l'm not a robot



Chapter 5: News Writing Basics In general, news stories are organized using the inverted pyramid style, in which information is presented in descending order of importance. This allows the audience to read the most crucial details quickly so they can decide whether to continue or stop reading the story. From an editing perspective, using the inverted pyramid style makes it easier to cut a story from the bottom, if necessary. Invented more than a century ago, the inverted pyramid in comprehensive form" by Christopher Schwartz is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 It is important to note that some news stories do not strictly follow the inverted pyramid style, although the lead for a hard news piece always does. Furthermore, not everyone in the journalism field embraces the style; some detractors believe it is an unnatural way to organize and share information in a fast-paced society (Scanlan, 2003). Therefore, it's important for students to learn the style; one good way to do so is to regularly read hard news stories and pay attention to how the leads are structured. The lead (also known as the summary lead) and the body of the inverted pyramid style are discussed in the next sections. For many decades, the media has been actively using the inverted pyramid structure. This style is considered the traditional scheme for writing news reports and stories. According to the inverted pyramid, the most significant, fundamental, and interesting facts are presented at the beginning of the article, in its first paragraph, and the rest (less decisive and useful) are arranged in descending order of their value in the following paragraphs. Some journalists are skeptical about the inverted pyramid, but despite the criticism, this principle continues to be widely used by the media. Until the end of the 19th century, newspapers were created according to the traditional "slow" principle. Information was presented in small portions in chronological order, and the reader found all the most interesting at the end of the article ("they lived happily ever after"). But everything changed with the invention of the telegraph. The first electromagnetic telegraph was created by the Russian scientist P. L. Schilling in 1832. Subsequently, the electromagnetic telegraph was built in Germany and Great Britain, and in the USA the electromechanical type telegraph was patented by the American inventor and artist Samuel Morse (in 1840). This event has led to a new era in art, literature, and science, thanks to which the inverted pyramid was born. The invention of the telegraph can be compared with the advent of the Internet, it caused such a powerful revolutionary effect. At first, simple messages were transmitted by telegraph agencies arose. But the telegraph had one major drawback - the high cost of use. The telegraph expenses were so high that it was necessary to write concisely and with a minimum of detail. As a result, a new literary style has arisen: one of the most influential styles of the 20th century, a type of journalism that is as objective as possible, devoid of any prejudice and personal opinion. A minute of ads. Create memorable, stunning, interesting publications, photo collages, infographics, postcards, posters, business cards, or documents in the visual editor Canva. Sign up to Canva Pro and get a free 30-day trial - that's 1 month free! One of the myths says that the inverted pyramid structure arose during the American Civil War (1861-1865). Reporters had to quickly telegraph only the most important breaking news from the scene because at any moment the wire could be damaged, and the connection would be lost. But this version is unconfirmed, although it is quite plausible. The problem is that there are quite a few news stories from the traditional chronological order, rather than in the inverted pyramid style, where the top story is in the first paragraph. There is another version: the inverted pyramid arose at the time of coverage of the tragic death of US President Abraham Lincoln. On April 15, 1865, American newspapers received a copy of a telegram from Secretary of War Edwin Stanton to a general in New York. This telegram was written with an inverted pyramid structure Edwin Stanton was not a journalist or writer, but his message was printed by major publishing houses on the front page of their newspapers. An inverted and prioritized: its value and importance decrease from the beginning of the text to its end. The inverted pyramid structureThis technique is most often used in news writing but is also used in blogging, advertising brochures, and editorial columns. Conventionally, the inverted pyramid consists of three parts:Lead. This is the first or leading paragraph of the text, the chapeau or abstract of the article, which outlines the main idea of the text, only the most valuable information. The bulk of the text is details, evidence, photographs, guotes, etc. The final part is additional information, similar, interesting materials, and a journalistic assessment. How to Write a News Story Using the Inverted Pyramid Structure: Example To achieve the desired result and in the first paragraph (or paragraphs) give out only important information, journalists often use the formula "5W": who, what, where, when, and why. That is, at the beginning of a news story, the author must give the reader answers to the next 5 questions: what happened, why, and how. Here is how this technique is implemented in the news article: "The largest known plant on Earth - a seagrass roughly three times the size of Manhattan - has been discovered off the coast of Australia. Using genetic testing, scientists have determined a large underwater meadow in Western Australia is in fact one plant. It is believed to have spread from a single seed over at least 4,500 years. The seagrass covers about 200 sq km (77) sq miles), researchers from the University of Western Australia said."The following paragraphs or the bulk of the news story contain additional information: various details, explanations, statistics, quotes, reference materials, photographs and videos. The value of information decreases from the beginning of a news text to its end: "The team stumbled upon the discovery by accident at Shark Bay, about 800km (497 miles) north of Perth. They had set out to understand the genetic diversity of the species – also known as ribbon weed – which is commonly found along parts of Australia's coast. Researchers collected shoots from across the bay and examined 18,000 genetic markers to create a "fingerprint" from each sample. They had aimed to discover how many plants made up the meadow. "The answer blew us away - there was just one!" said Jane Edgeloe, the study's lead author. "The there was just one!" said Jane Edgeloe, the study's lead author. "The plant is also remarkable for its hardiness." having grown in locations across the bay with wildly variable conditions. "It appears to be really resilient, experiencing a wide range of temperatures and salinities plus extreme high light conditions, which together would typically be highly stressful for most plants," said Dr Elizabeth Sinclair, one of the researchers. The species generally grows like a lawn at a rate of up to 35cm (13.7in) a year. This is how researchers estimated it has taken 4,500 years to sprawl to its current size. The reader understands what this article is about and its main meaning, so he can limit himself to this and not read the news to the end. Speeds up the editor's workflow. If the news story came out too large and complex, the editor only needs one action - to delete the last paragraphs. Keywords are collected at the beginning of the text, which improves the position of the site in the search (the website ranking). In addition to the followers of the inverted pyramid structure, some critics say that: The inverted pyramid structure makes it difficult to perceive information and complicates readability. It so happened that it is easier for us to perceive a text with a traditional structure: when there is a little introduction, then the main idea is gradually revealed, and at the end, we are waiting for a summary and conclusions. With the advent of Internet media, the principle of the inverted pyramid has changed. There are no such clear requirements for writing a news story, all the rules are blurred and dissolved in a huge stream of fleeting information. P. S.: Did you like this post? Share it with your friends, thank you! Share – copy and redistribute the material for any purpose, even commercially. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms. Attribution — You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the licensor endorses you or your use. ShareAlike — If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original. No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation . No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. The world of journalism is fast-paced and cutthroat: only the best can remain at the top. As people's attention spans are getting shorter, you need to fight to grab their attention and keep them reading as long as you can. The good news is, the inverted pyramid technique is a tool that can help you do just that, and you can learn how to use it skillfully. The inverted pyramid technique is a tool that can help you do just that, and you can learn how to use it skillfully. news stories with the most important information first, as follows: The Lead: The most essential information, such as Who? What? Where? When? Wher? When? Where? Where? When? Where? Where? When? Where? When? Where? Wher issues, background, evidence, quotes, images, video, or audio that help expand the topic. The Tail: Extra information such as related items, extra context, an editorial or the journalist's own opinion. Not all news stories strictly follow the inverted pyramid lets readers discover the most critical details first, and helps them make the split-second decision to either keep reading or drop the story. It also lets the writer organize the information efficiently, especially in our fast-paced daily life. Journalists who use the inverted pyramid style of writing also make it easier for the editor, who can simply cut out paragraphs from the bottom to fit into a desired word count, for examples of the inverted pyramid is an article published in the New York Times back in 1865 about the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Here is an excerpt from the article, written by Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, entitled "President Lincoln Shot by an Assassin.' This evening at about 9:30 p.m. at Ford's Theatre, the President, while sitting in his private box with Mrs. Lincoln, Mrs. Harris and Major Rathburn, was shot by an assassin, who suddenly entered the box and approached behind the President. rear of the theatre. The pistol ball entered the back of the President's head and penetrated nearly through the head. The wound is mortal. The President has been insensible ever since it was inflicted, and is now dying. About the same hour an assassin, whether the same or not, entered Mr. Seward's apartment and under pretense of having a prescription was shown to the Secretary's sick chamber. The assassin immediately rushed to the bed and inflicted two or three stabs on the chest and two on the face. It is hoped the wounds may not be mortal. My apprehension is that they will prove fatal. The nurse alarmed Mr. Frederick Seward, who was in an adjoining rented room, and he hastened to the door of his father's room, when he met the assassin, who inflicted upon him one or more dangerous wounds. The recovery of Frederick Seward is doubtful. It is not probable that the President will live through the night. But the inverted pyramid is not only for old-style newspapers. Even the BBC uses it a lot these days. Take a look at this excerpt from an online post on BBC in 2018, entitled Theresa May calls off MP's vote on her Brexit deal: Prime Minister Theresa May has called off Tuesday's crucial vote on her Brexit deal in the deal in t she said she was confident of getting "reassurances" from the EU on the Northern Ireland border plan. But European Council President Donald Tusk said the remaining 27 EU countries would not "renegotiate" the deal. While EU leaders would be willing to "discuss how to facilitate UK ratification" of the withdrawal agreement at Thursday's summit in Brussels, he suggested the controversial Northern Irish backstop, which the DUP and many Tories want removed, would remain in place. The prime minister's U-turn came after she and senior ministers had spent days insisting the vote would go ahead, despite the scale of opposition from MPs being obvious. Looking back on history, the inverted pyramid style of journalism was likely the result of an old technology, the telegraph. New outlets used the telegraph to send information, so they made sure to transmit the most vital details first. In case the connection was lost, the receiver could still publish the essential information. several reasons: It can lack art or creativity, since it is essentially a formula that journalists follow, removing a big chunk of their autonomy. Giving the "ending" away first means that readers have no incentive to keep reading. The structure might make the chronology of events confusing for the reader. The inverted pyramid has lost some of its prominence with the rise of online news writing. Whereas in traditional print newspapers editors are bound by page and column size, for online writing altogether. If you want to try your hand at traditional news writing, you may want to try using the inverted pyramid structure. But also bear in mind that the goal for any writing is to communicate and be understood, so consider it simply one of the tools in your writing arsenal. Did you find this post helpful? Let us know in the comments below! Yen Cabag is the Blog Writer of TCK Publishing. She is also a homeschooling mom, family coach, and speaker for the Charlotte Mason method, an educational philosophy that places great emphasis on classic literature and the masterpieces in art and music. She has also written several books, both fiction and nonfiction. Her passion is to see the next generation of children become lovers of reading and learning in the midst of short attention spans. For decades, the "inverted pyramid" structure has been a mainstay of traditional mass media writing. Following this structure, the "base" of the pyramid—the most fundamental facts—appear at the top of the story, in the lead paragraph. Non-essential information appears in the following paragraphs, or "nut" graphs, in order of importance. While some media writers are critical of the inverted pyramid structure, it remains one of the most widely used and time tested structures in mass media writing. What, When, Where, and Why. A successful lead paragraph communicates, on a basic level, the essential facts of who did what, when, where, and why. The "nut" graphs that follow contain additional details, quotes from sources, statistics, background, or other information. These are added to the article in order of importance, so that the least important items are at the bottom. Origins The inverted pyramid structure is the product of an old media technology—the telegraph. When news outlets would telegraph information in the story was transmitted first. In the event of a lost connection, whoever received the story could still print the essential facts. The inverted pyramid structure also benefits editors. If an editor needs to cut an article, they can simply cut from the bottom. If their reporter was writing in the reliable inverted pyramid for being artless, and certainly, it is not right for every news story, as it removes a great deal of autonomy from the reporter. Others link inverted pyramid structure goes against the very fundamentals of narrative. Some scholars have theorized that the inverted pyramid structure might bloggers, who typically eschew traditional news writing structure. Conclusion The inverted pyramid structure simply means placing the remaining details, from most important to least important, in the following nut graphs. Although there are critics of the inverted pyramid style, it remains a widely used approach to mass media news writing. Source Scanlan, Chip. "Writing from the Top Down: Pros and Cons of the Inverted Pyramid." www.poynter.org. 18 Dec 2008. Inverted pyramid refers to the structure or model commonly used for hard-news stories. It means that the most important, or heaviest information goes at the top of the story, while the least important information goes at the bottom. Here's an example: He used the inverted pyramid format was developed during the Civil War. Correspondents covering the great battles of that war would do their reporting, then rush to the nearest telegraph office to have their stories transmitted, via Morse Code, back to their newsrooms. But the telegraph lines were often cut in mid-sentence, sometimes in an act of sabotage. So the reporters realized they had to put the most important facts right at the very start of their stories so that even if most of the details were lost, the main point would get through. (Interestingly, the Associated Press, which is known for its extensive use of tightly written, inverted pyramid stories, was founded around this same time. Today the AP is the oldest and one of the largest news organizations in the world.) Of course, some 150 years after the end of the Civil War, the inverted pyramid format is still being used because it has served both journalists and readers well. Readers benefit from being able to get the main point of the story right in the very first sentence. And news outlets benefit by being able to convey more information in a smaller space, something that's especially true in an age when newspapers are literally shrinking. (Editors also like the inverted pyramid format because when working on tight deadlines, it enables them to cut overly long stories from the bottom without losing any vital information.) In fact, the inverted pyramid format is probably more useful today than ever. Studies have found that readers tend to have shorter attention spans when reading on screens as opposed to paper. And since readers increasingly get their news not just on the relatively small screens of smartphones, more than ever reporters must summarize stories as quickly and as succinctly as possible. Indeed, even though online-only news sites theoretically have infinite amounts of space for articles, since there are no pages to be physically printed, more often than not you'll find that their stories still use the inverted pyramid format should be easy to learn. Make sure to get the main points of your story — the five W's and the H — into your lede Then, as you go from the start to the finish of your story, put the most important news near the top, and the least important stuff near the bottom. Do that, and you'll produce a tight, well-written news story using a format that has withstood the test of time. commercially. Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. The license terms. Attribution — You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. ShareAlike — If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original. No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits. You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation . No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. Adapted from Libretext: Journalism 101 (Writing the Hard News Story) "There is but one art—to omit." - Robert Louis Stevenson After completing your reporting. You're done your reporting. you're on deadline, and you'd like for everyone to shut up so you can work. Good. This is how your readers feel when they pick up your newspaper or call it up on their computer—they're smart and in a hurry and want you to tell them what you to tell them what you to tell them what you can be vou c With hard news, you write short, declarative sentences that give lots of information coherently so the reader understands them effortlessly and they seem to have been effortless to produce, even simple. But, of course, it's not simple to write clearly and succinctly! Pascal said he could make his writing shorter but he didn't have the time. The first paragraph of a newspaper article is called the lead, in newspaper type used to be set in lead and editors didn't want to mix up the two words. The way to write a lede is sit at the keyboard until small drops of blood form on your forehead. That's the old joke—and not all that funny. Some people can write up a snazzy newspaper lede instantly, but most of us flail away hideously, banging out a sentence, erasing it, writing it again, cutting it again, cutting it again, cutting it again, cutting it together until it reads like it's been in an accident. Eventually, though, we place the right words in the right order to say what we mean precisely, and that's when we newspaper hacks are just like any artist who makes something super hard look easy. We are like Picasso, or Roger Federer, or that athlete playing the Sugar Plum Fairy, and just at the clock but at the clock but at the clock but at the clock of a clever, you are binking you'd better learn how to make good writing look easy in a big hurry, because you don't have time to write and erase, write and erase until the cows come home and Middlebury accepts someone else. Thus, you are eager for some inside tips on how to learn news writing quickly. Here are two of them: the first simple, the second complex. The simple tip is this: Practice. You get good at doing this sort of writing by doing it over and over, getting the hang of it, the rhythm of it. It takes a while to quit writing is not important here, and my writing is not about me—it's about the story. If you adopt this professional attitude, your mind will soon be preoccupied with relevant data only, such as: What am I trying to say in this newspaper article? And thus your mind will not go meandering down the time-consuming and pointless psychological roads our minds generally travel when we write for an audience, roads really more like halls than like roads, specifically like halls of mirrors, in front of which we pause in admiration, or in horror. This is a fabulous sentence, and we are so clever to have thought of it, and before we've strung together two independent clauses joined by a conjunction, we've already decided we're as good as Hemingway and better than John Grisham, whom we could write exactly like if we weren't aiming so much higher. Time meanwhile is passing, and the sentences aren't that good, believe me. This is because we always love our most overwritten sentences, because we think they show us off—how nifty we are, how clever with words, how sophisticated, whatever. We love ourselves, we love our dramas, we love our most dramatic sentences. But, hey!—newspaper readers are not interested in us right now. They want to know the news. So the hall of mirrors is a bad place to hang out when you think you're writing badly There you are, struggling with a lede. You keep writing the same exact sentence over and over (REDRUM), in the mirror you look like a hideous wreck, and you know you're a fraud and a loser; plus there's a Dali clock dripping down the wall. When you are writing on deadline, you don't need this distraction, believe me. The bottom line: Just be professional, even when the writing's hard, even when you're too exhausted or frustrated to bother sweating blood. Just stay calm and remember you have something to say. Here's how to do it: News writers get to the point and get out. So write simple, declarative sentences. Try to avoid dependent clauses. One line of typewritten 12-point type is two or more lines in a newspaper column; two-line computer sentences to 1.5 computer lines in a newspaper—and all of this is getting too long for your reader. Try to keep your sentences to 1.5 computer lines in a newspaper column; two-line computer sentences are four lines in a newspaper. lots of nifty verbs. Think in verbs. Deliberately use action verbs and take time to select them. Use the active, not passive, voice puts the subject last: "The wall was hit by John." Or, if the subject is not important, leave it out: "The rodents were trapped," and who cares by whom! But consider what happens if the subject actually is important, but the passive voice is dangerous, shots were fired." Well, okay, but who leaked? Who fired? The passive voice is dangerous, it allows facts to disappear.) Be repulsed by clichés. The opening paragraphs (or grafs) of a hard news story, along with the sentences themselves, are likely to feel like puzzles whose pieces you must fit together, or like very fine gold necklaces that tangle easily. If you start to come unglued, relax and think about how you would tell this news story to a friend. You would get to the point immediately with the most important thing first (a squirrel attacked the English teacher!) and take it from there in the next graf, giving the next bit of information that your friend would logically want to know. Keep the sentences short, keep the sentences short, and after those first few grafs, the story will write itself. As the first paragraph of a story, the lede gives the most important information. Readers often simply glance at the lede, so above all, write it clearly. Do not confuse the reader! The lede must be supported by the content of the story. If your story doesn't end up supporting your lede, change the lede or spike the story. A direct lede, also known as a summary lede, gives a summary of the story's main facts and will emphasize what is important of the WWWWH list: who, what, when, where, why, how. It should be one sentence long, 30 words or less. A blind lede is a lede that refers to people but saves their names for a later paragraph. A nut graf is a paragraph that follows the lede and fills in crucial information. To learn the craft of writing ledes and nut grafs, practice, practice, practice, practice, read the rest of the story, and then go back and try to write the lede. Compare it to the published lede, and you'll see how quickly you're learning. And if you aren't learning so quickly, not to worry. Join the crowd. Soon you'll understand the little saying about beads of blood on your forehead. To wit: Let's say you're writing an article about a high school band holding a fundraiser for one of the musicians whose family lost their house in a fire. The first time you write the lede, you're likely to write something like: "The Tallant Marching Band will hold a fundraising carnival to raise money for the band's trumpet player whose family lost all their posessions after a fire broke out in their home and destroyed all the home's contents." That's not a hideous lede by any means. But it's not good, either. Well, actually, it's a bit hideous, because it is so repetitive. You should give your reader information once and that's enough; then get on with the next bit of information. Here's a better lede for that story: "The Tallant Marching Band will hold a fundraiser next week for their trumpet player whose family lost their house in a fire." Now, you're probably thinking that sentence is not a glorious piece of prose. It's sort of bland, no big deal. And in some ways you're right—it's no big deal. But it's a good, solid lede, and it was not easy to craft. The Inverted Pyramid is the basic structure for a breaking news story. It begins with a direct lede. The second paragraph (nut graf) tries to answer questions a reader would naturally ask after reading the lede. The next most important facts follow in the next paragraph, and so on, so if readers don't have time to finish your article or don't feel like it, they'll get the most important ideas up high. You add quotes along the way, not before crucial information, but soon enough to add a human voice to a hard news story. Each paragraph should be one sentence long or two at most. There are several other structures for newspaper stories, but they are most effective with feature stories. For now, practice the inverted pyramid for hard news stories. The inverted pyramid for hard news stories are several other structures for newspaper stories. Quotes must be verbatim or else edited in such a way that they accurately (that's ACCURATELY, not "adequately") convey the speakers meaning and intention. If you cut words from a quote, you indicate this with square brackets around [your replacement]. Individual words or phrases from a quote shouldn't be inserted into your prose, as you would do with quotations from a work of literature. Instead, keep a source's name. Quotes should add color to your story or offer information in a rich way. Don't use quotes simply to deliver information that you might just as easily present in prose, unless, of course, the person giving the information is also significant to the story. For example, if the President of the United States said, "The law should be voted on this afternoon at 4 p.m.," you might offer that as a direct quote. It reveals something about the President's attention to this issue; it's giving the readers something more than simply the time of the vote. If you get a good quote from a source, just write it up. Don't precede the quote with a sentence about what it says. Your reader can figure that out for herself. Really terrific quotes are called "money quotes"—as in: Ka-ching, I got it on the record. Attribution If you see something with your own eyes, if the information is common knowledge, or if you can learn it from three printed sources, you can present it as fact. You must attribute everything else to a source. Try to place one source's information in successive sentences, so you only need to attribute the information once per graf. Otherwise, each sentence must contain an attribution. Use "he said" when reporting what a source says to you. Do not use "claimed," "announced," "admitted," "replied," "replied," "argued," synonyms carry shades of meaning and thus editorialize the news story. But news stories do not contain opinion. Just use "said." Use "according to" if your source is a document or report or if the source is offering you information but not quotes. On first reference, use a person's full name and title. Some titles precede the name (e.g. President Barack Obama, Justice Ruth Ginsberg), but most often a title will come after a name (e.g. Jennifer Jones, Superintendent of Schools). After a first reference, use a stylebook, such as The New York Times Manual of Style and Usage or The Associated Press Stylebook, to keep these and other style rules consistent. Elements of Structure and Balance Use a quotation early in the story to bring in a human voice. Provide background after the breaking news. Go through the accuracy checklist from the San Jose Mercury News: Accuracy San Jose Mercury News: Accuracy News: Acc Mercury News Is the lede of the story sufficiently supported? Has someone double-checked, called, or visited all the phone numbers, addresses, or web addresses, or web addresses in the story? What about the names and titles? Is the background material required to understand the story complete? Are all the story identified, and have representatives from that side been contacted and given a chance to talk? Does the story pick sides or make subtle value judgments? Will some people like this story more than they should? Is anything missing? Are all the quotes accurate and properly attributed, and do they capture what the person really meant? Read the story once more before you turn it in, checking that you do not editorialize or shade the story by your word choice or sentence structure, the arrangement of paragraphs, or the inclusion or exclusion of material. (More on this in the "Ethics and the Law" chapter of this book.) Exercises With a sticky note, cover up the first graf of a news story. Read the rest of the story, and then write an original lede. Compare your lede to the printed version. Take one page of a newspaper, and read each story on the page. Write a tweet (140 characters or less) that describes the essence of each story. Looking only at your tweets, decide on the verb that belongs in each lede. of facts or pieces of information, with no prose. Then reconstruct it back into an article in the inverted pyramid structure. The world of journalism is fast-paced and cutthroat: only the best can remain at the top. As people's attention spans are getting shorter, you need to fight to grab their attention and keep them reading as long as you can. The good news is, the inverted pyramid in journalism is, simply put, the organization of news stories with the most important information first, as follows: The Lead: The most essential information, such as Who? What? Where? When? Wher? Where? When? Where? Where? When? Where? When? Where? When? Where? audio that help expand the topic. The Tail: Extra information such as related items, extra context, an editorial or the journalist's own opinion. Not all news stories strictly follow the inverted pyramid style, but the lead for hard news pieces always uses it. Using the inverted pyramid lets readers discover the most critical details first, and helps them make the split-second decision to either keep reading or drop the story. It also lets the writer organize the information efficiently, especially in our fast-paced daily life. Journalists who use the inverted pyramid style of writing also make it easier for the editor, who can simply cut out paragraphs from the bottom to fit into a desired word count, for example. One of the earliest examples of the inverted pyramid is an article published in the New York Times back in 1865 about the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Here is an excerpt from the article, written by Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, entitled "President Lincoln Shot by an Assassin." This evening at about 9:30 p.m. at Ford's Theatre, the President, while sitting in his private box with Mrs. Lincoln, Mrs. Harris and Major Rathburn, was shot by an assassin, who suddenly entered the back of thee back of the back of the President's head and penetrated nearly through the head. The wound is mortal. The President has been insensible ever since it was inflicted, and is now dying. About the same or not, entered Mr. Seward's apartment and under pretense of having a prescription was shown to the Secretary's sick chamber. The assassin immediately rushed to the bed and inflicted two or three stabs on the chest and two on the face. It is hoped the wounds may not be mortal. My apprehension is that they will prove fatal. The nurse alarmed Mr. Frederick Seward, who was in an adjoining rented room, and he hastened to the door of his father's room, when he met the assassin who inflicted upon him one or more dangerous wounds. The recovery of Frederick Seward is doubtful. It is not probable that the President will live through the night. But the inverted pyramid is not only for old-style newspapers. Even the BBC uses it a lot these days. Take a look at this excerpt from an online post on BBC in 2018, entitled Theresa May calls off MP's vote on her Brexit deal: Prime Minister Theresa May has called off Tuesday's crucial vote on her Brexit deal so she can go back to Brussels and ask for changes to it. As it stands the deal "would be rejected by a significant margin" if MPs voted on it, she admitted.But she said she was confident of getting "reassurances" from the EU on the Northern Ireland border plan.But European Council President Donald Tusk said the remaining 27 EU countries would not "renegotiate" the deal.While EU leaders would be willing to "discuss how to facilitate UK ratification" of the withdrawal agreement at Thursday's summit in Brussels, he suggested the controversial Northern Irish backstop, which the DUP and many Tories want removed, would remain in place. The prime minister's U-turn came after she and senior ministers had spent days insisting the vote would go ahead, despite the scale of opposition from MPs being obvious. Looking back on history, the inverted pyramid style of journalism was likely the result of an old technology, the telegraph. New outlets used the telegraph to send information, so they made sure to transmit the most vital details first. In case the connection was lost, the receiver could still publish the essential information. Some in the media criticize the inverted pyramid structure for several reasons: It can lack art or creativity, since it is essentially a formula that journalists follow, removing a big chunk of their autonomy. Giving the "ending" away first means that readers have no incentive to keep reading. The structure might make the chronology of events confusing for the reader. The inverted pyramid has lost some of its prominence with the rise of online news writing. Whereas in traditional print newspapers editors are bound by page and column size, for online writing, article length has more wiggle room. Also, the rise of blogging means that more writing, you may want to try using the inverted pyramid structure. But also bear in mind that the goal for any writing is to communicate and be understood, so consider it simply one of the tools in your writing arsenal. Did you find this post helpful? Let us know in the comments below! Yen Cabag is the Blog Writer of TCK Publishing. She is also a homeschooling mom, family coach, and speaker for the Charlotte Masor method, an educational philosophy that places great emphasis on classic literature and the masterpieces in art and music. She has also written several books, both fiction and nonfiction. Her passion is to see the next generation of children become lovers of reading and learning in the midst of short attention spans. The world of journalism is fast paced and cutthroat: only the best can remain at the top. As people's attention spans are getting shorter, you need to fight to grab their attention and keep them reading as long as you can. The good news is, the inverted pyramid technique is a tool that can help you do just that, and you can learn how to use it skillfully. The inverted pyramid in journalism is, simply put, the organization of news stories with the most important information first, as follows: The Lead: The most essential information, such as Who? What? Where? When? Wher? When? The lead usually includes a "hook" or a provocative question or quote, takes around 30 words, or 1-2 thin paragraphs. The Body: The next most important details, such as controversies or issues, background, evidence, quotes, images, video, or audio that help expand the topic. The Tail: Extra information such as related items, extra context, an editorial or the journalist's own opinion. Not all news stories strictly follow the inverted pyramid style, but the lead for hard news pieces always uses it. Using the inverted pyramid lets readers discover the most critical details first, and helps them make the split-second decision to either keep reading or drop the story. It also lets the writer organize the information efficiently, especially in our fast-paced daily life. Journalists who use the inverted pyramid style of writing also make it easier for the editor, who can simply cut out paragraphs from the bottom to fit into a desired word count, for example. One of the earliest examples of the inverted pyramid is an article published in the New York Times back in 1865 about the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Here is an excerpt from the article, written by Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, entitled "President Lincoln Shot by an Assassin." This evening at about 9:30 p.m. at Ford's Theatre, the President, while sitting in his private box with Mrs. Lincoln, Mrs. Harris and Major Rathburn, was shot by an assassin, who suddenly entered the box and approached behind the President. The assassin then leaped upon the stage, brandishing a large dagger or knife, and made his escape in the rear of the theatre. The pistol ball entered the back of the President's head and penetrated nearly through the head. The wound is mortal. The vound is mort under pretense of having a prescription was shown to the Secretary's sick chamber. The assassin immediately rushed to the bed and inflicted two or three stabs on the chest and two on the face. It is hoped the wounds may not be mortal. My apprehension is that they will prove fatal. The nurse alarmed Mr. Frederick Seward, who was in an adjoining rented room, and he hastened to the door of his father's room, when he met the assassin, who inflicted upon him one or more dangerous wounds. The recovery of Frederick Seward is doubtful. It is not probable that the President will live through the night. But the inverted pyramid is not only for old-style newspapers. Even the BBC uses it a lot these days. Take a look at this excerpt from an online post on BBC in 2018, entitled Theresa May calls off MP's vote on her Brexit deal: Prime Minister Theresa May has called off Tuesday's crucial vote on her Brexit deal: Prime Minister Theresa May has called off Tuesday's crucial vote on her Brexit deal: Prime Minister Theresa May has called off Tuesday's crucial vote on her Brexit deal: Prime Minister Theresa May has called off Tuesday's crucial vote on her Brexit deal: Prime Minister Theresa May has called off Tuesday's crucial vote on her Brexit deal: Prime Minister Theresa May has called off Tuesday's crucial vote on her Brexit deal: Prime Minister Theresa May has called off Tuesday's crucial vote on her it, she admitted.But she said she was confident of getting "reassurances" from the EU on the Northern Ireland border plan.But European Council President at "renegotiate" the deal.While EU leaders would be willing to "discuss how to facilitate UK ratification" of the withdrawal agreement at Thursday's summit in Brussels, he suggested the controversial Northern Irish backstop, which the DUP and many Tories want removed, would remain in place. The prime minister's U-turn came after she and senior ministers had spent days insisting the vote would go ahead, despite the scale of opposition from MPs being obvious. Looking back on history, the inverted pyramid style of journalism was likely the result of an old technology, the telegraph. New outlets used the telegraph to send information. Some in the media criticize the inverted pyramid structure for several reasons: It can lack art or creativity, since it is essentially a formula that journalists follow, removing a big chunk of their autonomy. Giving the "ending" away first means that readers have no incentive to keep reading. The structure might make the chronology of events confusing for the reader. The inverted pyramid has lost some of its prominence with the rise of online news writing. Whereas in traditional print newspapers editors are bound by page and column size, for online writing altogether. If you want to try your hand at traditional news writing, you may want to try using the inverted pyramid structure. But also bear in mind that the goal for any writing arsenal. Did you find this post helpful? Let us know in the comments below! Yen Cabag is the Blog Writer of TCK Publishing. She is also a homeschooling mom, family coach, and speaker for the Charlotte Mason method, an educational philosophy that places great emphasis on classic literature and the masterpieces in art and music. She has also written several books, both fiction and nonfiction. Her passion is to see the next generation of children become lovers of reading and learning in the midst of short attention spans. In journalism, the inverted pyramid refers to a story structure where the most important information. This writing style is different than, for example, academic writing, where an abstract may summarize the main findings, but the conclusion which appears at the end of the article. The name "inverted pyramid" comes from picturing the broad facts at the top of the story, followed by smaller and smaller details, like a triangle balanced on one corner. The writing style can be depicted as a triangle balanced on a single point, representing the fact that content goes from the broadest facts to the smaller details. This writing style gets to the point quickly and supports all types of readers. Even those who have the time or inclination to read only a single paragraph, or even single sentence will still know what the story is about. The inverted pyramid also helps editors when they need to cut a piece at a certain length to fit a publication: if the paragraphs get less and less important as you advance in the article, the article can easily be trimmed at practically any point. Benefits of the Inverted-Pyramid Style for Web Writing The inverted pyramid is perfectly suited for the web - on any screen size. We know that users don't read carefully online. They have little patience for content that doesn't engage them. Users scroll, but only when they think that the content they want or need will appear on that page. The inverted pyramid style addresses all of these aspects of user behavior. Using the inverted pyramid style can: Improve comprehension: Users can quickly form a mental model and a general understand the details that follow. Decrease interaction cost: Users can understand the main point of the page without having to spend a lot of time reading. Encourage scrolling: This structure can encourage scrolling by engaging the audience with the main point, and drawing them in to the details that follows. Elements like anchor or jump links can become unnecessary when content is structured to draw the user down the page. Support readers who skim: Readers can stop reading at any point on the page and still come away with the main point. How to Write in the Inverted Pyramid Style Identify your key points. What piece of information is the key fact you want your readers to know, even if they only read a single paragraph or sentence on the page? What effectively summarizes all the information that will follow? Rank secondary information. Outline the story details and supporting information. Dutline the story details and supporting information. The structure only helps readers if the content is strong. Cut unnecessary information. Get to the point quickly. Use straightforward language. Use short paragraphs and bulleted lists. Frontload all elements of content with important information. The main headline should be descriptive. The story should start with the main point. Each heading or subheading should be descriptive. The first sentence of every paragraph should be the most important. The first words in each sentence should be information-carrying and indicate what content will follow. Consider adding a summary or list of highlights. Some sites go a step beyond and add a summary (like this article does) or a bulleted list of key points to further emphasize the main takeaways of the content. Conclusion The inverted-pyramid style matches how web users read content. Using this style on the web, whether for B2B service descriptions, ecommerce product descriptions or company or world news, helps engage and inform users effectively.