



# TERRIBLE LEADS

1. The Webster's Dictionary Lead
  - ▶ Webster's defines love as a feeling of romantic intimacy. If that's true, then...
2. The "That's the Word" Lead
  - ▶ Grades at ISU are higher than ever. That's the word from LAS Dean Peter Rabideau.
3. The Chair-Leaning Lead
  - ▶ Dick Haws leaned back in his chair and sighed. (Variations: leaned forward, stood up from his chair and studied the students walking by in the hall)
4. The Mystery It Lead
  - ▶ It's boring. It's intellectually demanding. It's time consuming. It's reporting class, and Mark Witherspoon teaches it every semester.
5. The Uncommonly Common Lead
  - ▶ What do Mark Witherspoon and Adolph Hitler have in common?
6. The No Exception Lead
  - ▶ Most journalism students are good spellers, and Susie Schmoo is certainly no exception.
7. The Quick-Trip-to-the-Almanac Lead
  - ▶ When Giles Fowler was born, Abraham Lincoln was president of the United States and advertising was in its infancy.
8. The One Word Lead
  - ▶ Stupid. That's what some people think journalism majors are.
9. The Calendar Cliche Lead
  - ▶ Yesterday was April Fool's Day, but Joe Blow didn't feel like joking when he came home to find his family had been murdered.
10. The Rodney Dangerfield Lead
  - ▶ Garbage collectors get no respect.  
Used car salesmen get no respect.  
Insurance salesmen get no respect.  
But Mark Witherspoon is determined that the reporters for The Iowa State Daily will get respect.
11. The Atypically Typical Lead
  - ▶ At first glance, ISU looks like a typical university. But in reality it's anything but typical.
12. The Fooled you, Fooled You Lead
  - ▶ Sex, drugs and the party life. That's certainly not a part of Joe Fred Nerdy's life. A sophomore journalism major, Nerdy claims to be the most boring student at ISU.
  - ▶ I'd never teach topless. That's what Tom Emmerson thinks about the new trend in topless teaching now popular on Ivy League campuses. (then never mention the topic again)
13. Direct Address
  - ▶ You might think you know what Thomas Hill does, but you probably don't.
14. Editorial Leads
  - ▶ ISU is a great university, but its students tend to be parochial.
15. Lazy Leads
  - ▶ Who are those guys in the blue military suits and silver helmets?
  - ▶ Ever wonder what the university does with all its trash?



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16. Weird Leads
  - ▶ If a Martian were to land at ISU, he might not be able to tell what the Campanile was. But students know that the Campanile is...
  - ▶ Two, four, six, eight, who do we appreciate? John Eighmey  
The students of Eighmey, Greenlee School DEO, might never actually do this cheer, but they do appreciate his concern for their academic progress.
17. The I-Can't-Find-the-Subject Lead
  - ▶ In a speech before five journalism majors at a meeting of the Society of Professional Journalists at the Memorial Union South Ballroom Tuesday night, Iowa State Daily advertising students argued their case that advertising is needed in newspapers.
18. The Many Students Lead
  - ▶ Many students aren't aware of this, but four journalism professors are actually intergalactic aliens, Mark Witherspoon said Monday.
19. This Isn't Too Obvious, Is it? Lead
  - ▶ The women's tennis team served and volleyed its way to a first place finish in the ISU Classic Monday.
20. The Begin-It-With-a-Date Lead
  - ▶ Monday, November 16, marks the first day to sign up for ISU's new comic book journalism major, Dick Haws said.
21. The Way Back When Lead
  - ▶ When we were children, Halloween usually meant trick or treating through our neighborhood, hoping ol' Mrs. Peabody, who lived two houses down, wouldn't give us those pimento-stuffed prunes again. Now that we are adults....
22. The I Can't Think of a Lead Lead
  - ▶ When the subject of earthquakes comes up, California usually comes to mind.
  - ▶ fill in the blanks: When the subject of xxxxxx comes up, xxxxxx usually comes to mind.
23. The Here's the Old News and Here's the New News Lead
  - ▶ Thomas R. Phillips, a district judge from Ankeny, was appointed Chief Justice of the Iowa Supreme Court last week by Gov. Tom Vilsack, a selection that Bill Burdock, a judge on the court of appeals, said Monday is "an excellent choice."
24. The quote That Doesn't Tell the Story Lead
  - ▶ "By submitting an application for the Leadership America Program I had nothing to lose but the world to gain," said Dan Jasica, senior finance major, (This category includes 99 percent of quote leads.)
25. The No S--- Lead
  - ▶ Cuban inmates released 26 prison guards from the Oakdale, La., Federal Detention Center Sunday, ending an ordeal that Arthur K. Berliner, associate professor of sociology, said has been "very distressing."
26. The It's Been Said Before So Don't Say It Again Lead
  - ▶ It's been said that the early bird catches the worm.
27. The There Lead
  - ▶ There will be some other assets in the new business building that will help students in the real world.



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## **QUESTIONS THAT HELP PRODUCE LEADS:**

(from "Writing for Your Readers," by Donald Murray)

1. What one thing does the reader need to know more than any other?
2. What would make the reader turn and say, "Now listen to this, Ira?"
3. What surprised me when I was reporting this story?
4. Can you find an anecdote that captures the essence of the story?
5. Have you an image that reveals the meaning of the story?
6. Where is the conflict?
7. How will this news affect my readers?
8. What's going on?
9. Why should anyone read this story?
10. How can I summarize this story?

## **CHECKLIST FOR LEADS:**

1. Is it fairly short and readable?
2. If you were a reader, not the writer, would YOU read the second graf?
3. Does it get to the point early? Are subject and verb close together? Does it begin with a subject or a phrase or clause?
4. Look at the verb or verbs. Are they the best you can do?  
Have you used a passive verb only if necessary?
5. Now read the lead in context. Does it reflect the story? Is the lead about what the story is about? Does it set the tone of the story?