

LEADS...LEADS...LEADS...

Figuring Out the Lead

What's the Story About?

The most important time in the writing of a story is the thinking process that takes place before your fingers start dancing on the keyboard. Start by thinking, "What is the story about? Why is this story going on the air?" The answers to those questions should not only tell you how to write the story but also answer the critical question of how to start it. The lead should usually be that brief headline you'd use if you were telling a friend about the item—although not quite as informally stated.

GOOD LEAD: Sunscreens . . . the stuff that's supposed to protect you from cancer . . . may actually cause the disease.

The lead tells us what the story is about . . . in a way that gets our attention.

GOOD LEAD: The mayor himself went to jail today . . . not as a prisoner but as an observer . . . to see for himself how serious a problem jail overcrowding has become.