Although the inverted pyramid is an important way of delivering information quickly, other formats help lift certain types of stories to higher levels of interest.

The inverted pyramid is an expository structure of story, meaning it is a logical ordering of facts. However, many feature stories are best told as narratives. They use the techniques of storytelling, including creating scenes, using foreshadowing and employing dialogues. However, it is important to stick with the facts — even in narrative reporting.

Just as the summary lead works best with the inverted pyramid story, the feature story might require a feature lead. Summary leads tend to ruin the end of the story right away. Alternative leads can set the stage for stories that require the reader to finish reading them before knowing the most important information. Here the writer can use a little more creativity than with the inverted pyramid story.

Even when using different formats, however, the first paragraph usually is limited to three lines — about 21 words. The purpose of the lead is to let the reader know what is in the story, thus helping him decide if he wants to read on. Leads are not intended to trick the reader into reading the story. It is to grab attention while delivering information.

An effective style of lead is the *anecdotal lead*. This lead is the telling of a bit of a feature source's story before transitioning into the broader issue that the anecdote illustrates.

Experienced reporters use their skills to fit stories into various formats. Although they do not categorize them, author Spencer Crump did so a long time ago. His list follows and still works very well:

- *The 1-2-3-4 Lead* — When an event provides several important elements, a writer accentuates them all in numerical order after a brief introductory paragraph. The points are then explained in the body of the story.

- *The Shirt-Tail Lead* — When several elements demand attention in the lead, the writer can include them in paragraphs immediately following the first.

- *The Punch Lead* — A brief lead sentence is followed by equally brief paragraphs the develop the story with high-interest facts.

- *The Cartridge Lead* — The first paragraph is extremely brief and contains one new incident of great importance.

- *The Descriptive Leads* — Drawing a word picture of the even helps put the reader into the story.

- *The Conditional Clause Lead* — Beginning the story with a conditional clause permits the writer to combine the news with feature elements.

- *The Contrast Lead* — When a news story has feature elements, drawing contrasts and comparisons can be an effective way of informing the reader.

- *The Quotation Lead* — Using a pertinent quotation, lines from a poem, book or play, or a familiar saying before the story's first paragraph can add a dimension to the article.

- *The Staccato Lead* — Words and phrases separated by ellipses can form the setting for a news or feature story. These leads obviously stand out and should be used sparingly.

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- *The Parody Lead* — Leads that draw on parody from movies or works of literature can work with a few stories, providing the writer does not sound flippant in using them.

- *The Literary Allusion Lead* — This format structures the lead to parallel a well-known literary work.

- *The Familiar Saying Lead* — The writer can add a lighter side to the story — if appropriate — by weaving a familiar saying or quotation into the lead, sometimes varying the original lines.

- *The Direct Address Lead* — The "you" approach, when used infrequently, can be a good way to introduce the story.

- *The Direct Quotation Lead* — A word-for-word quotation can have an impact only if the words are worthwhile and meaningful.

- *The Dialogue Lead* — This extension of the direct quotation lead can add punch and interest to an otherwise mundane story.

- *The Sequential Lead* — When articles lack a time element, often they can be written in chronological order from beginning to end.

- *The Suspended Interest Lead* — This lead typically does not hold the main news element, and readers must continue, often to the end, for this information.

- *The Colon Lead* — Separating words or phrases with colons can add variety to stories lacking hard news values.

- *The Cumulative Interest Lead* — The writer begins with a brief statement of the news and structures and remainder of the story to sustain the reader's interest as the facts unwind.

- *The Question Lead* — This lead rarely works well and should be used rarely. When used skillfully, it can add an impact to an article.