**Basic Journalism**

Think of journalistic writing as an inverted pyramid. The top contains only one or two sentences with the most important information first; this is called the lead. Next, a little more information is given about the story, and so on, until all of the information has been given.

"An example of a regular pyramid story might be an old-fashioned mystery where the reader is introduced to more and more important clues as he or she reads on," says Rich Cameron, the chair of the journalism department at Cerritos College in California. "It is only after collecting all of those clues that the reader can finally begin to solve the mystery."

"With an inverted pyramid story we give away the solution (or in our case a summary) at the very beginning. The rest of the story contains less and less important information until we just stop," says Cameron.

**Tone**: Your job as a reporter is to report facts and the opinions of others and to leave your own opinions out of the story. The term for introducing your own opinion into a story is called editorializing – try not to do this!

**Multiple** **Sources**: The more people you talk to, the better the article. You can use direct quotes or paraphrase what someone says, but always remember to identify who says what.

**Sentence** **Length**: Sentences should have an average of 20-28 words. This is an average, so you don’t need to spend time counting; just be aware that sentences and paragraphs are much shorter than what you’ve been taught with composition.

**Terms to Know:**

**5W1H**: Always answer the who, what, why, where, when, and how of the news article.

**Lead**: The opening of a story, usually a summary of the most important information.

**Headline**: A title or attention grabber above the body of an article. The author of the story usually does not write the headline.

**Angle**: A particular point of view or way of looking at a subject.

**Fact-checking**: Checking that your facts are correct. Amy, Aymee, and Amie are all pronounced the same way and can be easily misspelled. Look up the names of specific people and places and anything else you are presenting as fact to be sure you are stating the truth.