Lead;** This lead begins with a description of the scene surrounding an event. It is typically used for stories in which the setting is prominent, such as stories about festive events, performances and sports. It can also be used to strike a mood appropriate for the story. See below

*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, which describes itself as the most widely seen chamber ballet company in the United States. The professional group also tours abroad.*

- h. **Storytelling Lead;** Using a narrative style, begin by introducing the main characters, the conflict, and perhaps the setting of the story. Make readers feel the drama and want to know what's going to happen next.

Wall Street Journal reporter Angelo Henderson used this approach to begin his Pulitzer Prize-winning article about a pharmacist who is driven to violence by his encounters with armed robbery: See below

*"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.*

## **THE BODY**

The body of the story is the part of the story that follows the lead. It explains the lead and gives details to the content in the lead.

Each paragraph contains a new idea that is clear and concise. The structure of news is different from other formats of writing like drama, essay, poetry, novel, etc. which usually begin with minor details until climaxes.

In news writing, the climax comes first before the minor details. The story structure begins from the most important elements contained in the lead until the least important which is found in the last paragraphs.

In the last paragraphs, there may be element of background information as well. This style of writing is called the inverted pyramid.

## **The Inverted Pyramid**

This is a news writing format used in news writing since early beginnings of news writing. It enables the writer to present in the order of importance and clearly and quickly as possible.



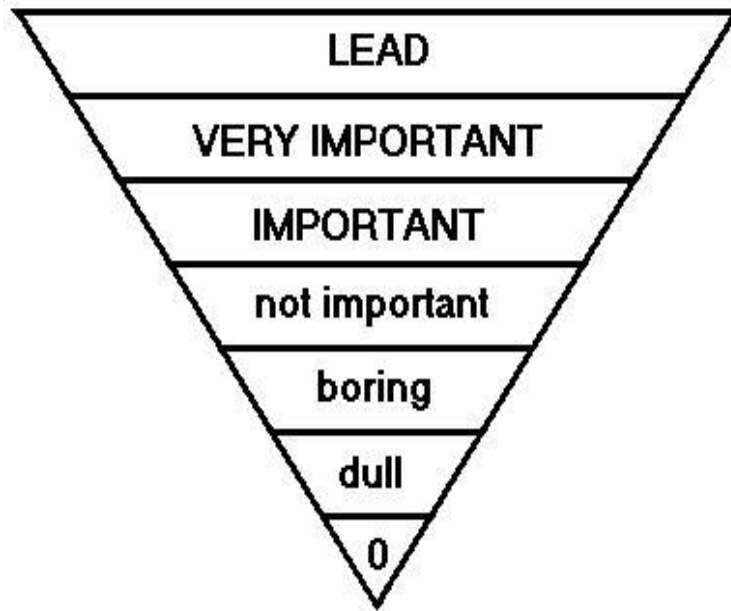


Figure 1: The Inverted pyramid format of news writing

### Advantages of the Inverted pyramid format

- i. Readers are able to get the main content of the story first
- ii. It simplifies headline writing
- iii. It helps the editors to plan a page taking note of each pyramid lead
- iv. It assists the editors to design the page
- v. It makes editing easier

### 5Ws and H

The 5Ws and H was established by '*Rudyard Kipling*'. The Journalist basic assignment is trying to find answers to these six letters.

- a. **What Happened:** This relates to finding out what happened. An example would be "a sum of 8 trillion has been budgeted for the 2017 budget of Tanzania."
- b. **Who was involved:** This relates to the personality in the news which shows the prominence angle among the elements of news writing. An example:

“President Samia Suluhu Hassan has presented a budget of 8 trillion for the 2022 fiscal year”.

- c. **Where did it happen:** This deals with trying to anchor a story from the point of view of location of an event, For example: “The National Assembly played host to the president of the United Republic in Dodoma.
- d. **When did it happen:** This relates to time and generally finds a place in the lead. Example: “President Samia, on Monday, presented the 2022 budget to the National Assembly”.
- e. **Why did it happen:** This relates to the circumstances that has made an event take place. An example: “The Court cannot try the IG simply on the grounds that the National Assembly is investigating him for alleged corruption”.
- f. **How did it happen?:** This is closely related to the why and it relates to explaining the process that makes an event a news story. An Example: “A priest was recently released by his captors after spending two days with the kidnapers without a ransom paid.”