



TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITÄT  
CHEMNITZ

DICE Summer School 2017

# Fundamentals of Newswriting and Newsgathering

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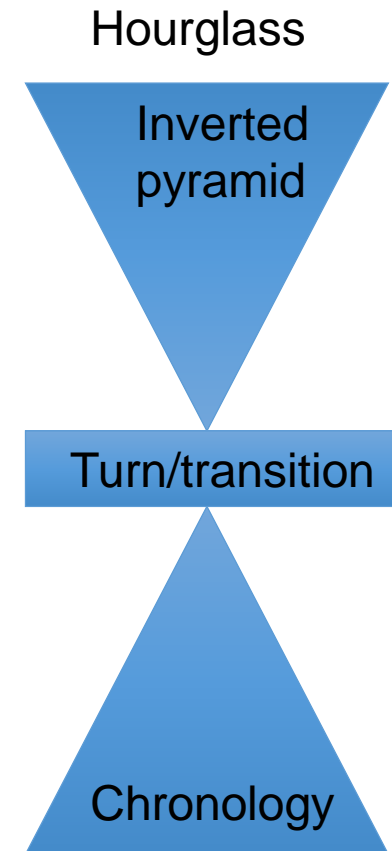
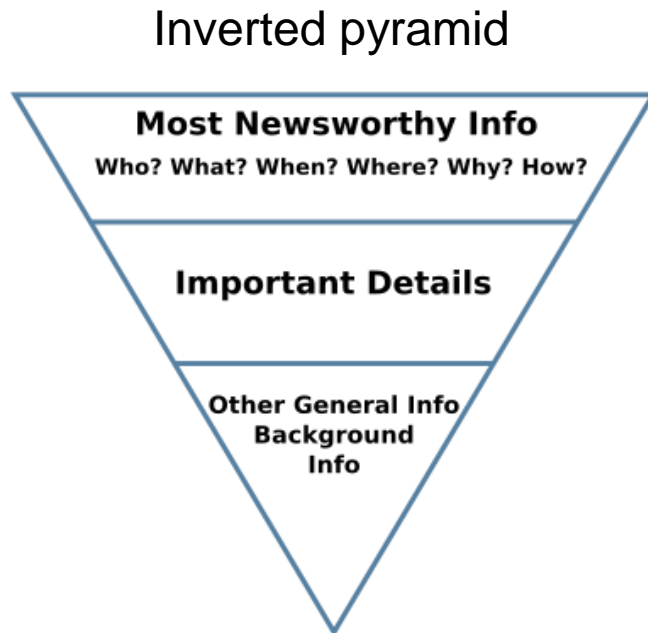
1. Characteristics of the news
2. News story structures
3. Newswriting style
4. Interviewing tips

# 1. Characteristics of the news

- Timeliness
- Impact
- Prominence
- Proximity
- Singularity
- Conflict or controversy

	Hard news	Soft news / features
Characteristics of the news	All, but especially <b>timeliness</b> What happened recently	All <b>except for</b> timeliness Human interest stories, but not urgent
Lead (Story beginning)	Summary lead / Hard news lead (1 sentence)	Soft news lead (Hook & nut graph)
Story structure	Inverted pyramid / Hourglass	Sections (e.g. point of view, topic, chronology, etc.)
Examples	Three firefighters were killed on Thursday when battling the forest fires. Yesterday, the fires destroyed 50 homes / destroyed part of a national park.	A follow-up story a month / a year / several years after the fires; focuses on people who lost loved ones or their homes; focuses on the state of nature in the forests

- Hard news story structures



- Soft news story structure: “sections”

Soft news lead (hook + nut graph)

Section 1

Section 2

Section 3

Section 4

Etc.

Sections can be

- Topics
- Chronology
- Points of view
- Comparisons/contrasts

## 3. Newswriting style

- a) Be correct
- b) Keep vocabulary simple
- c) Avoid redundancy
- d) Write concisely

### 3. Newswriting style

a) Be correct: spelling and word use

it's/its

their/there/they're

than/then

stationary/stationery

cardiac arrest / heart attack



## 3. Newswriting style

b) Keep vocabulary simple

stated

objective

attempt

expedite

### 3. Newswriting style

c) Avoid redundancy

future plans

major breakthrough

favored to win

## 3. Newswriting style

### d) Write concisely

A. Not: All of a sudden, the police officer arrived at a decision to secure the site where the badly decomposed body was found.

But: Suddenly, the police officer decided to secure the site where the decomposed body was found.

### 3. Newswriting style

In the profession, **style guides** govern the specifics:

- Vary by news organization: Associated Press, New York Times, BBC, etc.
- Explain how and when to use specific words
- Explain parameters for spelling, punctuation, abbreviations, capitalization, etc.

## 4. Interviewing tips

Before the interview: do research & develop good questions

a. Open-ended questions

*Tell me about the first time you flew in a plane.*

b. Closed-ended questions: be prepared with follow-up questions

*Have you ever visited Germany?*

*If yes: What did you think of it?*

*If no: Is it a place you would like to visit?*

*Why / why not?*

c. Put your questions in a logical order.

## 4. Interviewing tips

### During the interview:

- Be patient
  - a. Give your interviewees time to relax
  - b. Allow time to build rapport with your interviewee
- Take notes
- Confirm that you've understood what the person has said
- Pay attention: Often the most valuable/interesting information is information you aren't expecting

## 4. Interviewing tips

### In general:

- Be curious and eager to learn
- Be open-minded: don't assume you know what a person will say
- Be persistent: try again