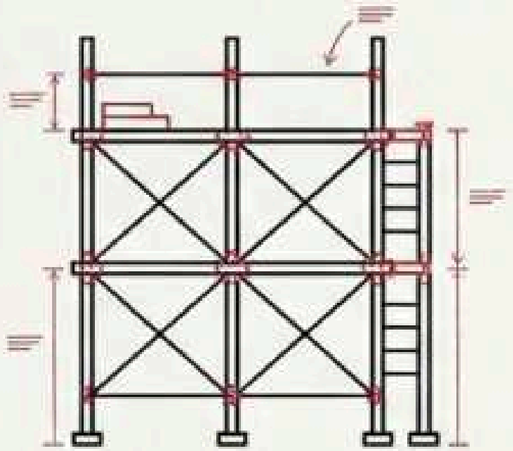
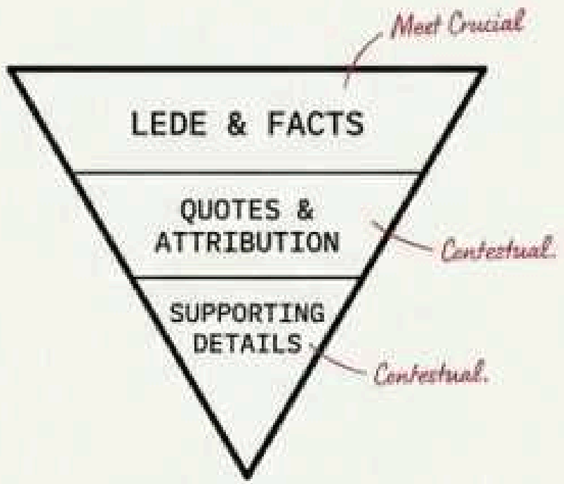
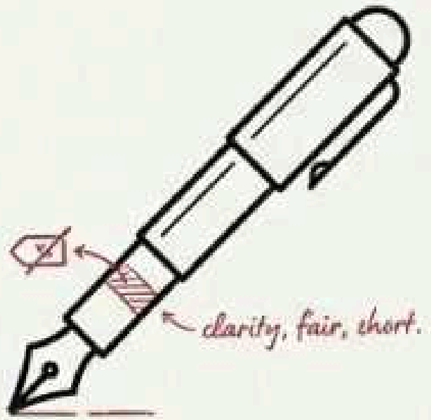
3.1



How is a news story built, and why?



How do you write a strong lede supported by facts, quotes, and attribution?



How do you edit work to be clear, fair, and short?

News writing is a craft of clarity.

FINAL DRAFT

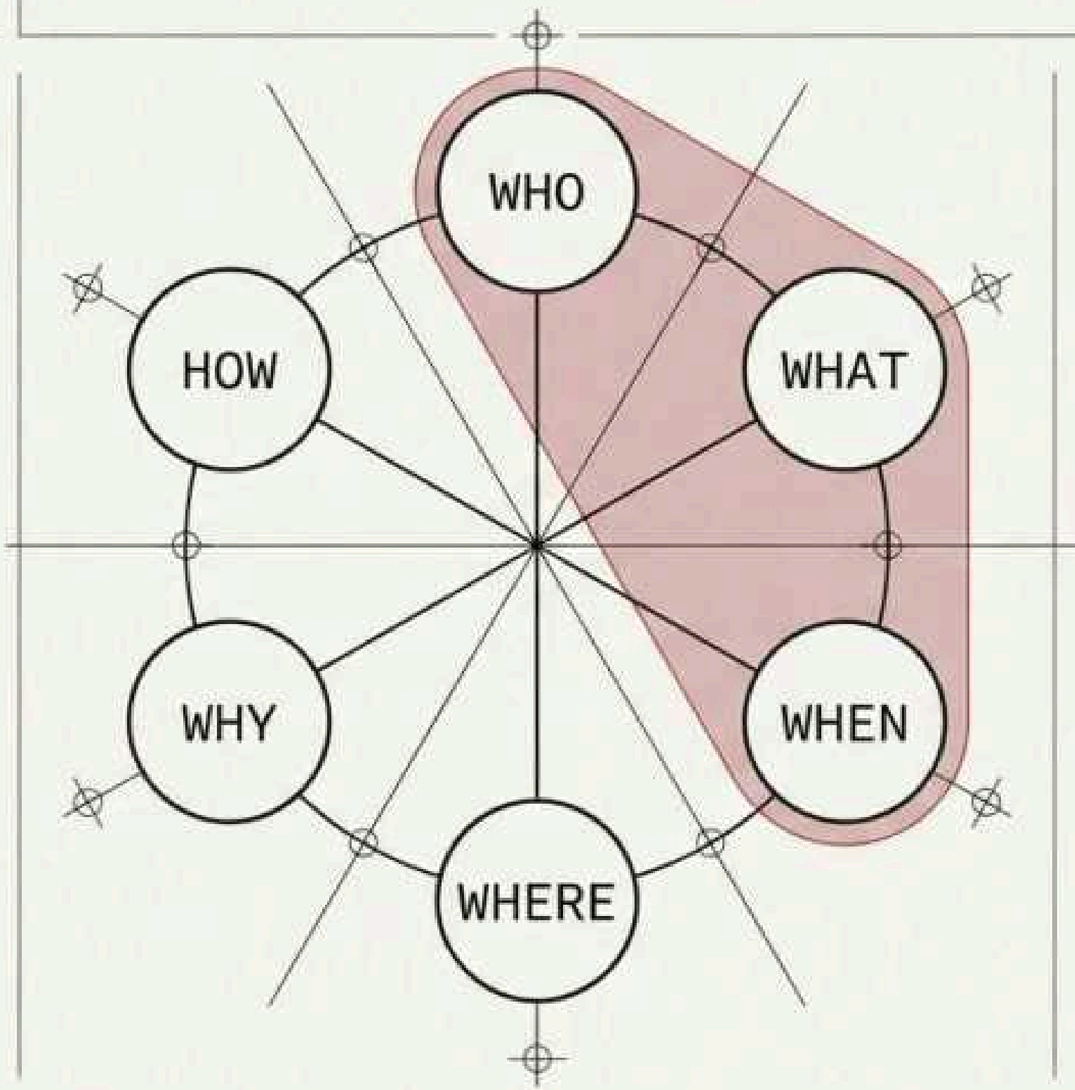
APPROVED

Gemini Notebook

3.2

A news story answers six questions.

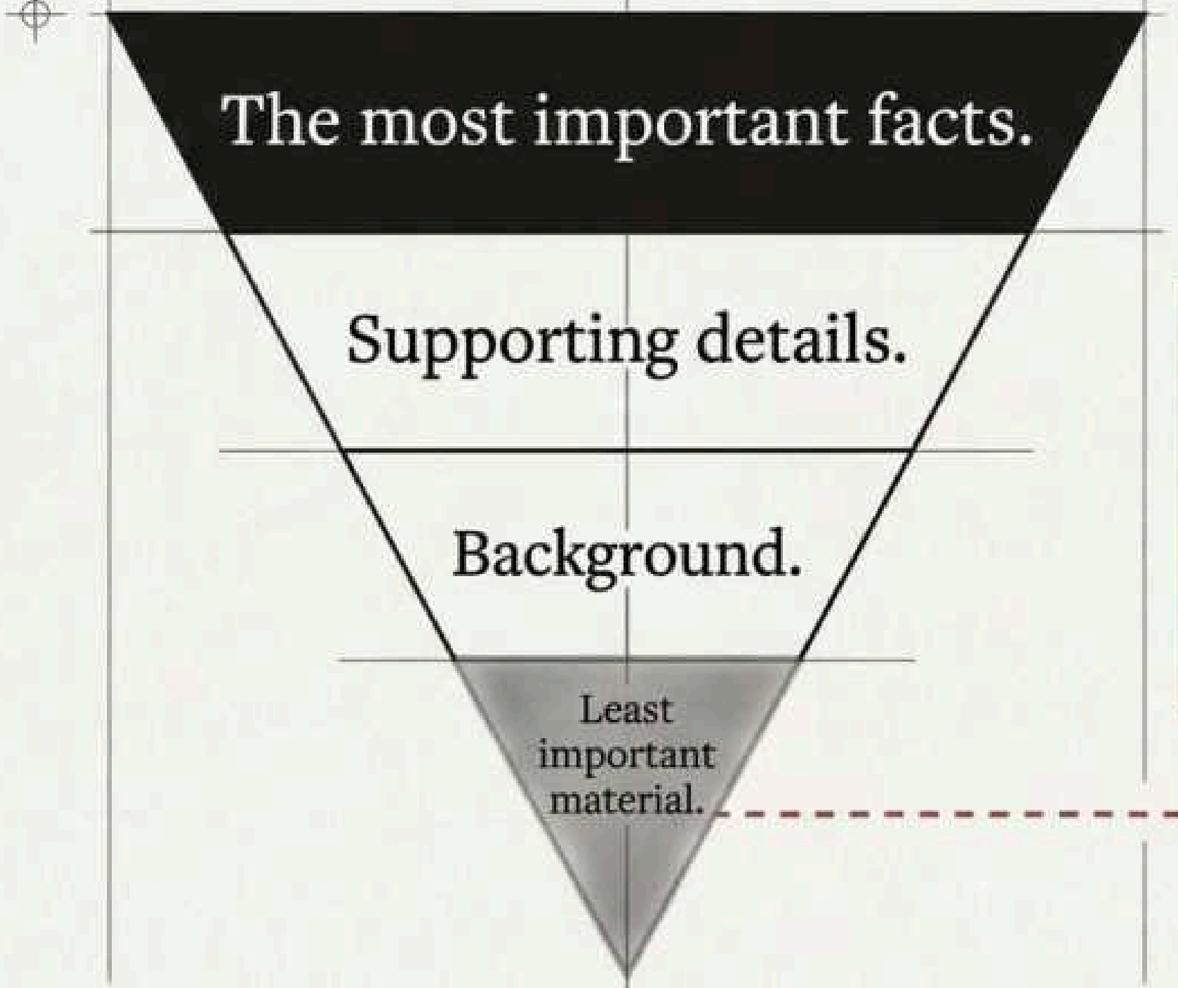
Many readers stop after a few lines; they must learn the most important answers at once.



Your first job is to decide which answers matter most.

Gemini Notebook

3.3



Editors can cut from the bottom without losing the core. Readers who leave early still get the news.

Gemini Notebook

3.4

Definition: The lede is the opening sentence or two. Specific, short, and states the news in plain words.

Focus: Begin with what happened and who is affected.

~~Vague background.~~

30

The Rule: Keep a direct news lede under ~30 words.

Gemini Notebook

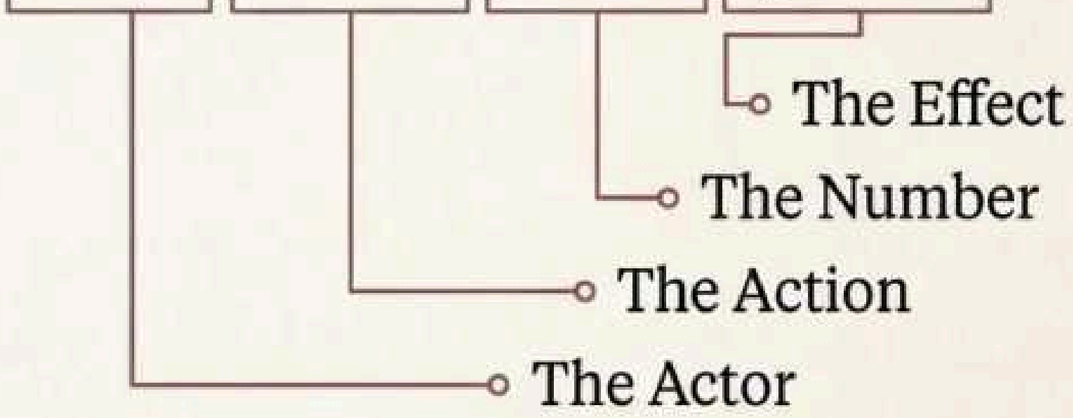
3.5

Weak

A meeting took place at city hall on Tuesday to discuss several matters.

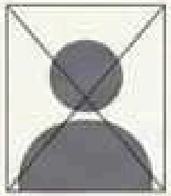
Strong

The city council voted 6-to-3 on Tuesday to raise water rates by 8%.



Gemini Notebook

3.6



Delayed or Anecdotal Lede

Opens with a scene or a person to draw readers in. Used often in features, not direct news.

The Nut Graf

A short paragraph that immediately follows. Tells readers what the story is about and why it matters now.

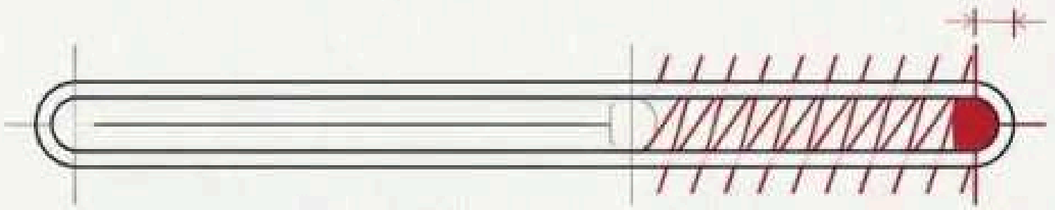
Gemini Notebook

3.7

When to Attribute

Attribution tells readers where information came from. Use for any claim not cot common knowledge or not seen yourself. Always name the source and their role.

Verb Selection Scale



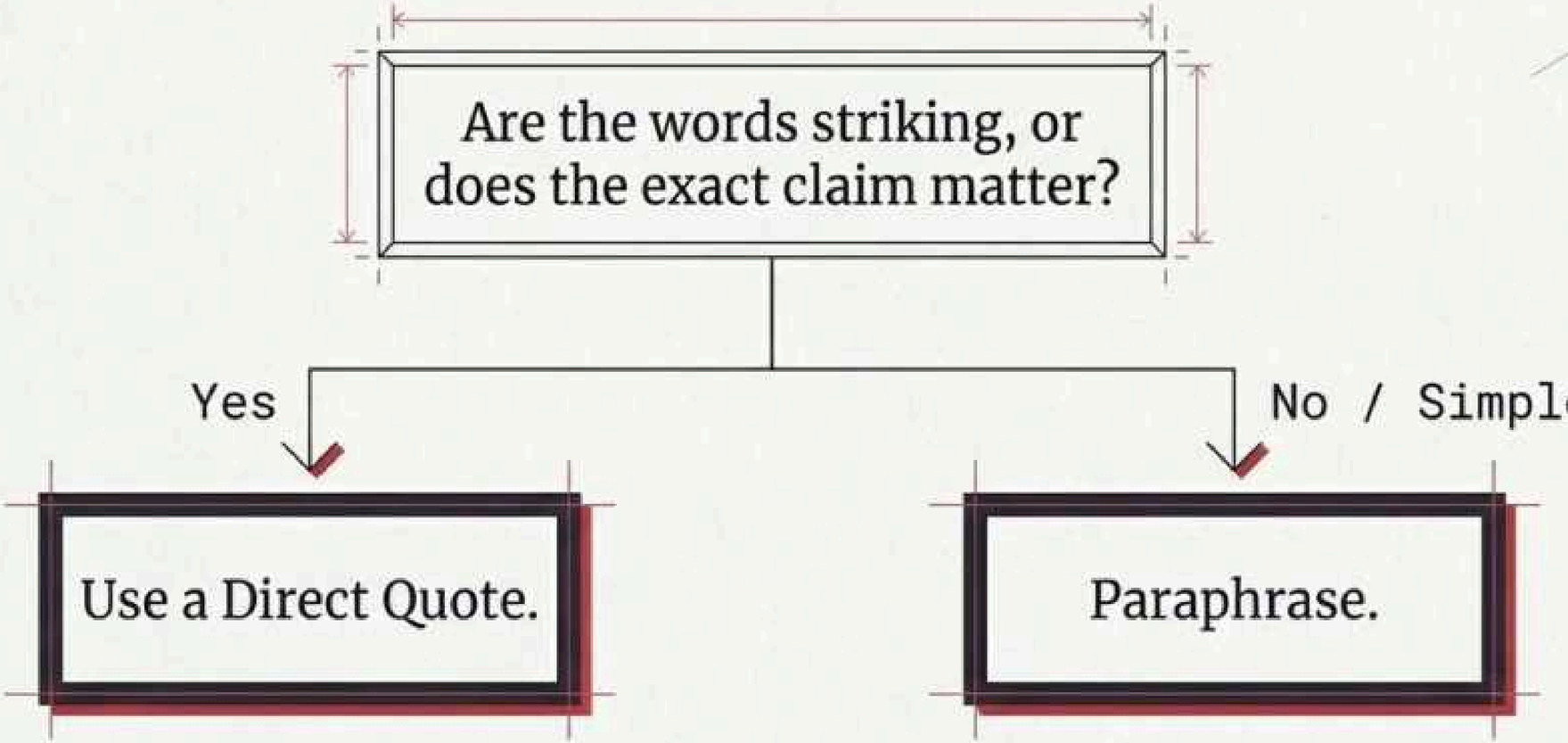
Preferred (Neutral):
Said or According to

Claimed or
Admitted

Avoid
(Suggests judgment)

Gemini Notebook

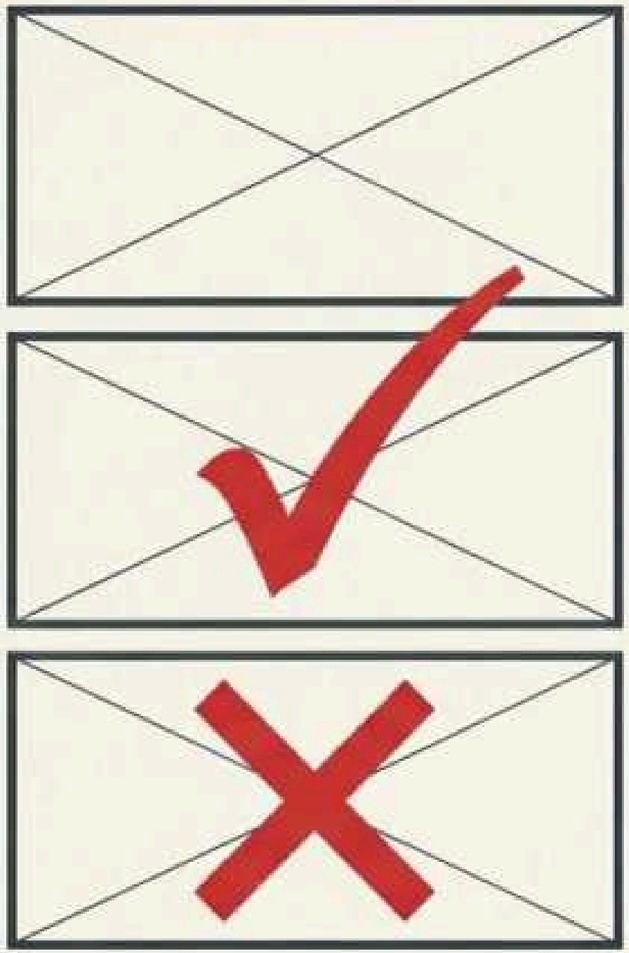
3.8



Quote accurately. Never change the words inside quotation marks.
If trimming is necessary, do not alter the meaning.

Gemini Notebook

3.9



Put attribution early so readers know who is speaking.

A good quote adds feeling or detail.

Avoid stacking long quotes sequentially.

Do not use a quote to state a fact you can state more clearly yourself.

Gemini Notebook

3.10

≈

Context

Numbers need context. A figure like $4 million means little without a comparison (e.g., last year's budget, cost per resident).

%

Percentages

Explain a percentage by giving the base.

=

Accuracy

Always check the math.

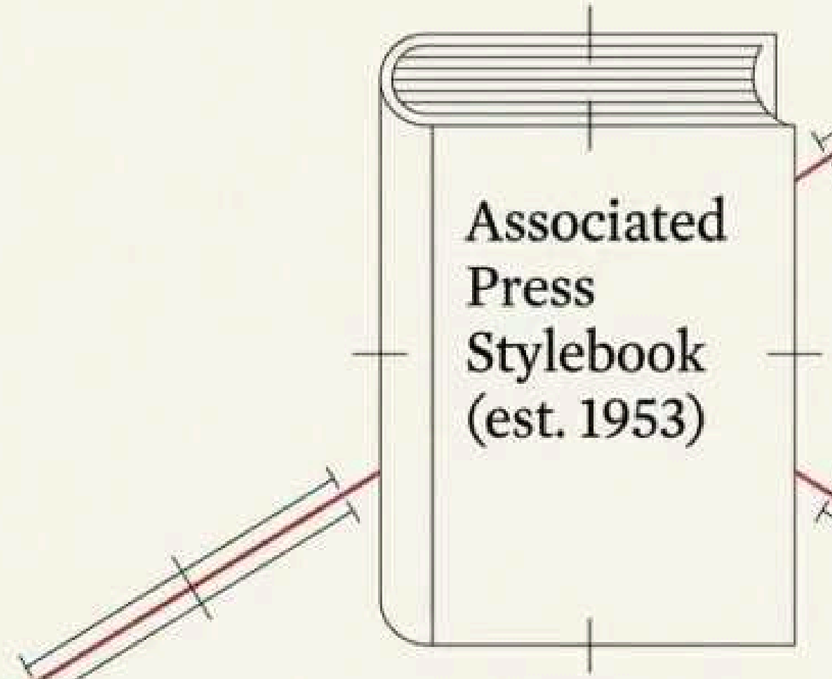
÷

Precision

Round with care and avoid false precision.

Gemini Notebook

3.11



Rules

Sets rules for names, titles, dates, numbers, abbreviations.

Reader Benefit

Consistency helps readers trust the text.

Newsroom Benefit

Saves editors time.

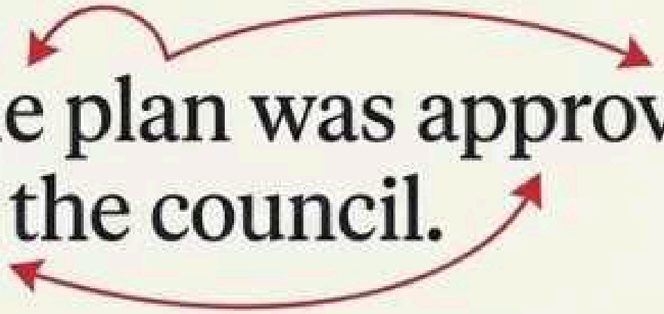
Style guides keep writing consistent

(Various outlets outside the U.S. have their own guides).

Gemini Notebook

3.12

Use plain, active language. Prefer short sentences and concrete verbs.



The plan was approved by the council.

→

The council approved the plan.

Eliminate

~~Jargon~~ (Explain technical terms if necessary)

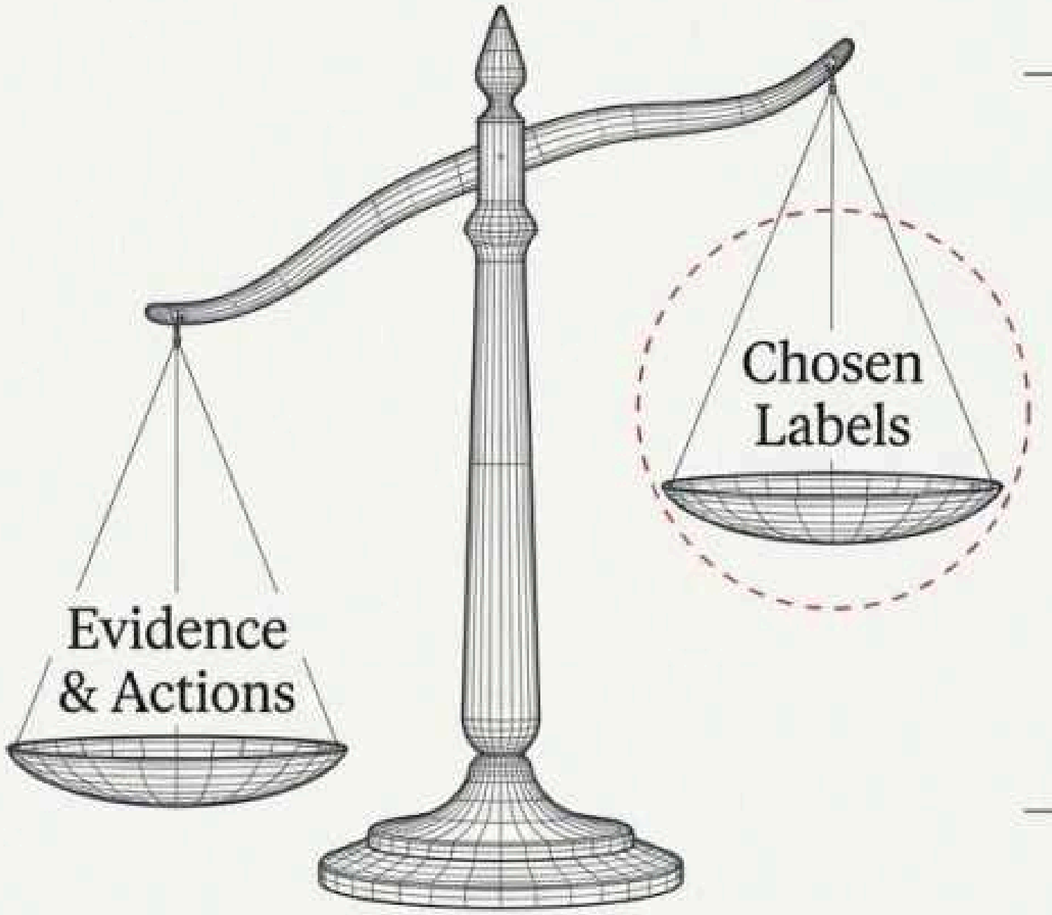
~~Loaded Adjectives~~ (Can slip bias into a story)

Gemini Notebook

3.13 Keep writing neutral without being empty. Describe people by actions and own words, not labels you choose.

Handling Disputes

When a fact is disputed, say who disputes it.



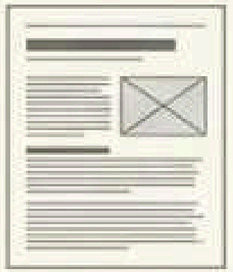
Handling Falsehoods

When something is known to be false, say so directly.

Do not hide behind a he said, she said structure.

Gemini Notebook

3.14



Brief
Key facts in
a few lines.



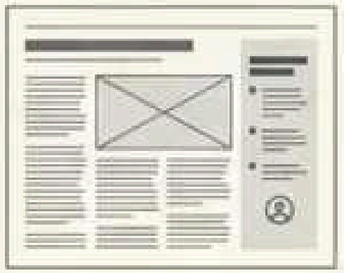
Profile
Portrays a person.



Explainer
Answers a specific
reader question.



Follow-up
Reports what
happened next.



Sidebar
Adds a related item
to a main story.



Investigative
Combines many forms,
often runs in several parts.

Gemini Notebook

3.15

The Good Headline

- ✓ Written for speed.
- ✓ Accurate.
- ✓ Specific.
- ✓ Uses an active verb.
- ✓ Supported by the story (must not over-promise).



The Clickbait Trap

Hides the facts to force a click. It may win attention, but it loses trust.

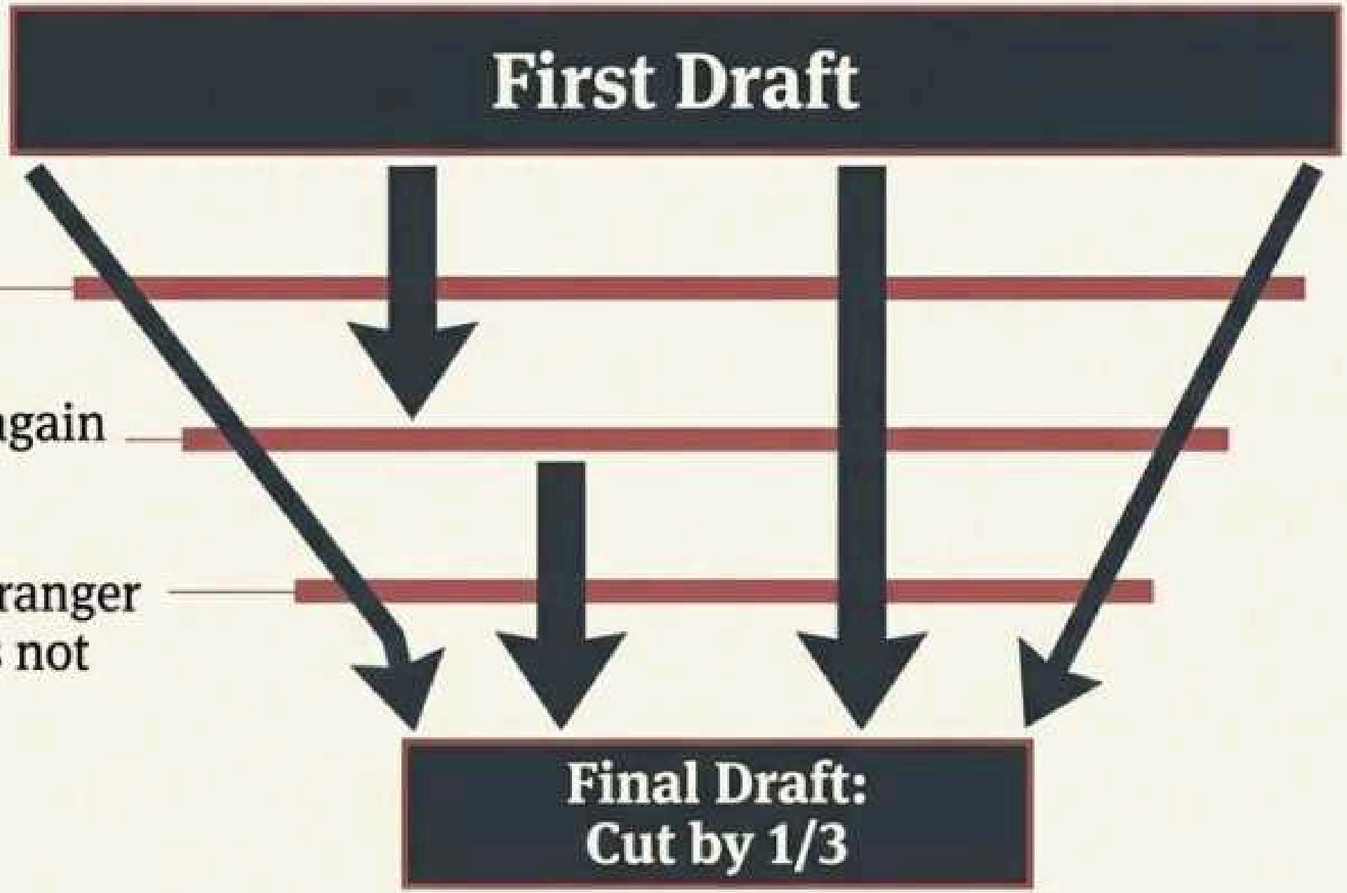
Gemini Notebook

3.16

Ear Test: Read aloud.

Fact Check: Check each fact again (names, numbers, quotes).

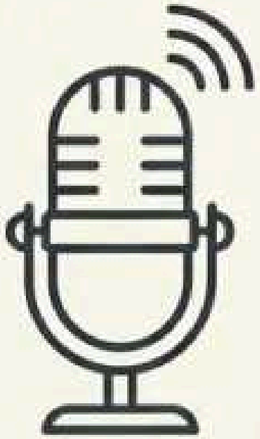
Clarity & Purpose: Ask if a stranger could follow it. Cut what does not serve the main point.



Many writers improve most by cutting a third of a first draft.

Gemini Notebook

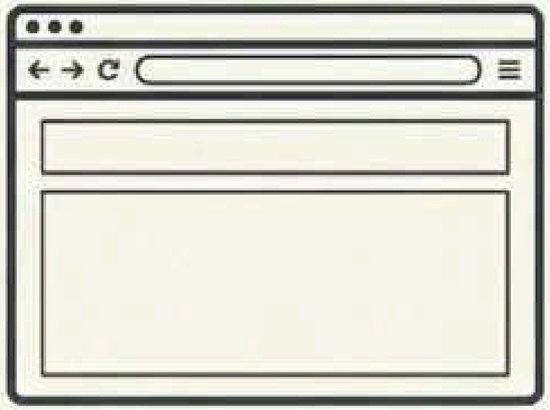
3.17



Broadcast

"Written for the ear"

Short sentences, simple words, rounded numbers.



Web

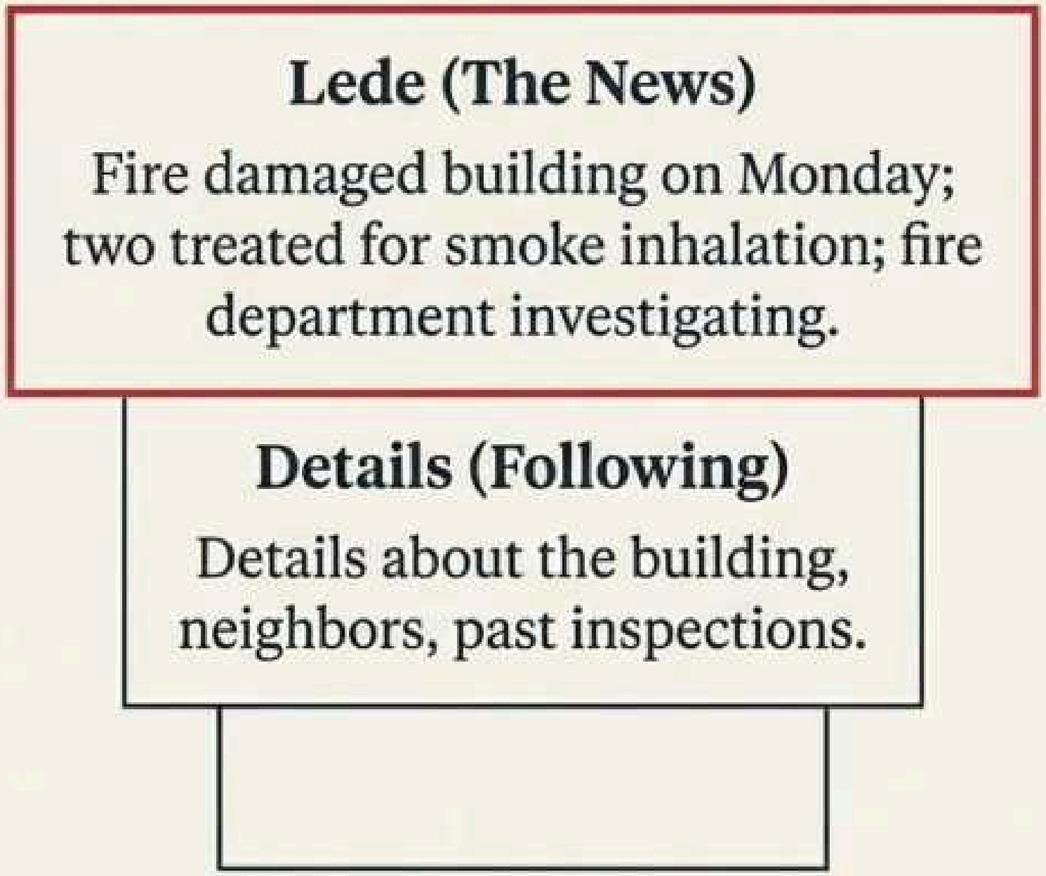
"Written for scanning"

Key facts near the top. Uses links, subheads, and updates. Always note when and why a story was changed.

Gemini Notebook

3.18

Scenario: Fire at an apartment building on Elm Street.

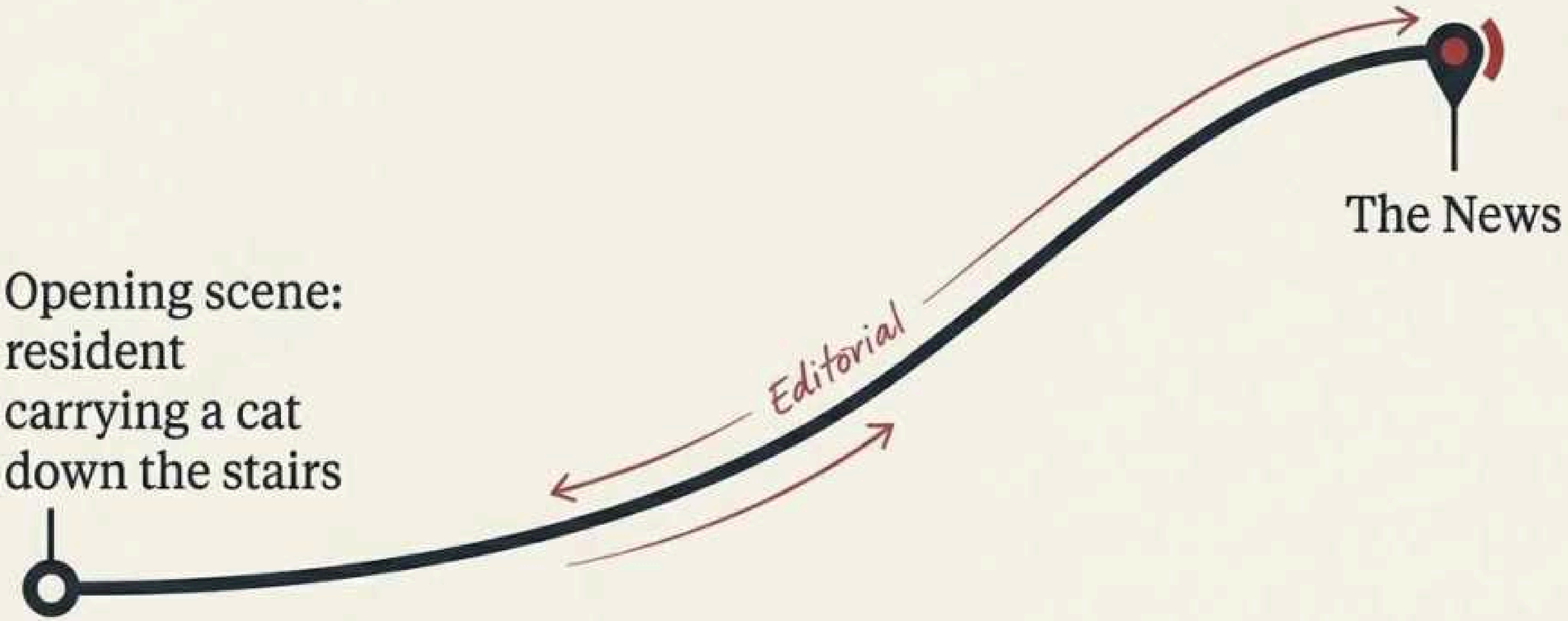


Takeaway: A reader who stops after one sentence still knows what mattered most.

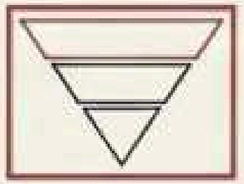
Gemini Notebook

3.19

Narrative Version



Effect: Holds readers longer, but a reader in a hurry waits for the news.



Application: Use pyramid for breaking news, save narrative for features.
A skilled writer learns to judge which form the story and reader need.

Gemini Notebook

3.20

1

Step 1: Select

Take a small event from your day (e.g., a local meeting or game).

2

Step 2: The Lede

Write a lede in under thirty words that names who, what, and when.

3

Step 3: The Support

Add one paragraph of attributed detail.



Step 4: The Edit

Read both aloud to check that each fact has a source.

Gemini Notebook