

News Story Structures

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Basic News Story Structures

A structure of a news story is based on the style a writer applies. Styles are divided into two common ways:

1. Inverted Pyramid Style (most common)
2. Hourglass Style
3. Chronological Style

Inverted Pyramid Style

Most commonly, news writers use inverted pyramid style for their story reporting. It can easily and quickly deliver the message to the readers, since the modern day people do not have much time to read the rest of the story if the news is not very interesting for them. Inverted pyramid style starts with:

- * **Lead** – a summary of the topic (with five Ws, the H)
- * **Supporting details** – important supporting information
- * **Less important details** – less important information

Structure Sample

INVERTED PYRAMID

**Main points of the article
- the 5 W's plus the hook**

**Additional essential
information**

**Less
essential
details**

**The lead paragraph, which
contains who, what, where,
when, why, and how.**

**More important information
about the topic.**

**Less essential details that may
be cropped by the editor (to
fit in the newspaper) without
losing meaning.**

Sample of Inverted Pyramid

Source: *Phnom Penh Post*

The Kratie Provincial Court has ordered Captain Meas Piseth, an RCAF officer who has been accused of beating a deputy provincial prosecutor, to appear in court today.

*Lead, summarizing the news
about the provincial court order*

Authorities say that the dispute started when the prosecutor, Keo Socheath, had an argument with the father of Piseth, a local taxi driver named Meas Matesh, about a blocked car. Matesh then phoned his son, who, moments after he showed up, hopped out of his Lexus and began to beat Socheath.

*Supporting details, telling how
the dispute started*

“Until now, Meas Piseth and his father were not charged by the court or got warrants for their arrests. They were summonsed to appeal at Kratie Court to handle their case tomorrow,” said Lieutenant Colonel Srey Vutha of the Justice Police Office in Kratie.

*Additional detail (quote), telling
the suspects were not yet
charged or warranted the arrest*

The court has also summoned the father and a potential witness, Vin Mao, who worked with Matesh in drumming up fares. Police have been unable to contact Mao, Matesh or his son, all of whom fled.

*Less important details, telling
the involvement of the witness
and the escape of the suspects*

Kratie military police also believe that Piseth and his father were former luxury wood dealers.

Hourglass Style

The hourglass form summarizes the news, then shifts to a narrative. The top delivers the news, the turn acts as a transition, the narrative tells the story.

- * **THE TOP.** Here you deliver the news in a summary lead, followed by three or four paragraphs that answer the reader's most pressing questions. In the top you give the basic news, enough to satisfy a time-pressed reader. You report the story in its most concise form. If all that is read is the top, the reader is still informed. Because it's limited to four to six paragraphs, the top of the story should contain only the most significant information.

Hourglass Style (Cont.)

- * **THE TURN.** Here you signal the reader that a narrative, usually chronological, is beginning. Usually, the turn is a transitional phrase that contains attribution for the narrative that follows: according to police, eyewitnesses described the event this way, the shooting unfolded this way, law enforcement sources and neighbors agree.
- * **THE NARRATIVE.** The story has three elements: a beginning, middle and end. The bottom allows the writer to tell a chronological narrative complete with detail, dialogue, and background information.

Hourglass Diagram

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The Top, summarizing the news

The Turn (transition), shifting to a narrative

The Narrative, telling the story

Identify the top, the turn, and the narrative.

Identify the top, the turn, or the narrative.

Shots Fired While He Stabbed Ex-Wife

By *Conie Piloto* and *Molly Hennessy-Fiske*
The Miami Herald
Aug. 9, 1998

It wasn't the first time that Dennis Leach had violently terrorized his ex-wife. But it will be the last.

Leach, 37, was shot by Davie police Saturday afternoon after he disregarded their orders to drop his knife and instead plunged it repeatedly into Joyce Leach outside her duplex at 6110 SW 41st Ct.

Dennis Leach was pronounced dead at the scene. His ex-wife, who asked police, "Why did you shoot him?" as she was loaded into the ambulance, was taken to Memorial Regional Hospital in Hollywood, where she was listed in stable condition.

The mayhem was witnessed by Dennis Leach's parents and some neighbors. The neighbors said turmoil at the Leach home was nothing new.

In May, Dennis Leach was charged with aggravated assault when, according to police, he showed up with a hammer, broke a window and chased his ex-wife around the duplex, shouting, "I'm going to kill you!"

Police and neighbors gave this account of the latest domestic violence.

Dennis Leach became angry with his 37-year-old ex-wife after he went to a neighborhood bar Friday night. He stormed into her duplex Saturday afternoon and threatened her with a butcher knife.

A terrified Joyce Leach dashed next door to the adjoining home of Leach's parents.

"He's got a knife, and he's gonna kill me!" Leach's mother, Reba Leach, said her daughter-in-law screamed.

At the same time, 15-year-old April Leach, one of their six children, called from a convenience store blocks away.

"Your father is going to kill me!" Joyce Leach yelled.

April Leach hung up and dialed 911.

When officers arrived at the duplex, Dennis Leach was chasing his ex-wife with a knife.

Police ordered him to drop the weapon, said Davie Capt. John George.

Instead, Leach started stabbing her.

An officer fired at Dennis Leach, striking him around a knee, but he wouldn't stop plunging the knife into his ex-wife, neighbors said.

An officer or officers fired again, this time hitting Leach in the chest. He collapsed and died on the side of the road. His parents were watching from inside their home.

Davie police would not say whether more than one officer fired at Dennis Leach, nor would they identify the officer or officers.

Neighbors say they heard at least five shots.

As police carried Joyce Leach to an ambulance, the knife still stuck in her right shoulder, she turned to police and said: "Is he dead, is he dead. ... Why did you shoot him?" said next-door neighbor Shannon Schmitzer.

As Joyce was hoisted into the ambulance and police placed a yellow tarp over Dennis Leach's body, April Leach and a brother arrived.

The two siblings cried and tried to run to their mother and father but were escorted away.

Police later drove them to Memorial Regional Hospital to be with their mother.

Dennis and Joyce Leach lived for years in the duplex owned by Leach's parents.

"They've had a lot of trouble in the past," Schmitzer said.

As the couple's problems escalated, the Department of Children and Family Services stepped in. The state took custody of the children for a while, placing them in foster homes, neighbors said.

Joyce Leach got a job at Dunkin' Donuts, just blocks away, but Dennis Leach couldn't stay out of trouble.

In May, Davie police charged him with domestic violence and aggravated assault after the incident with the hammer. He was convicted and jailed for 90 days.

He got out Tuesday night and returned to his family's house, his mother said.

"We weren't supposed to let him stay here," his mother said. "But he just showed up."

Chronological Style

Like spatial and logical orders, chronological style is rarely used for journalistic writing since the most important point will stand at the end of the article, where most of the readers fail to get the message after a few seconds of reading the “boring” opening. It tells a story narratively and chronologically. It begins with:

- * **Lead**
- * **Foreshadowing** (nut graph)
- * **Chronological Storytelling**
- * **Climax at End**

Chronological Style Diagram



Lead

Foreshadowing

Chronological Storytelling

Climax