

## Starting your story

What your lede must do

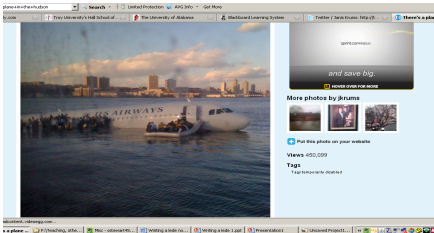
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## Breaking news



The screenshot shows a Twitter interface with a tweet from user jkrums. The tweet text reads: "http://twitpic.com/435xa - There's a plane in the Hudson. I'm on the ferry going to pick up the people. Crazy." The user's profile picture and name are visible on the left.

## Breaking news



The screenshot shows a news website with a large photo of a plane in the water. The text "More photos by jkrums" is visible below the photo. The website's layout includes a search bar and navigation links.

## Lede (lead)

- First paragraph or two of a news story
- Several types
  - Inverted-pyramid
  - "You"
  - Summary
  - Immediate-identification
  - Delayed-identification

## 4 things a lede must do

- Content
  - Suck 'em in.
  - Give 'em a clue.
- Structure
  - Start strong.
  - Don't waste words.

## Who are 'they'?

- Sources?
- Subjects?
- Advertisers?
- Bosses?
- Readers!



## Grab their attention

- Too much information
- Short attention spans
- You're in competition!
- Reader has no obligation to read your story.
- Make the story impossible to resist.



## Give 'em a clue

- Let the reader know whether the topic will interest her.
- Don't disappoint her.
- ... But don't tell it all.



## Give 'em a clue (not)

From Boston to Los Angeles, cities across the United States hosted parties to celebrate the release of "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows."



## Start strong

- Make the first few words count.
  - Grab attention.
  - Get to a main point of the story.
- Avoid boring words.



## Don't waste words

- 30-35 word maximum?
- Be concise.
  - "Brief" means using few words.
  - "Concise" means packing a few words with information.
- Postpone unnecessary details.



## OR: Omit needless words

Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences. ... This requires not that the writer make all his sentences short, or that he avoid all detail and treat his subjects only in outline, but that every word tell.

—Strunk & White, "The Elements of Style"

### Janis Krums' lede



There's a plane in the Hudson. I'm on the ferry going to pick up the people. Crazy.

### Possible rewrite

A passenger jet landed this morning in the Hudson River. A ferry is approaching it to pick up the people.

### Another way of saying it

Make it:

- Short
- Rich in "information scent"
- Front-loaded with key words
- Predictable

—Jakob Nielsen, usability expert,  
useit.com, April 27, 2009

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