

Yearbook Story Leads

Your attention please

Good leads begin stories. Bad leads can finish them. If the first couple of sentences don't make the reader feel helplessly curious and compelled to continue, your body copy won't be read. Yearbook leads don't sum up the entire article like newspaper leads. Instead, they give the reader a tempting taste of what lies ahead without necessarily addressing the main point of the story. They can tease, mislead, startle, amuse – anything that will invoke the reader's curiosity. Study the following types of leads. Learn to write more creative and effective leads – leads that are real attention-getters.

Allusion

consists more frequently of a quotation or reference to a literary, historical or mythological character; use only when reference is natural and appropriate.

Example

From the Andrew Sisters to the Supremes to The Boss, audiences traveled through time along Harmony Road. (show choir named Harmony Road)

Astonisher

usually consists of a short, snappy sentence set off in a paragraph by itself with a summary of other facts in the second paragraph; also used when you have one fact that is extremely important or startling.

Example

3...2...1...Blast-off! Takeoff to and from school began in Hondas, Tretorns and school buses depending on whether students drove, walked or rode the bus. (transportation)

Atmosphere

sets the scene, describing even the tiniest details.

Example

Girls in long black skirts and boys with loosened bow ties entered the auditorium carrying sheet music and instruments. They took their place as others carried tables across the stage and the director fiddled with his tape recorder. (community youth orchestra)

Background info

describes an event in which the background overshadows the people who participate in it.

Example

Ear piercing, the most common form of mutilation today. (pierced ears)

Combination/free style

a combination of two types of leads; for example, background, atmosphere and suspended interest leads often can be considered descriptive leads, too.

Example

The aroma of buttery popcorn and chocolate chips wafted down B Hall, drawing students, mesmerized by the scent, to the home economics room. (academics feature on home economics class)

Comparison/contrast

used to point out extremes; must be sharp and vivid.

Example

Papa Smurf guided all smurfs. Napoleon tried to conquer the world. While differing greatly, both held positions as leaders. (student leaders)

Descriptive

utilizes powerful description and includes graphic details to create an image in the reader's mind.

Example

A casual smile, offhand flip of the wrist and sudden twist of the head exposed personality. An AC/DC poster, overcrowded bulletin board and a ragged stuffed dog revealed character. Like body movements, bedrooms expressed one's individuality. (bedrooms)

Direct quotation

consists of a speaker's exact words; only used if the quotation is unique and attention-getting.

Example

"You immediately blush and look around to see if anyone noticed you," said senior Julie Lange. "Then you do it again and end up concentrating so hard on keeping your eyes open instead of what is going on." (falling asleep in class)

Exclamatory

a short exclamatory sentence set off in a paragraph by itself; usually used for extremely striking information, often big news.

Example

Dismember them, dismember them! Cut off their arms and legs! Cheerleaders, students and administrators chanted Napoleon death threats at the Homecoming Bonfire. Shouts penetrated the air as four senior football players carried the wooden coffin towards the menacing fire. (homecoming bonfire)

Freak

a gimmick lead, usually having a bizarre meaning.

Example

Eenie, meenie, minee, moe ... it came down to an individual decision. (deciding whether to take driving lessons in or out of school)

Narrative hook

tells a fictitious story.

Example

The room fell silent as the full effect of his words set in. His parents were speechless, his sister without expression. Had he really asked his parents to go to the party with him? (relationships with friends vs. parents)

Parody

consists most frequently of a play on words of a well-known song, poem, quotation, book or motion picture title; use only when parody is appropriate, easily recognized and not trite.

Example

Thought for food and none left over. A new menu for the Fall Sports Banquet pleased the athletes. The traditional lasagna was nowhere in sight. (sports banquet)

Question

never in yes/no form and only used when the question is the heart of the story; it is set off in a paragraph by itself.

Example

What do car washes, plastic footballs and pumpkins have in common? Each needing money to survive, student organizations organized fundraisers which included the freshman class pumpkin sale, sports club miniature football sale and cheerleader car wash. (fundraisers)

Satirical

exposes students' lack of good sense, understanding or foresight.

Example

Jumping off a cliff was easier than climbing down. Reading Cliff Notes was easier than reading the book. (Cliff notes)

Summary

describes the essence of the story.

Example

"And We Danced," the Homecoming Dance theme, combined with silver balloons and pop rock capped off the week of activities.

(Homecoming Dance)

Suspended interest

Consists of several sentences in which the reader's interest is intensified as he continues to read.

Example

Spin the Wheel of Fortune. Call Donahue. Form a human alphabet. Pep Assemblies capture student interest with familiar plots and group involvement. (pep assemblies)

Turn-offs

Try to avoid these boring, and rather ineffective, leads.

Label

"The volleyball team, coached by Mr. Jim Kirchdorfer"

Date

"It was January 29, 1991"

Name

"Cindy Maxwell couldn't believe it when she was crowned Homecoming Queen."

Worthless quote

"The dance was a lot of fun!"

Yes/No question

"Have you ever wondered what it's like to perform in front of hundreds of people?"

Nothing

"Many new things occurred this year, but they didn't affect the awesome spirit of the student body. Nothing could have done that."

"The purpose of . . ."

"The purpose of the Spanish Club is to find out a little bit more about Spain and its culture."

“During . . .”

“During the year, the athletic club helped to raise money for sports.”

“This year . . .”

“This year, there were restrictions placed on cheerleading mounts.”

“Goals of . . .”

“The goals of the administration were to get along better with the students and have a smooth year.”

“Officers . . .”

“The officers of AFS are: President, Bill Lambert, Vice President, Ashley Puckett, and Treasurer, Amy Miller.”