

# Ledes - Soft

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# Soft Ledes

- Zingers
- Anecdote
- Scene Setter
- Quote Ledes
- Question Ledes
- List Ledes

# Soft Ledes

- Soft news ledes can also be referred to as nontraditional or delayed ledes
  - Because they slightly delay getting to the story.
    - Keyword should be slightly

# Hard vs. Soft

Get directly to the point.	Involve setting up the story.
Very little creativity	More room for voice/creativity
Rarely more than 1-2 sentences	Can be a few grafs.

# Zingers

- Grab readers with snappy or clever phrase.
  - Often a play on words.
  - Must be kept short.
  - Must actually “zing.”
    - Don’t force funny. It rarely works.
- Make sure the story fits with a zinger.
  - Some might not, especially where humor is concerned.

# Anecdotes

- Short interesting story to pull readers in.
  - Can be story of one or more people.
  - Can recap an event.
  - Should be entertaining/intriguing/insightful.
- Probably most common soft lede.
- Can humanize a story.

# Scene Setter

- Also referred to as descriptive lede.
  - Lead with describing the scene/providing color.
- Best scene setters are unforced.
  - They also contain specific details
- Opportunity to get creative as far as writing.

# Scene Setter

- Don't fall back on out of laziness.
  - It's easy to set the scene, but is it the best lede for your story?
  - Ask what is it about this scene that makes it different/stand out?
    - If the answer is not much, lead with something else.
- Avoid getting overly wordy/literary/romanticizing the scene.



# Quote Ledes

- Phenomenal quotes that open a story better than any writer could.
- Your textbook says “they should be used on in *rare* instances when the newsmaker has said something that introduces the story better than the reporter can.”
- I say NEVER use them.
  - I have not used one in seven-plus years since I was called out by a fellow (more experienced writer) for them.
    - He was right.

# Quote Ledes

- To often reporters use quote ledes when they can't come up with something.
  - Laziness.
- You as the writer need to open the story.
  - If you have a great quote, set it up with one sentence. Then quote.

# Question Ledes

- Open with a question.
  - Question needs to be central to your story.
  - Should be a very unique question.
    - Idea is to grab readers attention/intrigue them.
- Avoid.
- Similar to with a quote, preface question with a lead-in sentence.

# List Ledes

- Open with a list.
- Usually for emphasis.
- Again, shouldn't be a frequent lede used.

# Other Ledes to Avoid

- False lede: A lede that sets up something your story does not deliver.
  - Might draw people in, but your lede needs to tie in to the story that follow.
- Double lede: When you have two ledes on top of each other.
  - i.e. A zinger, then an anecdote.
  - Only have one lede.
- Buried lede: When your “true” lede is buried so deep in the story that it’s hard for readers to find it.

# Soft Ledes

- Soft ledes should still be tight.
- Must set the angle the story will follow.
- Can't ramble/take too long to get into the story.

# Soft Ledes

- Can be used for serious subjects.
  - However, for breaking/developing and major news, hard ledes are better.
- Story must lend itself to a nontraditional lede.
- Can't ramble/take too long to get into the story.
- Must highlight, not obscure the news.
  - Even with a soft lede, your readers should be able to relatively quickly get what the story is.
  - Don't meander.
    - Nut graf should be there by four or fifth graf.

# Soft Ledes

- Simplicity is still best.
- Just because a soft lede can be longer does not mean it should be.
  - Still look to write as tight/concise as possible.
- A story can lend itself to multiple types of soft ledes.
- Writing good soft ledes takes practice.
  - Combination of news judgment, eye for detail and writing.