

News Writing for the Media Center



Fall 2019

What news stories need

- A headline (and often a subheadline).
- A lead (often spelled “lede”).
- A summary paragraph (or “nut graph”) that offers well-chosen context: a summary of *why this story matters*.
- Direct quotes and paraphrases to add context, color.
- Facts that are attributed to reliable sources and observed details from your original reporting.

What is a lede?

A lede is essentially **the first sentence** of your story, typically about 35 words long in print.

A lede is generally **simple**, and avoids **jargon**, unnecessary **specifics** or **flowery** language.

In print daily or **breaking news**, the lede must give the reader the most newsworthy, up-to-date information.

The **summary lede** typically focuses on **who**, **what** and **when**. **Why** and **how** often come later.

More on the nut graph

The nut paragraph delivers a **promise** of the story's content and message. It's called the nut graph because it contains the nut or kernel, the **essential theme**, of the story.

It provides a **transition** from the lede, **explaining** the lede and its connection to the rest of the story.

It often tells readers **why** the story is **timely** (and worth reading).

It often includes **supporting material** that helps readers see why the story is important.

Recent examples from local
newsrooms

Taix eatery site sold, but don't say *'adieu'*

French restaurant will be part of a new luxury complex



BRIAN VAN DER BRUG / LOS ANGELES TIMES

BERNARD INCHAUSPE with Erin Lehane in 2012. Holland Partner Group will build 170 luxe apartments on the Taix site.

By ROGER VINCENT

The owner of Taix French Restaurant, a Los Angeles institution for nearly a century, has sold the property to a real estate developer that plans to turn the Sunset Boulevard site into a housing and retail complex that will include a new version of the Echo Park stalwart.

A smaller version of the restaurant, including the bar and lounge popular with Dodgers fans, will survive the makeover. The project will add about 170 luxury apartments in a six-story complex planned by the new owner of the property, developer Holland Partner Group.

Since the 1960s, Taix (pronounced Tex) has been a neighborhood favorite for weddings, funerals and family get-togethers as well as a popular watering hole before and after games at nearby Dodger Stadium. Generations of diners have come to Taix to order French country dishes such as onion soup, mussels, beef Bourguignon, steak frites and trout almondine.

But even though Echo Park has been in an economic renaissance for more than a decade, the restaurant business has been getting harder for the Taix family, owner Michael Tuix said.

"My profits

[See Taix, C4]

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Los Angeles Times, Aug. 24, 2019

CHARGES FILED IN CAMPUS KILLING

BY HANNAH FRY
AND PRISCILLA VEGA

A man who police say fatally stabbed his co-worker, a retired Cal State Fullerton administrator, in a campus parking lot was charged Friday in the slaying.

Chuyen Van Vo, 51, is facing a murder charge along with two sentencing enhancements based on allegations that he used a deadly weapon in the attack and committed the murder by lying in wait, according to Orange County Superior Court records.

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Police say Vo attacked Steven Shek Keung Chan, 57, in his vehicle, killing the former budget director who had returned to Cal State Fullerton as a consultant. Chan was stabbed multiple times inside his car, which was parked in a campus lot. Paramedics performed life-saving measures on the man, who was bleeding from his head, but he died at the scene.

Fullerton Police Lt. Jon Radus said the two men were employed by Cal State Fullerton, and Vo specifically targeted Chan in the attack.

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Los Angeles Times, Aug. 24, 2019

Teen girl was sick with measles at Disneyland

^ ^ ^

headline

Visitors to theme park and other sites she visited may have been exposed, officials say.

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By SOUMYA
KARLAMANGLA

A teenager from New Zealand visited Los Angeles and Orange counties this month and made a trip to Disneyland while she was sick with measles, potentially infecting others, health officials warned Friday.

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Orange County officials say visitors may have been exposed to measles while at Disneyland or California Adventure on Aug. 12, or at the Desert Palms Hotel in Anaheim from Aug. 11 to 15. L.A. County officials listed other tourist destinations the girl visited.

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Measles spreads through coughing and sneezing but

can linger in the air for up to two hours after an infected person leaves the room.

"Measles is a highly contagious and potentially severe disease that causes fever, rash, cough and red, watery eyes," Orange County health officer Dr. Nichole Quick said in a statement. "It spreads very easily by air and by direct contact with an infected person."

Quick advised anyone who was at the Orange County locations to monitor for fever or rash. Signs of infection will appear within 21 days of exposure.

The news comes as the country grapples with its worst measles outbreak in decades.

As of Aug. 15, 1,203 people have been diagnosed with measles this year, compared with 372 in all of 2018.

Disneyland is not the first crowded place measles has popped up this year.

Officials have warned of exposure to the disease on

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Los Angeles Times, Aug. 24, 2019

“Like The Kremlin”: USC’s broken promises of transparency

The contrast between USC’s promises of transparency and its actions has fueled mounting criticism.

By: Austin Peay

5 days ago

In July of 2017, USC was reeling from a Los Angeles Times [investigation](#) into the former medical school dean, Carmen Puliafito. He had quietly resigned the previous year — but then the Times revealed that while he was still leading the medical school, he had been abusing methamphetamine and other drugs with criminals and addicts. One woman had overdosed while with him in a hotel room.

Days after the story broke, USC [promised](#) a full investigation into Puliafito’s conduct and how the university had handled his case. Last year, Rick Caruso, chair of the USC Board of Trustees, was asked directly if the university would make the report public: “[the answer is yes](#),” Caruso said. Legal issues might preclude releasing everything, he said, but “the goal is to get as much or all the information out there that we can.”

Now, more than a year after Caruso promised to release the Puliafito investigation, and more than two years after it was announced, nothing has been made public. In fact, multiple high-ranking USC officials say that they have not seen or heard of a written report, raising the possibility that it does not even exist. Instead, the high-priced lawyers paid to conduct the probe have given verbal briefings to a select few USC leaders.

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5 W's and the H

- Who
- What
- When
- Where
- Why
- How

Note: You don't have to cover all of these in the lede, but you will usually address some combination in the first paragraph. The rest should come fairly soon.

A local news lede

The body of a 68-year-old man was found Sunday, five days after he disappeared when he separated from his hiking group during an excursion on Mt. Whitney, officials said.

That lede, dissected

The body of a 68-year-old man (WHO), was found (WHAT) Sunday, (WHEN) five days after he disappeared (WHAT) when he separated from his hiking group (HOW) during an excursion on Mt. Whitney (WHERE), officials said. (ATTRIBUTION)

A local news lede

Scattered thunderstorms and showers on Saturday knocked out power for thousands, closed Los Angeles County beaches and put a damper on the North fire in the Cajon Pass.

Can you dissect it? ...

A local news lede

Scattered thunderstorms and showers on Saturday knocked out power for thousands, closed Los Angeles County beaches and put a damper on the North fire in the Cajon Pass.

That lede, dissected

Scattered thunderstorms (WHAT) and showers on Saturday (WHEN) knocked out power for thousands (WHO), closed Los Angeles County beaches (WHERE, WHAT) and put a damper on the North fire in the Cajon Pass. (WHERE, WHAT)

Question: What are some why and how possibilities here?

Now let's try writing ...

Some details ...

2 USC students fell off the roof of the Standard hotel in downtown L.A. while they were taking a selfie on Thursday night at 10:30. The roof of the Standard has a bar and a swimming pool and is very popular for drinks. The students were both of legal drinking age.

Los Angeles Police Department officials identified the couple who fell as Sarah Lakshimpathi, 21 years old, and Mark O'Reilly, 22, who were both rushed to a nearby hospital after the fall, even though it was hopeless.

A quote ...

“The couple were celebrating their engagement and fell while they were trying to take a photo showing off her new engagement ring. ... Witnesses told us they lost their balance while they were hugging and posing. ... That’s why both fell to their deaths. It’s a shame to lose a young couple like this. The families must be devastated. I don’t know if they were aware of the proposal yet—I hope they knew. I don’t know. I haven’t checked that yet; we were too busy keeping people away from the bodies on the sidewalk. Luckily, they didn’t fall on anyone from way up there, they both landed on the concrete sidewalk,” said LAPD Officer Jesus Ramos.

What are the most important details for your lede sentence?

Some details ...

2 USC students fell off the roof of the Standard hotel in downtown L.A. while they were taking a selfie on Thursday night at 10:30. The roof of the Standard has a bar and a swimming pool and is very popular for drinks. The students were both of legal drinking age.

Los Angeles Police Department officials identified the couple who fell as Sarah Lakshimpathi, 21 years old, and Mark O'Reilly, 22, who were both rushed to a nearby hospital after the fall, even though it was hopeless.

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What are the 5 W's and the H here?

Who: two USC students

What: fell to their deaths while taking a selfie

When: Thursday

Where: the Standard hotel in downtown Los Angeles

Why: Witnesses say they lost their balance while posing

How: A bit unclear. Were there adequate barriers? Were they drunk? Were they disobeying Standard management? Should their friends have stopped them?

Your text lede can be as simple as ...

Two USC students fell to their deaths on Thursday after losing their balance while taking a selfie and plummeting to the sidewalk from the rooftop bar of a hotel in downtown Los Angeles, police said.

(37 words)

How one student wrote it:

Two USC students died Thursday night after falling off the roof of the Standard Hotel in downtown L.A. The two students, who were both of legal drinking age, reportedly fell after trying to take a selfie.

Police officials identified the couple as Sarah Lakshimpathi, 21, and Mark O'Reilly, 22, who were both rushed to a nearby hospital after the fall.

According to witnesses, the couple were celebrating their engagement and were trying to take a photo showing off her new engagement ring when they lost their balance and fell.

“It’s a shame to lose a young couple like this,” said Los Angeles police officer Jesus Ramos. “The families must be devastated. I don’t know if they were aware of the proposal yet — I hope they knew.”