

## Writing Tips for News Stories

You can organize anything into a news story if you think of what your readers would want to learn first. Get right into the main point of the story; don't get lost with the when and where just because it sounds like "official journalism." You will have a decent story if you answer these questions in this order.

**1. So what happened? What's the big deal?**

What would readers think is the most important piece of information?

Write that first--one paragraph long. No more than 30 words, please.

**2. Why is this significant or important? Who's involved?**

Then what would the reader want to know about this information?

Write that in the second paragraph. Again no more than two sentences

**3. How did all this happen, where, when--if you haven't already told me?**

What background do readers need to know about this story?

A meeting, a news conference, a police report, a speech, a new study?--ground your information and tell where it came from and how.

**4. What do prominent people say about this--quote somebody? If there's a dispute, quote different sides?**

Who is saying what about all this and why did you choose to quote them?

Be sure to put their direct quotes in quotation marks, and don't make the quote too long. Just include the most important part. Don't put the quotations of two different people in the same paragraph. The rule is: different person speaking? Different paragraph? Don't worry about too-short paragraphs. News stories always use short paragraphs.

**5. How did all this get this way? Origins of the story...**

Start at the beginning now to explain how what happened today got started. This is where you can tell the story in narrative, "Once upon a Time" style--that is if you have the space.

**6. What's next?**

When, where and what can readers do to learn more?