

Chapter 6. Basic News Leads

Exercise 1. Evaluating Good and Bad Leads

1. This lead is constructed in passive voice and is a bit long. It could be shortened and written in the active voice:
 Authorities charged a Greeley man with first-degree murder and arson in the deaths of his wife and three children.
 The second paragraph could identify the man and give his age, identify the family members and give the circumstances of their deaths.
2. This lead provides a good start, but could use more information such as the amount of the grant. Also, the verb, "has to return," sounds awkward. It may be better to begin the lead with who is ordering city officials to return the grant:
 State officials ordered city council to return a \$50,000 grant it received last year to fix deteriorating road conditions on Main Street.
3. A clear, concise and specific lead that opens the story in such a way that the following paragraphs can build on the scene established by the lead.
4. Vague lead that provides no specific information on the amount of increase university officials are considering.
5. This lead is too long and written in passive voice.
 Court officials Monday threw out a petition filed by city council member William Belmonte to force council into a special session on property taxes because half the names on the petition were dead people.
SPELLING ERROR: Belmonte is misspelled
6. While this lead gives specific details about what happened, it buries the news in the final brief sentence. The lead is choppy and omits other important details about the place, time and circumstances surrounding the death of the woman:
 An 85-year-old woman died instantly when she stepped into the path of a car and was thrown 50 feet into the air.
7. A dull, routine lead that fails to note specifics of the burglary. In addition, the lead is written in the passive voice. The lead needs more details about the burglary, such as what was taken or the dollar amount of property taken or any unusual circumstances involving the burglary.
8. Vague lead that states the obvious. Every city police chief is concerned about crime.
9. This is a weak lead because instead of giving readers information they can use about the play, it is filled with the writer's opinion of the play and tells readers what to do.
10. This lead is faulty because it is written in headline format. It fails to use proper sentence structure—subject, verb, object—or articles "the," "a" or "an."
11. This is a poor lead because it sounds more like the opinion of the writer than any specific source. The lead needs attribution.
12. Vague lead that provides no specific information on what kinds of animals are making the campus their home.
13. A good lead that sets the scene for the rest of the story. The second paragraph could identify the men and provide the circumstances of their capture.
14. A good lead that provides specifics of the settlement in the lead.
15. This lead is faulty because it is written in headline format. It fails to use proper sentence structure—subject, verb, object—or articles "the," "a" or "an."
16. A good lead that provides specific information and provides the reader with an intriguing entry into the story.
17. This lead has multiple problems. It is vague, written in passive voice, repeats information and begins with a prepositional phrase as the time element. Beginning with the time element delays