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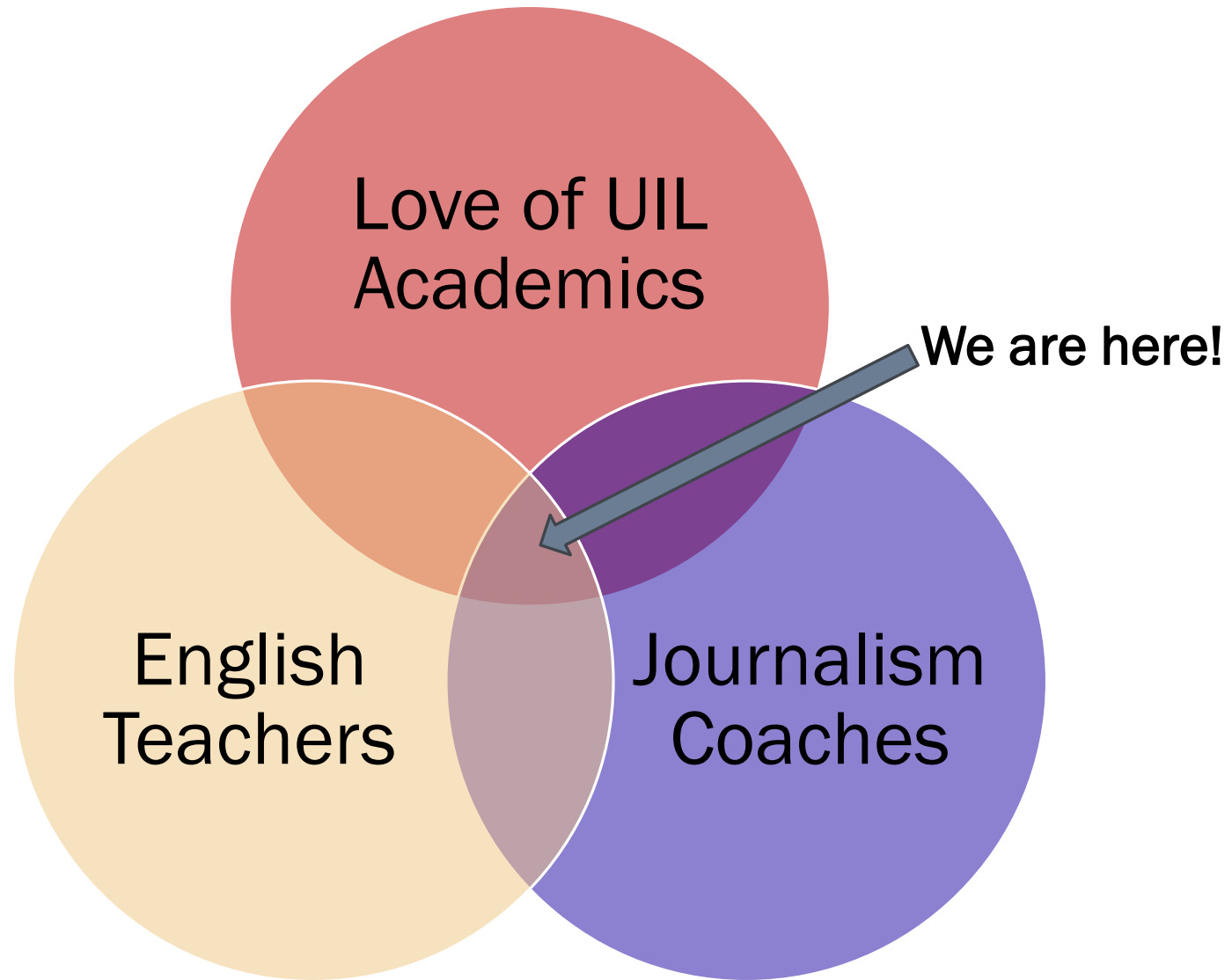


# English Teachers as Journalism Coaches

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So you were just informed that you are  
the new Journalism coach . . .





# **Journalism Judges' Lingo**

# Lead ▪ News Peg ▪ Future Date ▪ Old News

**LEAD** (or sometimes LEDE). As the term suggests, this is the first paragraph in a News or Feature story. It is comparable to the introduction of an essay in that it presents the main point that the story will develop.

The lead should conclude with the **NEWS PEG**, the aspect or angle of the story that makes it newsworthy. Just as the thesis expresses the main idea of an expository or persuasive essay, the news peg establishes the point of the story. It should address the “newest news” and often includes what judges call the **“FUTURE DATE.”**

Do not begin with **“OLD NEWS”**—that is, relevant information but information that the audience would likely already be familiar with. The old news provides context for the “new news.”

# Tips for Composing the Lead

“The lead . . . should be a flashlight that shines down into the story.”—John McPhee

“A good lead beckons and invites.”— Christopher Scanlan



# Tips for Composing the Lead

- Read the prompt and underline the future date.
- Determine if the future event will occur within a week.
- Ask what is happening on that date and who is involved.
- Establish context for the news peg (without leading with old news).
- Keep sentences clear and concise. Make sure the facts are accurate.
- Avoid **PASSIVE VOICE**.

# Active Versus Passive Voice

**VOICE** refers to the quality of verbs that indicates whether something is doing the action (active voice) or receiving the action (passive voice). Typically, judges like to see writers use active voice because it is direct and clear.

**EXAMPLE:** “They love going camping” (active) versus “Camping is loved by them” (passive).

Note that passive voice can be appropriate if the emphasis is on what happened rather than who did it. But usually, judges will mark the use of passive voice, noting their preference for active voice.

Probably the most challenging Journalism event in which to avoid passive voice is Headlines. (More on that later.)

# The Importance of “Flow”

**FLOW** refers to the logical progression of the story. In a story with good “flow,” one idea leads logically and smoothly to the next, resulting in a seamless feel to the story. Establishing good “flow” is key to the success of News, Feature and Editorial papers. News and Feature writers employ the **TRANSITION/QUOTE FORMULA**. Remember that there are **no direct quotes** in Editorial Writing.

Students should consider the information in the prompt as being the notes they have taken as they have interviewed people for the story they are going to write for the Leaguetown Press. They are going to take relevant information from their notes and order the facts and details in a way that “tells” the story of what is happening at the school.

Typically, the first person quoted is the individual most closely connected to the story, frequently the first person listed in the prompt. The first quote should be an immediate response to the situation presented in the **LEAD**. It might offer an explanation for or a defense of a decision, praise for an individual or a reaction to an event.

# How to Handle Attributions

Journalism judges will also check that the writer's **ATTRIBUTIONS** are formatted correctly. Attribute all quotes using "said," which always appears **AFTER** the person's name. Quotations should be two to three sentences with the attribution appearing after the first sentence. Avoid quotations of merely one sentence.

In indicating who the speaker is, students may identify people by their titles or by their job descriptions.

# Title Versus Job Description

According to the “AP Stylebook,” “A formal title generally is one that denotes a scope of authority, professional activity or academic activity.” In the world of Leaguetown, therefore, capitalize “principal” and “superintendent” when they appear before a name. Contrarily, if a job description is used to characterize a speaker, do not capitalize it.

**EXAMPLE:** “We are looking forward to working in our new labs,” science teacher Bill Nye said. “Having new equipment will create a better learning situation for students.”

# Reminders about Attributions

- Spell names correctly.
- Capitalize first and last name.
- Determine if a title **or** a job description is being used and capitalize accordingly.
- Place the attribution at the end of the first sentence of the quotation.

# Transitions and Quotes

**TRANSITIONS** contain facts that clarify the sequence of events and ideas in a story, whereas **QUOTES** express emotions and opinions. While English teachers are accustomed to teaching students the importance of including transitional words and phrases, in journalistic writing, the ideas themselves serve to move readers through the story. Therefore, do not use standard transitions in Journalism.



# Transitions and Quotes

The same information should not appear in both quotes and transitions. Rather, quotes should **extend** the details presented in the transition by providing additional information or a reaction to the factual information communicated in the transition. A quote should flow smoothly from the transition that precedes it. A well-placed quote should provide readers with a sense of expectation fulfilled.

# Transitions and Quotes

Remind students to include a student quote at some point in their News or Feature story. They are writing for a student newspaper, so student voices should be represented.

The final quote should bring the story to a logical conclusion. In a sense, it should put a “cap” on the story. The final quote is typically somewhat broad, perhaps offering a reaction to the overall situation, and it may express hope for a good outcome. Think of the final quote as a conclusion paragraph in an expository or persuasive essay. Readers should be left with a feeling of completion.

# Tips for Making a Story Flow

- On the prompt, mark out irrelevant information.
- Determine the logical organization of ideas **before** writing the story.
- Highlight or underline relevant sections of quotes.
- Tell the “story” in a logical order. That is, what do readers need to understand first before they can appreciate the next detail? This is where logical thinking comes into play!
- Make sure that the quote that follows a transition expands on the factual information contained in the transition. The quote should offer additional information or a reaction to the information the transition presents.

# Avoiding “Splits” in Headlines

What judges refer to as “splits” may refer to several different kinds of errors. Splits are most common in two-line headlines.

- Placing an adjective at the end of the first line and the noun it modifies at the beginning of the next
- Splitting an infinitive—that is, placing “to” at the end of the first line and the main verb at the beginning of the next
- Dividing a prepositional phrase by placing one or two words on one line and completing the phrase on the next
- Basically, avoid splitting any words that comprise a unit of meaning.

# Other Potential Pitfalls

As indicated previously, judges like to see **active** verbs in headlines, and they will count off for the use of passive voice. Sometimes, however, competitors must think creatively to avoid using passive voice.

The following headline is offered as a sample three-line headline for a story on a district test from 2011:

**Driving class  
eliminated  
for fall 2011**

This headline provides an example of the use of passive voice because it does not stipulate who is doing the eliminating. Passive voice is also identifiable by the implied “be” verb—has been eliminated by . . . .”

Judges would prefer to see

**District eliminates  
driving class  
for fall 2011**

Of course, to be correct, the headline must meet the demands of count, and this requirement can complicate the writing of the headline.

Here is another example, this time of a one-line headline:

## **Science fair set for Tuesday**

The meaning of this is “Science fair [has been] set [by someone] for Tuesday.

Again, judges would rather see the doer of the action at the beginning of the headline. For example, “**School sets science fair for Tuesday.**” However, this is too long for a one-line headline (only 32 spaces are available), so therein lies the dilemma. Something has to go. So . . . “**School sets science fair**”? This version sacrifices the time element, but something has to go, and the headline must meet the count requirements.



Keep in mind that if the event has already occurred, students should use **present** tense.

Journalism team **wins** State (event has already occurred)

If the event will occur in the future, then **future** tense should be used.

Journalism team **to compete** at State (event has not yet occurred)

**Do not** use past tense in a headline!

~~Journalism team **won** State~~

# Help with Editorial Writing

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"Let's just agree to disagree about  
how wrong you are."

# Help with Editorial Writing

Whereas in News and Feature Writing, it is important to present information impartially, in Editorial Writing, students must take a position on an issue or action, state their stance clearly and concisely, justify their position with solid reasons, rebut opposing views, sometimes offer a compromise solution, and reiterate their stance with a brief “why.”

The optimal length for an Editorial is about 1 1/4 to 1 1/3 pages. (In comparison, a News Story is typically about 1 1/3 to 1 1/2 pages, and a Feature Story should be around 1 1/2 to 2 pages.)

# How to Become a Journalism Coach

1) Study the PowerPoints, videos and handouts available from the UIL. Go to <https://www.uiltexas.org/journalism>. Look under “UIL Contests” and “Resources.”



2) Attend Capital Conference!

3) Take your students to a Student Activities Conference.

4) Take your students to invitational meets and JUDGE. Learn from the experienced teachers there.

5) Seek help from successful Journalism teachers located near you.

# How to Become a Journalism Coach

- 6) Write News stories, Feature stories and Editorials yourself so that you have a better idea of what your students are going through and how to help them.
- 7) Write Headlines with your students and compare/contrast to determine who came up with the best one!
- 8) Read and study the “AP Stylebook” to become familiar with the conventions of journalistic writing. Be sure to obtain the new 57<sup>th</sup> edition, which will be applicable for the next two years. Ideally, each of your competitors should have a copy, but it is a must for students competing in Copy Editing.
- 9) The Associated Press has also changed dictionaries, so you need to obtain the most recent edition of the “Merriam Webster Collegiate Dictionary.”
- 10) Transmit to your students your own excitement about the Journalism contests, and be patient—with your students and yourself!

# 2024 Student Activities Conferences

September 7 – Tyler Junior College, Tyler

September 14 – Lone Star College – North Harris, Houston

October 5 – Texas Tech University, Lubbock

November 2 - University of Texas at Austin

Good luck—  
and have  
fun!







# THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING

Registration link,  
presentations and handouts  
are available on the website.

*Remember to register your  
attendance for each session.*

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Handouts & More