

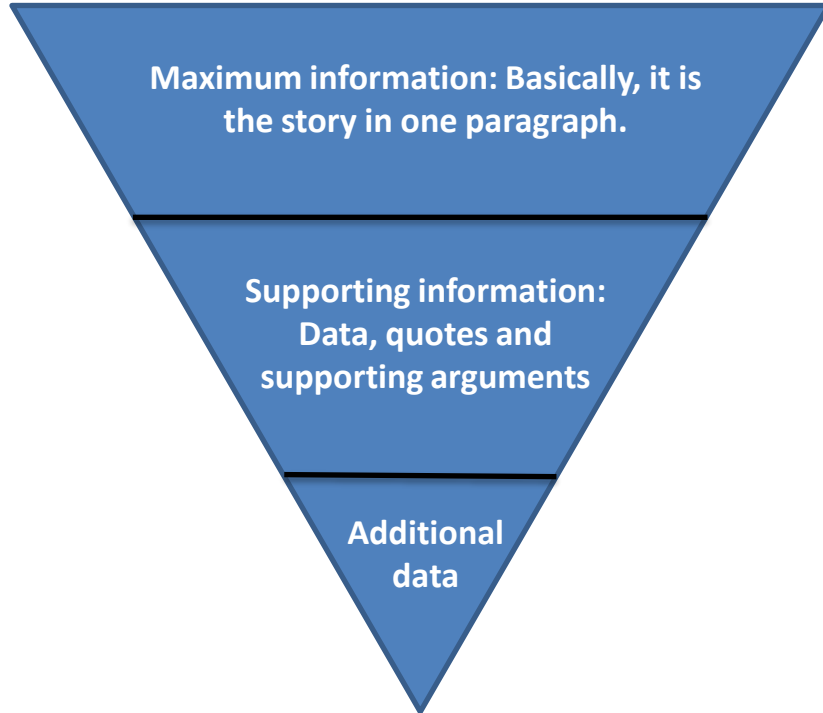


Basics of news-writing: Episode 1





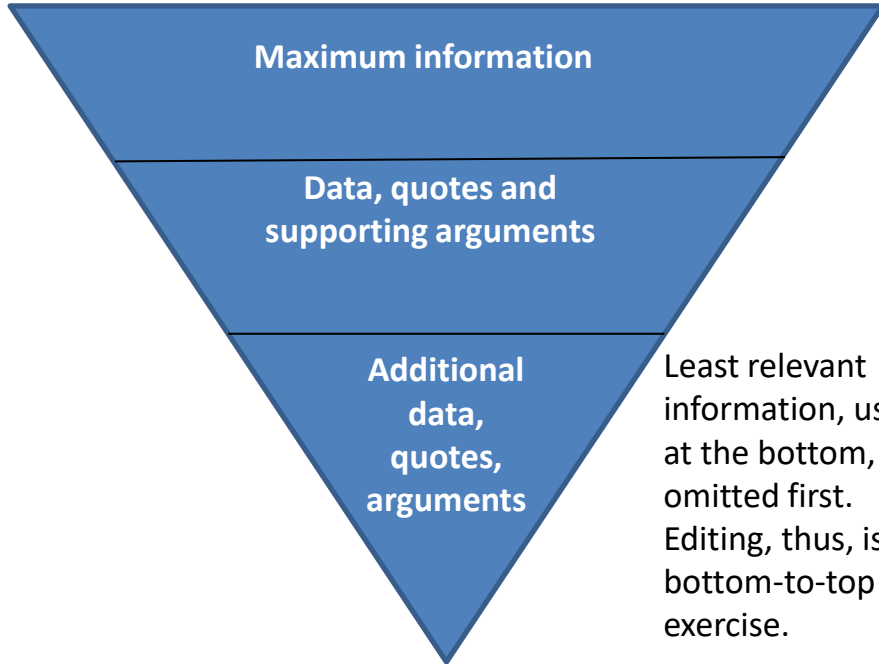
What is this?



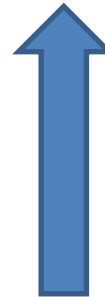
This upside-down triangle has a special meaning for students of journalism. Known as the “inverted pyramid” principle, it is the first lesson of news writing. In simple terms, it is used to describe the structure of a news story. Typically, a news story progresses from the most relevant fact/facts to the least relevant fact/facts. The idea is to provide maximum information in the beginning so that even if the reader does not have the time for in-depth reading, the most important facts have been conveyed.



What's this again?



Least relevant information, usually at the bottom, is omitted first. Editing, thus, is a bottom-to-top exercise.



Answer: It's the editor's guide

Since space is always an issue, more so for the print medium than the online, for editors (the desk) the “inverted pyramid” helps in removing unnecessary content.



What is wrong with this?

In a research published in *Scientific Reports*, a peer-reviewed open access scientific journal published by *Nature Research*, researchers have demonstrated for the first time that cells from an insect-eating brown bat can be persistently infected with MERS coronavirus for months, due to important adaptations from both the bat and the virus working together.

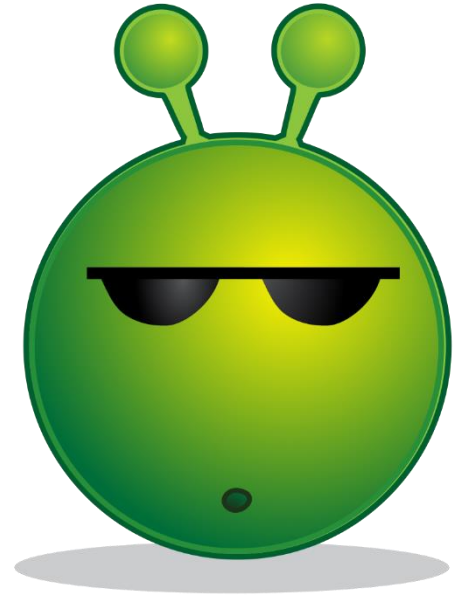




When and where to use the “full stop”?

There is no hard and fast rule about the length of a sentence. Typically, a sentence should be **no longer than 20 words** and should contain **no more than three ideas**.

The longer and more convoluted the sentence, the less reader-friendly it is.





Keeping sentences simple

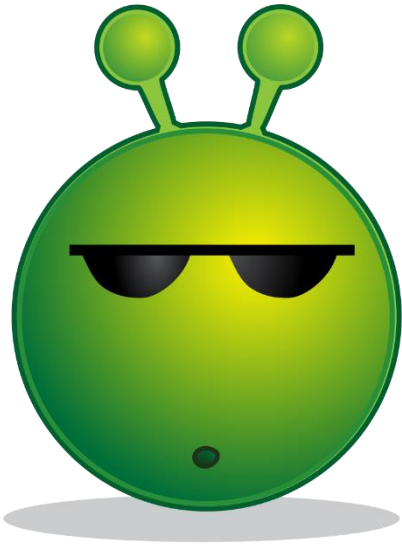
We try to avoid the use of passive voice as much as possible. Why?

Sentence 1: Pallavi broke the table (Word count: 4)

Sentence 2: The table was broken by Pallavi (Word count: 6)

The other reason for avoiding passive voice while writing is that we usually speak in the active voice in our daily lives. The language is important in news writing. Using active voice makes the writing relatable, thus, reader-friendly.

BUT there are instances when one HAS TO use passive voice.





When to use passive voice?



Sometimes, we need to retain the sentence, even if it is in the passive voice. Here is an example.

Actual sentence: Three children have been admitted to hospital with suspected food poisoning.
(Passive voice)

When we change this sentence in active voice, we get:

Sentence 1: **Someone** admitted three children to hospital with suspected food poisoning. (Active voice)

Sentence 2: **Food poisoning put three children in hospital.** (Active voice)



What is a peg?

The peg of the story is what makes the news newsworthy. Typically, the newsworthiness of a story is based on the following factors:

- Timeliness
- Proximity
- Impact
- Prominence
- Human interest
- Peculiarity





Timeliness



The question you need to ask is: What makes the story important right now?

Hint: The latest is the most relevant

Examples

[New species of dragonfly discovered in the Konkan](#)

[The science of hand sanitisers](#)



Proximity

It is important who the reader is. For example, if the reader is from India, news about specific developments in the country or those that will impact India more is newsworthy.

Examples

[Monsoon likely delayed, to hit Kerala on June 5: IMD](#)

[The curious case of rapid melting in the Himalayas](#)





Impact

Higher the number of people to be impacted by a development/event, the more reasons for a journalist to write about it.

Examples

[COVID-19: 60% farmers suffered yield loss on their harvest, shows survey](#)

[Days of COVID-19 confinement: How school-goers are dealing with lockdown](#)





Prominence

The focus of the news is Who did it or Who said it? The “Who” can be a celebrity, a person holding an important office/position or an organisation.

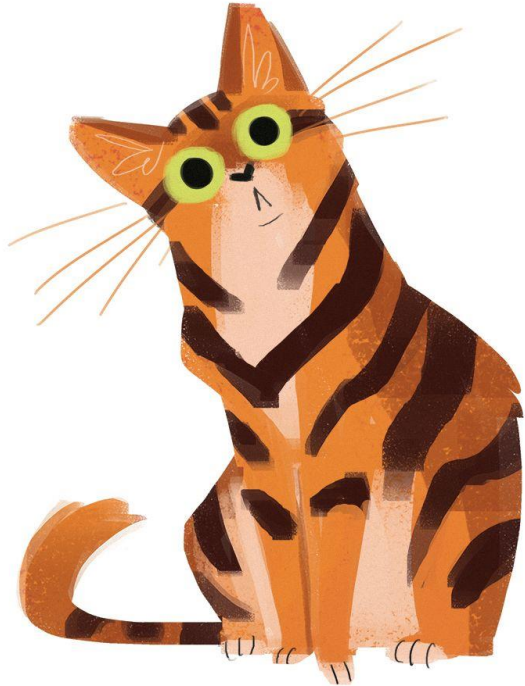
Example

[Obama pledges to create largest marine reserve in Pacific Ocean](#)





Peculiarity



Charles A Dana, a famous editor, once said, "If a dog bites a man, that's not news. But if a man bites a dog, that's news!"

Peculiar and strange developments usually generate curiosity. It is because of this reason that many one-time odd events are also great news stories.

Example

[Penguin returns to visit rescuer every year](#)

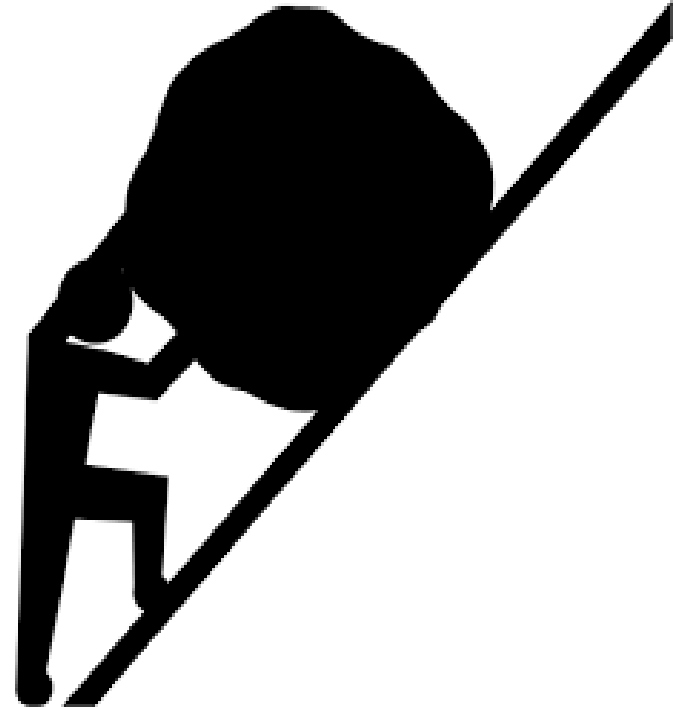


Human interest

At the heart of any human interest story is people. It is people sharing their unique stories in an interesting way. Whether it be overcoming adversity, raising awareness, opening up about a condition or experience to help educate others; tales of exceptional human achievement, acts of bravery, unsung heroes, victims, funny stories – the focus is always on the person and their experience.

Example

[13-year-old girl drives father home on a bicycle from Haryana to Bihar](#)





What is a news package?

Pick up any news story, you will find a combination of these elements:

- Headline
- Strap/Intro
- Image/Illustration/infographic/cartoon
- Image caption
- Body of the story

A story is not complete if it does not have one of these elements. (More on this on Episode 2)





gobar times
A DOWN TO EARTH SUPPLEMENT FOR THE YOUNG AND CURIOUS



End of Day 1: Campers, let's re-group tomorrow



Join us for quiz and news-writing sessions tomorrow

Time-table for Day 4

Quiz

(10:30 am-11:30 am)

Basics of news-writing: Episode 2

(11:30 am-12:30 pm)

See you!