

## **Guidelines for an Inverted Pyramid Article (Adapted from Prof. Shaheen Pasha)**

1. Write a succinct, short lead. Summary leads work well here because the first paragraph really shouldn't be more than 35 words that gives the major point of the story.
  - a. Remember even in a summary lead, you can have two paragraphs that explain the 5Ws (Who, What, When, Where, Why) and the How.
  - b. Alternative: Lead with an anecdote that briefly describes an individual's experience with the issue. This is good when you have a very strong anecdote or quotes.
2. After the lead, the next few paragraphs should provide all the important information that a person would want to know that supports your lead.
3. Use quotations early in your story, like in the third or fourth paragraph. A good rule of thumb is that once you've given the most important information, you should then have a quote. Separate direct quotes by using another paragraph with additional information or if you still want to say what this person told you, paraphrase their comments. For instance:
  - a. "We will not rest until the terrorists are brought to justice," said President Bush.  
Then in another paragraph say: Bush added that the government has launched a massive investigation into the attack and preliminary finding indicate that Osama bin Laden was involved.  
Now you want to put a direct quote in from him again saying "Bin Laden has waged war on the U.S. and we will retaliate," Bush said.  
Do you see how you have two good direct quotes but if you put them back to back they wouldn't make sense so you should have a paragraph between them?
4. Provide background information. This is where you provide the reader with the information of what led up to the current news. For instance, in a crime story, you may lead with the fact that a person was convicted for murder and sentenced to 15 years in jail. But a few paragraphs down you should go into some detail about what the exact crime was and how it happened. That happened in the past, therefore it is background.
5. Present news in descending importance. Remember news is what's happened most recently because it's the most importance. You can then go into information that's increasingly less important such as stuff that happened in the past.
6. Use transitions. A paraphrased quote, a background paragraph, a paragraph with additional news or even a direct quotation can be used as transition to move readers smoothly from one paragraph to another. Transitions are basically

words or paragraphs or sentences that tell a reader that something else is coming up. Example transitions:

- a. To indicate a change in opinion from one paragraph to the next use but, on the other hand, however
  - b. To clarify a point, use in other words, for example, that is, to illustrate, to demonstrate, specifically, to clarify
  - c. To make a comparison use also, in comparison, like, similarly, on the same note, a related point
  - d. To contrast points use but, in contrast, despite, on the contrary, unlike, yet, however, instead of
  - e. To expand information use in addition, an additional, moreover, in other action, another, further, furthermore, too, as well as, also
  - f. To indicate a change in place use above, higher, beneath, nearby, beside, between, across, after, around, below
  - g. To indicate time use while, meanwhile, past, afterward, during, soon, next, subsequently, until then, future, before, at the same time
7. Don't editorialize which basically means, keep your opinion out of a story. If something is really horrible, let the sources and quotes in your story say that. The reporter could have easily said that the expected death toll is too horrible to imagine in the World Trade Center attack. But that's his opinion. Instead he let the mayor say it. You don't want to put an opinion in a story without attributing it to someone other than yourself.
8. Avoid writing "the end." Continue reporting until you are done with the story and then either just stop writing or use a quote that is memorable to end the story.

## Sample Inverted Pyramid Story (Sample A)

In the most devastating terrorist onslaught ever waged against the United States, hijackers crashed two airliners into the World Trade Center on Tuesday, toppling its twin 110-story towers. **SUMMARY LEAD: 5 Ws**

The deadly calamity was witnessed on television across the world as another plane slammed into the Pentagon, and a fourth crashed outside Pittsburgh. **HOW**

“Today, our nation saw evil,” President Bush said in an address to the nation Tuesday night. “Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror.” **QUOTE UP HIGH**

Said Adm. Robert J. Natter, commander of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet: ““We have been attacked like we haven't since Pearl Harbor.” **THIS IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT GIVES CONTEXT TO HOW BAD THE ATTACKS WERE FOR THOSE WHO MAY NOT GET IT**

Establishing the U.S. death toll could take weeks. The four airliners alone had 266 people aboard and there were no known survivors. At the Pentagon, about 100 people were believed dead. **THE NEXT MOST IMPORTANT THING BECAUSE PEOPLE WANT TO KNOW HOW MANY DIED**

In addition, a firefighters union official said he feared at least 200 firefighters had died in rescue efforts at the trade center – where 50,000 people worked – and dozens of police officers were believed missing. **THIS IS LESS IMPORTANT**

“The number of casualties will be more than most of us can bear,” a visibly distraught Mayor Rudolph Giuliani said. **THIS IS A GOOD VISUAL QUOTE BUT IS LEAST IMPORTANT INFORMATION BECAUSE THE STORY COULD HAVE DONE WITHOUT IT. IT DOESN'T ADD ANY MORE INFORMATION TO THE STORY**

Sample Inverted Pyramid Story (Sample B)

## Two planes crash into World Trade Center in apparent terrorist

By JERRY SCHWARTZ AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) -- In a horrific sequence of destruction, terrorists crashed two planes into the World Trade Center and knocked down one of the 110-story towers Tuesday morning. Explosions also rocked the Pentagon and the State Department and spread fear across the nation. **(LEAD: Tells the 5 Ws)**

A witness said he saw bodies falling from the twin towers and people jumping out.

President Bush ordered a full-scale investigation to "hunt down the folks who committed this act." **(IMPORTANT QUOTE)**

One of the planes that crashed into the Trade Center was American Airlines Flight 11, hijacked after takeoff from Boston en route to Los Angeles, American Airlines said. **(INCIDENT)**

The planes blasted fiery, gaping holes in the upper floors of the twin towers. The southern tower collapsed with a roar about an hour later.

"This is perhaps the most audacious terrorist attack that's ever taken place in the world," said Chris Yates, an aviation expert at Jane's Transport in London. "It takes a logistics operation from the terror group involved that is second to none. Only a very small handful of terror groups is on that list. ... I would name at the top of the list Osama Bin Laden." **(STRONG FULL QUOTE)**

All planes were grounded across the country by the Federal Aviation Administration. All bridges and tunnels into Manhattan

were closed down. **(GIVES AN UPDATE OF THE CURRENT SITUATION)**

The twin disaster at the World Trade Center happened shortly before 9 a.m. and then right around 9 a.m. **(STARTS IN THE BACKGROUND OF WHAT HAPPENED)**

Heavy black smoke billowed into the sky above the gaping holes in the side of the twin towers, one of New York City's most famous landmarks, and debris rained down upon the street, one of the city's busiest work areas. When the second plane hit, a fireball of flame and smoke erupted, leaving a huge hole in the glass and steel tower. **(DESCRIPTIVE WRITING CREATES AN IMAGE)**

John Axisa, who was getting off a PATH train to the World Trade Center, said he saw "bodies falling out" of the building. He said he ran outside, and watched people jump out of the first building, and then there was a second explosion, and he felt heat on the back of neck.

WCBS-TV, citing an FBI agent, said five or six people jumped out of the windows. People screamed every time another person leaped.

David Reck was handing out literature for a candidate for public advocate a few blocks away when he saw a jet come in "very low, and then it made a slight twist and dove into the building."

People ran down the stairs in panic and fled the building. Thousands of pieces of what appeared to be office paper came drifting over Brooklyn, about three miles away.

Within the hour, an aircraft crashed on a helicopter landing pad near the Pentagon, a car bomb exploded outside the State Department, and the West Wing of the White House was evacuated amid threats of terrorism. And another explosion rocked

New York about an hour after the crash.

"Today we've had a national tragedy," Bush said in Sarasota, Fla. "Two airplanes have crashed into the World Trade Center in an apparent terrorist attack on our country." He said he would be returning immediately to Washington.

Terrorist bombers struck the World Trade Center in February 1993, killing six people and injuring more than 1,000 others.

"A second occurrence is just beyond belief," said Ira Furber, former National Transportation Safety Board spokesman.

Several subway lines were immediately shut down Tuesday. Trading on Wall Street was suspended.

"We heard a large boom and then we saw all this debris just falling," said Harriet Grimm, who was inside a bookstore on the World Trade Center's first floor when the first explosion rocked the building.

"The plane was coming in low and ... it looked like it hit at a slight angle," said Sean Murtagh, a CNN vice president, the network reported.

In 1945, an Army Air Corps B-25, a twin-engine bomber, crashed into the 79th floor of the Empire State Building in dense fog.

In Florida, Bush was reading to children in a classroom at 9:05 a.m. when his chief of staff, Andrew Card, whispered into his ear. The president briefly turned somber before he resumed reading. He addressed the tragedy about a half-hour later.