**Guidelines for Writing a Lead Up Article**

* Clearly define what your article is about by starting with a keyword. This keyword should appear in your title as well as your introduction.
* Your title is your one chance to get someone to click on an article. We don't want to make the title "click-bait," but we do need to it to communicate to the potential reader that reading the article has value for them.
* The title should answer one of the following questions for a reader:
  + Why should I care? (Based on the title, they should be able to finish the sentence, "I should care about this post because...")
  + How does this connect with what I already know?
  + How does this apply to my life?
  + The more practical, applicable, or useful the title appears to readers, the more people will read the article. If it isn't perceived as being helpful, less people will be interested in reading it
  + (Note that BA print edition titles articles differently than online articles. My preference is to submit the title for online publication and then BA can change it in the event they decide to print it.)
* The following are "magnetic title words" that increase the likelihood that someone will find the title engaging/relevant enough to click on the article: how, you, what, where, why, when, who, any numbers, a question mark (asking a question)
* It is recommended that you write multiple headlines for each article and then choose the best from that group.
* Begin the article with a short, punchy, and interesting paragraph. Tell a very short story or introduce your topic with something interesting.
* Your article should contain three sections: an engaging introduction, an informative body, and a clear concluding application. It often helps to have the conclusion in mind before you write the article. Ask yourself: what do I want the reader **to do** as a result of reading this article?
* Break up the body with headings. Online readability is best when no more than 300 words are contained under each heading, but we fudge on this. Headings follow similar guidelines as titles
* **Use active voice.** This is huge.
* Cut out filler words such as "just" and "that" (here's a list:  <https://grammar.yourdictionary.com/grammar/style-and-usage/avoid-these-filler-words-in-your-writing.html> )
* Use very few adjectives and adverbs. Instead, focus on strong verbs and nouns.
* Use transition words
* Try to keep sentences to 20 words or less.
* Keep paragraphs short: no more than 150 words. If you have a long paragraph consider following it with a 1 line paragraph. This is because people read screens differently from print. The attention span is much shorter, so breaking up the text helps them keep reading.
* When you write, be sure to include concrete imagery. If you can't think of a good concrete picture for your article, your imagery isn't strong enough. Good imagery keeps people reading longer.