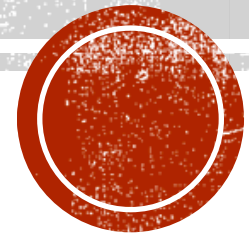# SEVEN DAYS TO A BYLINE THAT PAYS

Dr. Michael Ray Smith

Michael Ray Smith

7 DAYS
TO A BYLINE THAT PAYS

7 Days to a Byline that Pays Explains how to tell stories that audiences will read and editors will pay you to write. Delivered in a breezy and compact manner, this book will help you work fast, smart, and get paid for your work.

"I've worked with writers and editors across the country to compress the salient points in an easy-to-grasp approach that you can tackle," says the author, Michael Ray Smith. "I'm convinced you can accomplish your goal of writing a salable article in seven days by using the ideas in this book."

Dr. Michael Ray Smith

Smith is an award winning communication and media professor who has written seven books, 12 journal articles and hundreds of articles for the popular press. He was named a "Top 50 Journalism Professor" among other awards.
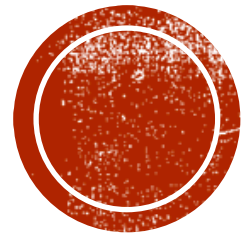
Some of his books:

"The ABC's of Feature Ideas"

"The Jesus Newspaper"

"A Free Press In Freehand"

CHAPTER 2: GETTING STARTED & MASTERING THE LEAD

-Examining the summary lead

-Selecting the appropriate opening

-Considering fictional techniques in nonfiction writing

WHAT'S NEW?

Ask yourself:

- "In one sentence, tell me what's new?"

- "In one sentence, tell me what happened?"

- "In one sentence, tell me the most interesting action, fact, or idea that you just heard?"

*By compressing the story into one sentence, you are fashioning a crude **lead**, the first sentence of your report. Lead, also known as lede, is the hook you hope will make your reader, and listener, want to stay with you.*

"The last thing we discover in composing a work is what to put down first." - Blaise Pascal

SUMMARY LEAD:

- A summary lead provides a one-sentence to two-sentence summary of the article.

- Up to 35-40 words.

- Summary leads are long because they are trying to answer all of the questions mentioned in chapter 1/the previous lecture:
  - Who
  - What
  - When
  - Where
  - Why
  - How

- The *why* and *how* are often difficult to integrate into the lead, and are often left for paragraph two.

- Often summary leads simply tell *who* did *what*, and reveal other details later.

THE WHO DID WHAT LEAD:

- Put the person's name in the first spot and the action in the second spot

- Who is the who?

- What is the what?

- Example:
  - *Virtual reality artist Brenda Bennett won first place today in an art contest*
  - *Who:* Virtual reality artist Brenda Bennett
  - *Did what:* Won an art contest

- This example needs a stronger *verb*

- Better Example:
  - *Virtual reality Artist Brenda Bennett denounced the lack of sacred images produced by the majority of artists in a speech before Colson College students.*

- This example tells the who, gives context, and answers the "what's new" and "so what" questions, but still is a "who did what" lead.

YOU DID WHAT?

EXAMPLES OF SUMMARY LEADS:

New York Times, Nov. 29, 2008

Giants receiver Plaxico Burress accidentally shot himself in the right thigh while at a Manhattan nightclub early Saturday, hours after he was deemed unfit to play in Sunday's game at Washington because of a hamstring strain in the same leg.

Christianity Today, Dec. 2013 issue

Journalist Kathryn Joyce caused a stir this year with her book 'The Child Catchers,' a sweeping indictment of the evangelical overseas adoption movement.

Be advised. Summary leads, <u>like any tool,</u> work best when they are used for a <u>specific purpose.</u> In breaking news, news that is unexpected and ongoing, the summary lead is very useful. A news story about a kitten that survived being sucked through the city's leaf-gathering equipment, while news, lends itself to a non-summary lead. In the case of the kitten, the maintenance crew adopted it and named it, you guessed it, Hoover.