Before writing a newspaper article, one must have an understanding of the different types of articles contained in a newspaper. Most news articles are news stories and focus only on the facts but editorials and columns are not considered real news stories and usually reflect the opinion of their writer. There are several types of news articles:

- A local news article focuses on what's going on in your neighbourhood. An example of a local news story would be an article on a city council meeting.

- A national news article focuses on what's happening in the country. An example of a national news article would be an article on the Canadian government passing a new bill.

- An international news article focuses on news that's happening outside the country. A story on an influenza outbreak in China would be considered an international news story.

- A feature article is an article that is about "softer" news. A feature may be a profile of a person who does a lot of volunteer work in the community or a movie preview. Feature articles are not considered news stories.

- An editorial is an article that contains the writer's opinion. Editorials are usually run all together on a specific page of the paper and focus on current events. Editorials are not considered news stories.

- A column is an article written by the same person on a regular basis. A columnist (the writer of the column) writes about subjects of interest to him/her, current events or community happenings. Columns are not considered news stories (No author).

There are certain aspects that characterize a newspaper article. These distinguishing features need to be considered before writing about a topic in order to have a well structured article.

**Headline and Byline**
All newspaper articles should be set off with a headline. The headline shouldn’t be a summarization of the article; instead it should serve the purpose of getting the reader’s attention. The byline should usually follow the headline. This states the author’s full name. In some cases the byline can occur and the end of the article. Remember to not use the first person point of view in your article (Mass).

**Lead Paragraph**
The lead paragraph is the first one in a news story. Usually, the lead is one sentence long and summarizes the facts of the news story in order of most newsworthy to least news-worthy (Knox). The lead paragraph should not tease
at the beginning or summarize at the end, as you sometimes see on television news. Instead, the author should lay all his/her cards out on the table, so to speak. The lead paragraph should include the “who, what, when, where, why, and how” of the story (-Cigelske). Depending on the elements of news value, the summary news lead emphasizes and includes some or all of these components:

**Who** names the subject(s) of the story. The “who”, a noun, can refer to a person, a group, a building, an institution, a concept -- anything about which a story can be written.

**What** is the action taking place. It is a verb that tells what the who is doing. Reporters should always use active voices and action verbs for the what because they make the wording direct and lively.

**When** tells the time the action is happening. It is an adverb or an adverb phrase.

**Where** is the place the action is happening. Again, it is an adverb or adverb or adverb phrase.

**Why**, another adverb, explains the action in the lead.

**How** usually describes the manner in which action occurs.

One example of a lead is: *Bargainers from General Motors and UAW Local 160 will resume talks in Warren this morning seeking to end a day-old strike over the transfer of jobs from unionized employees to less costly contract workers.*

The “who” in the lead above are the bargainers from General Motors and the UAW. What are the bargainers doing? The lead says they will resume talks. When will the bargainers resume talks? The bargain are meeting this morning. In our story, the “where” is Warren. Why are the bargainers meeting? The bargainers are meeting to discuss the transfer of jobs (-Knox).

The reader should know this information at first glance so they are aware what the story is about and what the emphasis is on.

The lead sets the structure for the rest of the story. If the lead is good, the rest of the story comes together easily. Many reporters spend half their writing time on the lead alone. One guiding principle behind story organization is: the structure of the story can help the reader understand what the author is writing about. The structure should lead the reader from idea to idea simply and clearly. The object is to give readers information, and wow them with convoluted style.

**Transitions**
With one-sentence paragraphs consisting of only one idea -- block paragraphs --
it would be easy for a story to appear as a series of statements without any smooth flow from one idea to the next. Block paragraphing makes the use of effective transitions important. Transitions are words or phrases that link two ideas, making the movement from one idea to the other clear and easy. Obvious transitional phrases are: thus, therefore, on the other hand, next, then, and so on.

Transitions in news stories are generally made by repeating a word or phrase or using a synonym for a key word in the preceding paragraph. Think of block graphs as islands tied together with transition bridges of repeated words or phrases (-Knox).

**Explanation and Amplification**
Following the lead paragraph comes the explanation and amplification, which deals with illuminating details. The author should use discretion in choosing details to include in this part of the story. Some details may not be as important as others and they should be presented in order of importance from greatest to least. The author should not feel the need to include everything he/she knows, but include everything he/she feels is important (-Cigelske). In addition, a direct quote should be used after the summary statement to provide amplification or verification, for example (-Knox).

**Background Information**

At a high reading level, the average reader will become confused reading the story. Therefore, the author should fill in the gaps with background information. When in doubt about whether information should be included, the author should put it in. For example, almost every piece on the O.J. Simpson case included in the explanation and amplification section the basic information on what he was on trial for even though it was basically common knowledge (-Cigelske).

**Biases**
Newspaper articles should be written without bias. Personal prejudices should not find their way into the article. The use of an op-ed or column forum is recommended for personal opinions (-Cigelske).

**Direct and Indirect Quotes**
When possible, the author should use direct or indirect quotes to enrich the article. However, quotations should not be included just for the sake of using them: make sure they are relevant (-Cigelske). Direct quotes can be used in the following situations:
- if a source’s language is particularly colourful or picturesque
- when it is important for written information -- especially official information -- to come from an obviously authoritative voice
- to answer the questions “why, how, who, or what?”
Remember, a direct quote repeats exactly what the interviewee said. If a person's exact words aren't known, the author can paraphrase, but never change the meaning of a person's words. When paraphrasing, quotation marks aren't required but the individual's name should be included after the paraphrased sentence.

Bibliography
The article must always contain a Bibliography or “Works Cited” list that includes at least two sources. All sources must be documented in the correct format* (-Sebrank).

The basic format of a newspaper article can be condensed into a simplified explanation:

- Headline—An attention getting phrase at the top of the article.
- Byline – By, your name.
- Lead Paragraph – Start with a strong, interesting sentence to get the reader engaged. Include the “who, what, when, where, why, and how” as appropriate.
- Explanation and Amplification–This section will include several brief paragraphs explaining the details surrounding your photograph.
- Background Information–This section will include several brief paragraphs explaining events leading up to the picture, related national stories, etc. (-Sebrank).

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