Appendix 7: Inverted Pyramid

Journalists write all sorts of stories, but when they write about something that is urgent, they don’t tend to get fancy. Instead, they use the inverted pyramid — a writing formula designed for speed.

With the inverted pyramid, the guiding principle is that the most important (and most recent) information goes on top. As the reader progresses through the story, the information gets less and less important, and older. In an inverted pyramid story, the story is not told chronologically. Instead, we put the climax at the beginning. It’s the result that readers care about.

Sprinkle in a few key quotations from your sources, and you have — voila! — a classic inverted pyramid news story.

Why is the inverted pyramid so important to journalists?

1. **For readers**, they can skim the top of a story and know they have read the most important information.

2. **For editors**, they can cut the bottoms off of a story and know they’re still saving the most important part for readers.

3. **For writers**, they have an easy way to organize their thoughts — from most important to least important.