Script: News Writing
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Slide 1
Title slide.

Slide 2
Reporting and writing the news is a means of telling members of the public what happened when they were not able to witness it. Everyone sees just a small slice of life in a given location each day.

Slide 3
The journalist's job is to summarize the news taking place in communities all around the world.

Slide 4
A journalist will first collect the information carefully, accurately and fairly,

Slide 5
then use this information to write stories that are easily understood by the audience.

Slide 6
Journalists do not present breaking news chronologically, or from the moment when the news began to break.

Slide 7
Typically, they look for the outcome, or the most newsworthy aspect of the news event.

Slide 8
To do this, a journalist will often rely on a format called the inverted pyramid, which has proved to be a successful way to communicate news.

Slide 9
The inverted pyramid always puts the most newsworthy information at the top of the story, in what is called the "lede." The rest of the information is arranged in descending order of importance. Learning this method allows journalists to work quickly and efficiently.

Slide 10
Here is an example of the way the inverted pyramid works. Let's suppose the City Police Department reports that an accident occurred at 2:30 a.m. today. This is the information the police provided to the press:

A car driven by Joe White, 29 years old, hit a curb on Main Street, smashed into a tree and overturned. Police say White was speeding and lost control of his car. He was hospitalized for minor injuries.

A passenger in White's car was killed. The passenger was Amanda Smith, 22 years old. She was pronounced dead at 2:45 a.m.

"We are conducting toxicology tests to determine if alcohol was involved," Police Chief Jack Russell said.

Slide 11
The inverted pyramid always puts the most newsworthy information at the top of the story, in the lede. Here are the key facts a journalist must consider in order to write the lede: What happened, when, where, why and how? Let's find that information and put it in order.

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1. What was the most important thing that happened? In terms of importance, the death of a 22-year-old woman was the most significant outcome, more significant than the accident itself.

Slide 13
2. When did it happen? It happened at 2:30 a.m. today.

Slide 14
3. Where did it happen? On Main Street.

Slide 15
4. Why did it happen? The driver, Joe White, was speeding and lost control of his car.

Slide 16
5. How did it happen? The driver's car hit a curb, smashed into a tree and overturned.

Slide 17
An important piece of information a journalist also needs to consider when writing a story is the source of the information. In this case, the source is the City Police Department. Because the journalist did not witness the event, all of the information must be tied directly — or attributed — to the police department.

Slide 18
A lede will almost always include what happened, when it happened and where it happened. It also very often includes how it happened. This is how an inverted pyramid lede would be written for our story:

Slide 19
A 22-year-old passenger was killed early today after a car hit a curb, crashed into a tree and overturned on Main Street.

Slide 20
The same lede is now annotated to show its parts: [What happened?] A 22-year-old passenger was killed [when?] early today [how?] after a car hit a curb, crashed into a tree and overturned [where?] on Main Street.

Slide 21
Using the inverted pyramid format, the rest of the story would look like this:

According to the City Police Department, the driver Joe White, 29, was speeding and lost control of his car, causing the death of Amanda White. [This covers why the news happened and who was the source of the information.]

Slide 22
White was hospitalized for minor injuries. [This covers an additional fact provided for the story.]

Slide 23
"We are conducting toxicology tests to determine if alcohol was involved," Police Chief Jack Russell said.

This includes a quote from a police source, which gives credibility to the story.

Slide 24
Quotes are best used to add authority to a story, or in the case of feature stories, to add personality.

Slide 25
Quotes are poorly used when journalists rely on them to explain a complicated action. A complicated action is best paraphrased, so the journalist can summarize it in simple terms.

Slide 26
If facts that cover what, when, where and how are included in the lede, that is often sufficient. Here are best practices for building a lede.

Slide 27
** Notice that the names of the driver and passenger are not included in the lede. This is common practice if the names are not well known. Their names can be used in the next sentence.

Slide 28
** Notice also that the lede has fewer than 25 words. Studies show that 25 words is the maximum length to keep a lede simple and easily understood.

Slide 29
** The "why" is not always included, because it can make the lede too long and can be saved for the next sentence.

Slide 30
** Attribution can wait until the sentence after the lede.
** Quotes can also follow the lede.

Slide 31
The inverted pyramid can be used for a multitude of breaking news stories — accidents, crime, fires, election results, verdicts in court, sports events, business announcements and many more.

Slide 32
Breaking news is best told in the inverted pyramid format, but there are alternative news ledes, often when the news is not urgent and when stories can often be classified as features. These alternative news ledes include delayed ledes, suspense ledes and descriptive ledes.

Slide 33
A delayed lede begins with a clever or interesting example that illustrates the story's theme. The news is placed in the second sentence.

Slide 34
Here is a good delayed lede from the Chicago Tribune. IBM Watson once won $1 million playing "Jeopardy." Soon it could be helping your doctor read your X-rays.

Slide 35
When a journalist uses a delayed lede, the next portion of the story is called a "nut graph." This "nut" paragraph in a story will carry the news. Following the above example, the "nut graph" reads like this:

Slide 36
 "IBM Watson Health aims to make sense of a growing pool of health care-related data to help patients and providers make better decisions."

Slide 37
Suspense ledes trigger the reader's curiosity or raise an important concern.

Slide 38
Here is an example from the Kansas City Star about the city's baseball team: "*To fortify their pitching staff, the Kansas City Royals reached into their past to aid their bullpen.*

Slide 39
The reader wonders why, so the next sentence should relieve the suspense.

Slide 40
"The Royals entered the final stages of completing a three-year, $25 million deal with former All-Star relief pitcher Joakim Soria."

Slide 41
Descriptive ledes paint a picture for readers before they reach the nut graph.

Slide 42
 Here is an example:
"She's grown heavier. She wears tent dresses instead of mini-skirts. Her face is pale and strained.

Slide 43
Then here is the nut graph:

Slide 44
"Ten years after Allison Washington survived Hurricane Katrina, she is no longer the young, carefree woman she used to be."

Slide 45
Quotes and questions should be used sparingly as ledes.

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Quotations rarely include enough strong information to hook the reader's interest,

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and readers are typically looking for answers, not questions.

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Contact information slide.