

Journalism

Story structure

What to do with that great lede

Inverted pyramid

- ❖ The inverted pyramid format gives the most important facts at the top of the story.

This is the lede. It contains the most important facts

This paragraph is important; adds details and necessary info

Yet more details

And details

Less important info

You get the point

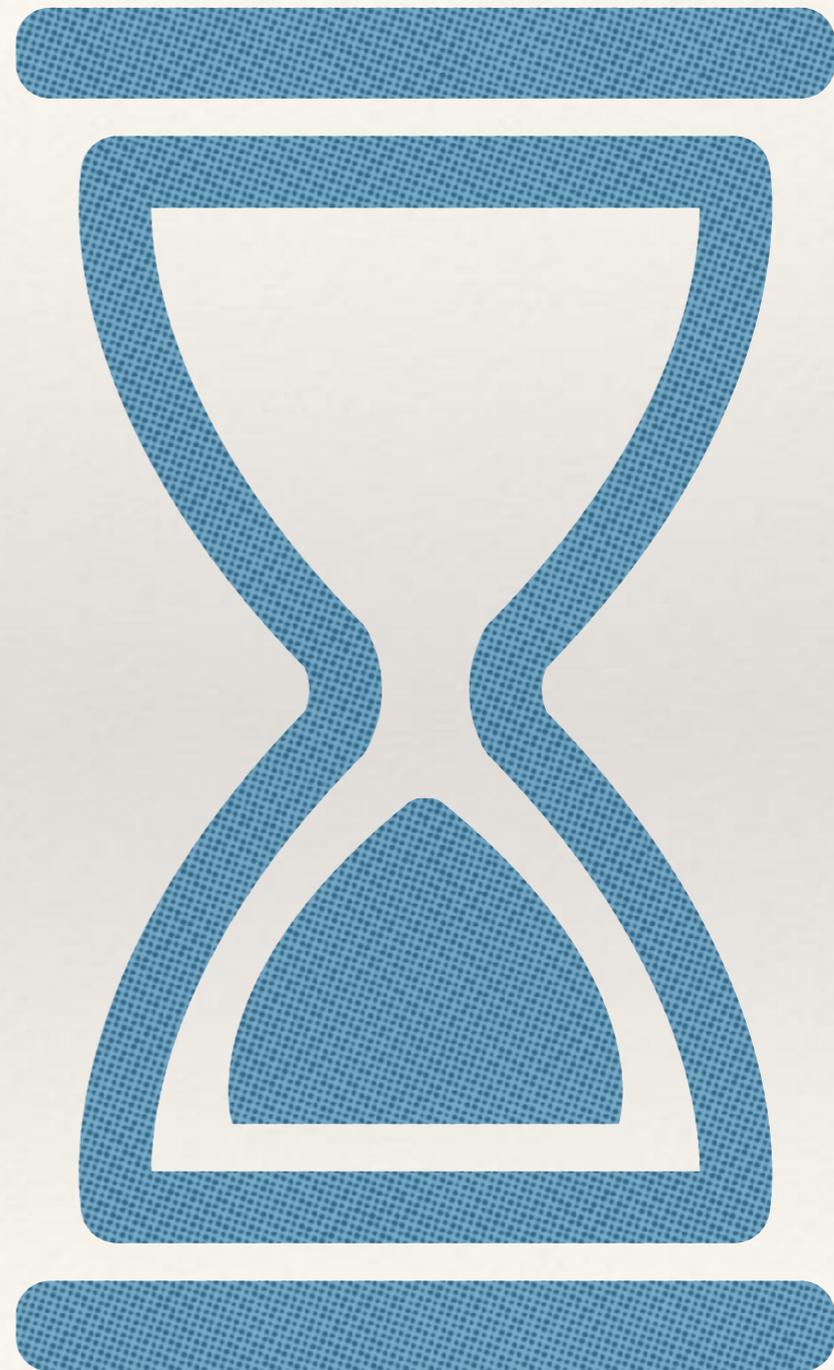
- ❖ But what other styles are there?

Narrative structure

- ❖ Narrative structure is typically a chronological ordering of facts that is kept together to avoid confusing the audience.
- ❖ Typical usage includes crime stories, especially lengthy crime stories that require reporting of several timed events. (Murders, cold cases, etc.)
- ❖ Don't confuse with narrative ledes! Two completely different things, with completely different meanings.

Hourglass structure

- ❖ This story structure combines inverted pyramid and narrative story structures.
- ❖ Story starts with an inverted pyramid format, but it then shifts to a side story (a subplot!) that is related to the story — an eyewitness account of an event; coverage of a theft ring, where multiple victims' accounts are reported, etc.



The Martini Glass

- ❖ This style combines the inverted pyramid and narrative writing styles, with an important detail at the end (the base of the glass)

The lede and most important facts in inverted pyramid style

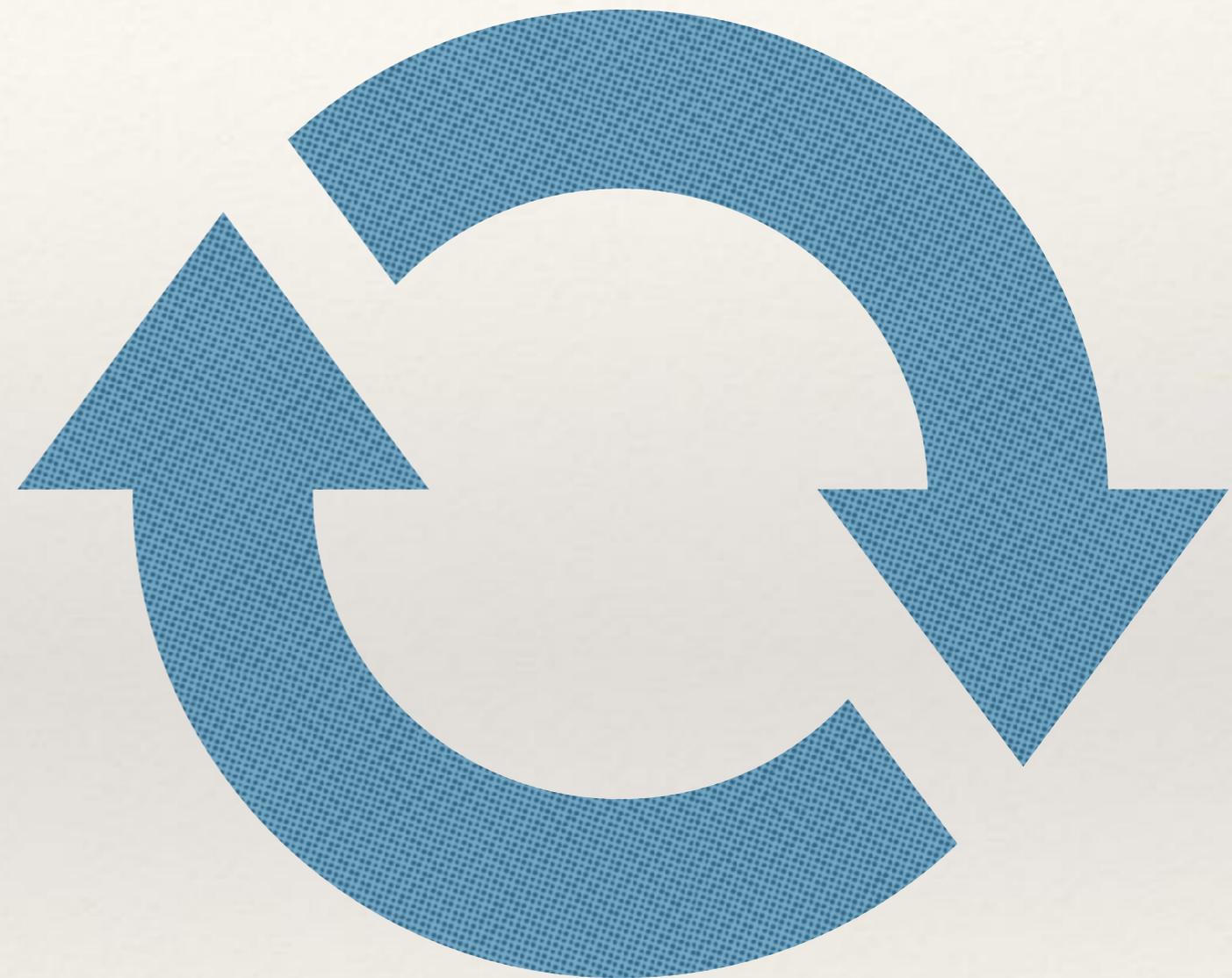
Events in chronological order



A kicker: usually a story twist or great quote

Circular style

- ❖ This is a fun style to write in, but it's one of the most difficult to pull off.
- ❖ Starts with a strong lede, telling the main focus of the story.
- ❖ Introduces a side story, or subplot.
- ❖ Jumps back and forth between main theme and subplots.
- ❖ Ends roughly where it begins.



Popular with sports stories, long-form features and stories spread out in a series over multiple days

Story organization

- ❖ Isn't this the same as writing styles we just looked at?
- ❖ Well, kind of...
- ❖ Good story organization, especially for beginning journalists, starts with an outline.
- ❖ Yep, just like in English class...
- ❖ **Sorry...**
- ❖ **Not sorry...**

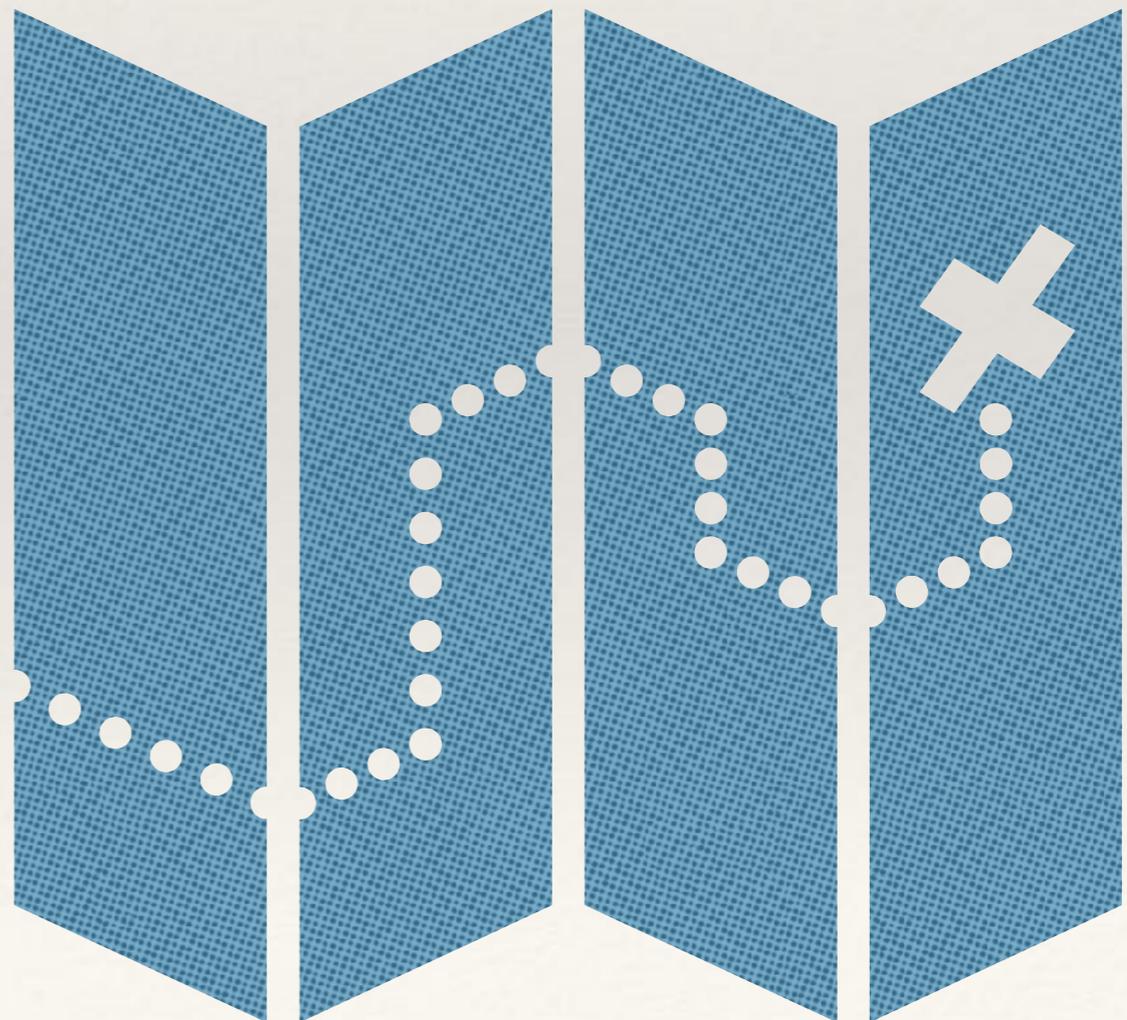
Story organization

- ❖ The best stories start with a clear destination in mind. In other words, know where you're going!
- ❖ You wouldn't drive a car blindfolded, would you?
- ❖ Please tell me your answer to that is NO!

Story organization

❖ A good outline goes a long way. It helps you plan. It helps you stick to that plan. It's insurance to keep you on your path toward your intended destination. (Note the cliché; we'll get to that.)

1. Why am I writing this story?
What is the main issue or problem?
2. Explain the issue or problem.
3. What do people affected by the issue or problem have to say?
4. What do experts or stakeholders have to say about the issue or problem?
5. Is progress being made?



Sentence structure

- ❖ Avoid lots of English rules, but grammar rules remain the same.
- ❖ Short sentences.
- ❖ One- or two-sentence paragraphs.
- ❖ No exclamation points!!!
- ❖ Use transition sentences so readers don't get lost.
- ❖ And for crying out loud, capitalize the letter I when referring to yourself.

Sentence structure

- ❖ Almost always write in past-active tense.
- ❖ Don't confuse active voice with active tense.
- ❖ *Voice* refers to how a verb acts with a subject.
- ❖ *Tense* refers to the time of the action.
- ❖ When using active tense verbs, the person or thing (the subject) is doing the action.

Active vs. passive verb tense

- ❖ Active: The officer ticketed the driver for his reckless driving.
- ❖ Passive: The reckless driver was ticketed by the officer.
- ❖ When in doubt, look at the sentence and find the action. What is at the front of the sentence? Is it the person or thing that does the action? Or is it the person or thing that has the action done to it?

Rewriting!

- ❖ Possibly the most important part of solid reporting.
- ❖ It's the part we hate most.
- ❖ But it makes our work better.
- ❖ After you finish your story, go back and read it twice. Fix any grammatical errors, convert passive sentences to active verb tense, rewrite your lede. Rinse, wash, repeat.

Clunkers, clichés and bad puns

- ❖ Avoid redundancy. (No such thing as first annual; all-time record; completely destroyed; true fact; a total of 14 birds; circle around; revert back; briefly summarize; end result)
- ❖ Stay away from clichés. Unless it's great. You get one a year. (The close-knit community; as old as the hills; fit as a fiddler; the writing on the wall; time heals all wounds; what goes around comes around; when you have lemons, make lemonade.)

Avoid jargon

- ❖ Jargon: Special words or expressions used by specific professionals or group that are difficult for the general public to understand.
- ❖ Utilized, finalized, apprehended, incarcerated, acquisition, alternative investment, capital.
- ❖ Internet jargon: LOL, BTW, BFF, BRB, LMBO and U.

Now it's your turn

- ❖ Write a news brief (journalism jargon :/) using the following details:
 - Maddie Smith is 16.
 - She has a part-time job at Sonic Drive-In.
 - She last worked at Sonic on Thursday, Sept. 28.
 - She found \$500 in the parking lot Wednesday while sweeping the parking lot.
 - She immediately took the cash to her manager and explained where she found it before clocking out and driving home.
 - The manager noticed the money clip holding the cash had a man's name and phone number engraved on it.
 - The manager called the number listed and spoke with the man.
 - He said he was at the restaurant an hour earlier, and he said the money must have slid off of his dash when he drove off.
 - When Smith got to the restaurant Thursday for her next shift, the manager and the man were waiting on her.
 - He was so thrilled with her honesty, he gave Smith \$100 as a gesture of his gratitude.
 - "I didn't expect anything in return," Smith said. "I turned it in because it was the right thing to do."