

Five Ws and an H (or, finding a lead by emphasizing the most important news element):

1. **WHO:** President Clinton will visit Cuba next week at the request of Caricom nations.
2. **WHAT:** Lightning struck the upper deck at Wrigley Field last night while the Cubs were playing in San Francisco.
3. **WHEN:** Midnight tonight is the deadline for tax returns, but the local post office is ready to accommodate procrastinators.
4. **WHERE:** The Emerson and Towanda intersection is officially the most dangerous crossing in Bloomington, according to the Illinois Bureau of Transportation.
5. **WHY:** Because she could correctly spell "ostentatious," Lisa Wheeler will go to the state Spelling Bee finals.
6. **HOW:** By hitting his 50th home run last night for the fourth year, Chicago Cubs slugger Sammy Sosa etched his name in the baseball record books alongside Babe Ruth and Mark McGwire.

Common Types of News and News-Feature Leads (more ways to "lead" the reader into the story)

1. **Straight Summary Lead:** Twenty-eight passengers and a crew of four were killed last night when a single-engine plane crashed four miles south of Bloomington.
2. **Picture or Dramatic Lead:** Mourners lined up for miles yesterday in the pouring rain to take one last look and lay flowers near the coffin of Mother Teresa, who lived among Calcutta's sick and needy for 35 years.
3. **Background Lead:** After two weeks of picketing, United Auto Workers put down their signs yesterday following an agreement which would give members a 10 percent raise.
4. **Quotation Lead:** "I don't want to sound anti-American," poet Derek Walcott told his audience at Illinois Wesleyan University, "but this country is the only nation that taxes the Nobel Prize."
5. **Ironic or Contrast Lead:** St. John's Church survived the 1868 fire that destroyed most of Bloomington, and it weathered firebombs thrown in anger during the sixties. But it crumbled last night under the weight of snow from yesterday's freak storm.

6. **Punch Lead:** Two muskrats have taken over Holiday Pool, evading would-be capturers and forcing residents to look for other ways to survive the latest heat-wave.
7. **Quotation Lead:** "When a man bites another human being's ear, he should be banned from boxing for life," Evander Holyfield said, pressing a handkerchief against the side of his bloodied head.

Common mistakes:

1. **The Hidden Lead.** Does the lead zero in on the latest and most important news, or is the real heart of the story (and therefore a better lead) hidden elsewhere in the story?
2. **The Overly Dense Lead.** Does the lead have too many of the W's and H's? Does it have too many proper nouns or too much data?
3. **The Dull Lead.** Given your lead, would you really read this article if you hadn't written it?