MEGA:BITESS Academy
Writing About Data

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Context

Writing for school's blog, newspaper, podcast

➢ for local government
➢ for local health department

Challenges in teaching writing about data:

➢ Students are used to 5-paragraph essays. Boring!

➢ Chronology is tempting, but not particularly useful.

➢ Writing scientifically is much different than writing for other audiences.
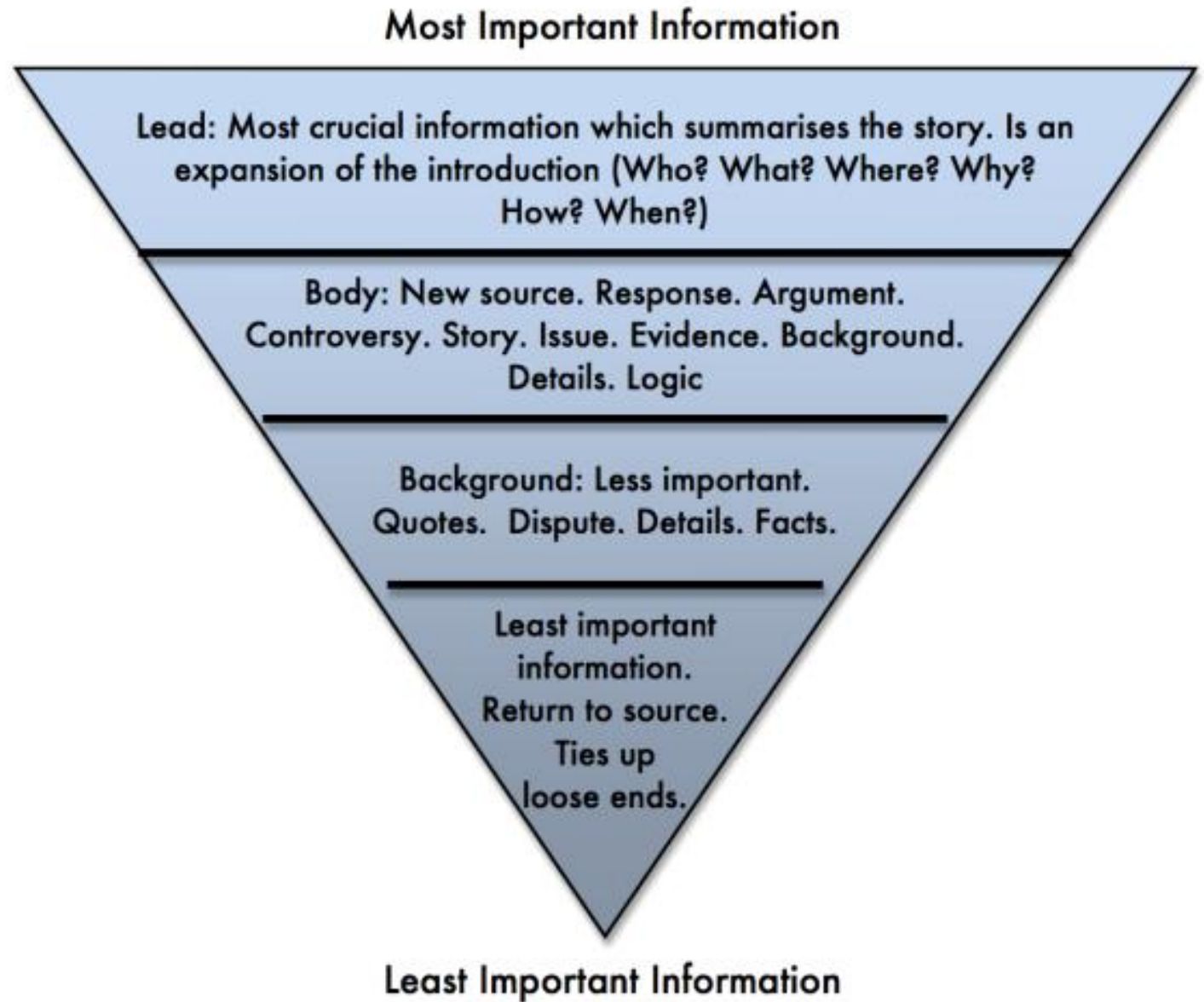
Writing news ledes

Who, what, when, where, why, how
- 30 words or less

FIG. 11-1. Simplicity of handling has established the Linotype slug as the modern unit of composition.

Most Important Information

Lead: Most crucial information which summarises the story. Is an expansion of the introduction (Who? What? Where? Why? How? When?)

Body: New source. Response. Argument. Controversy. Story. Issue. Evidence. Background. Details. Logic

Background: Less important. Quotes. Dispute. Details. Facts.

Least important information. Return to source. Ties up loose ends.

Least Important Information

Share your findings

Who: is this relevant to? Who conducted the study? (Who funded it?)

➢ Parents at a softball game; Residents of your community; 8th graders at Bearden MS;

➢ **Funding:** On a larger scale, funders can shape how studies are conducted or how findings are interpreted. (Big Pharma and drug trials)

➢ But do mention that your work is in conjunction with the Mega:Bitess Academy!

What: is the most important finding(s)?

➢ **Start here!** Explain in terms that clearly helps show the relevance to the audience.

➢ Examples:

University of Toronto researchers **recently found in an observational study of United States women** that race and ethnicity can influence early diagnosis and survival of breast cancer.

Early identification of breast cancer and chances of survival **directly relate to a woman's race and ethnicity,** according to researchers at the University of Toronto.

Researchers at the University of Toronto **link ethnicity to the risk of developing invasive breast cancer** through a comprehensive 7 year study ending in 2011.

Report the methods

When: was the study conducted?

➢ Traps set out in August 30, the height of mosquito season….

➢ Important due to historical artifacts (something from outside you can't control).

Where: was the study conducted? Is it relevant to only certain areas?

➢ Traps set near the tree lines around the school parking lot – how much of school's campus is likely to be most attractive to Aedes?

➢ Use your maps!

Why: is this important? Why was the study conducted?

➢ LACE is terrible but largely preventable (see Becky's information)

How: was the study conducted?

➤ **Avoid traditional scientific terms** – e.g., oviposit, vector, independent variable, probability sampling.

➤ **But explanation needs to be understandable and accurate**:

Recently, a group of French researchers set out to study the communication between crocodile mothers and their young. To do this, **they grabbed a bunch** of baby alligators, caimans, and crocodiles and **recorded their "Help Mom, a predator's got me!"** cries.

They found that older (i.e. larger) juveniles had lower pitched distress calls than younger individuals. The researchers then **played the calls back to the mothers of these animals** to see how they reacted. Most crocodilian mothers investigated the younger distress calls but not the older ones, **indicating that mothers modify their level of parental care** based on the age of the young.

What does it *mean*?

-- **Jordan Bush,** blogs.scientificamerican.com

Importance of efficacy

Self-efficacy: What can individuals **<u>do</u>** to remedy the situation?

Response efficacy: Will doing this thing mitigate the response?

Can reach all audiences with the same message, regardless of involvement

Online resources on writing about data

This is a lesson plan based on Common Core Standards: Information writing tips from *The New York Times* -- https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/23/learning/unit-4-informational-writing.html

Polls (public opinion) – American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR)

Writing podcasts – with student examples – from *The New York Times* -- https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/22/learning/making-a-podcast-that-matters-a-guide-with-examples-from-23-students.html