

# The mapped story format

## Delivering news to a wider audience

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▶▶ **What it is:** A more reader-friendly way to organize information in many news stories.

▶▶ **How it works:**

*Overview/* The story begins with a summary written in inverted pyramid style.

*Rest of the story/* The body of the story is organized into mini-chapters, dealing with one element or thread at a time.

*The “map”/* An informative subhead introduces each segment, acting as a signpost, signaling to readers what information comes next.

▶▶ **What’s wrong with the status quo:** On longer stories, the inverted pyramid style of organizing information creates difficulties for readers who don’t share the journalist’s familiarity with the topic.

▶▶ **The benefit:** The subheads improve comprehensibility for non-journalist readers. The segments break a story into more easily digested pieces. The layered structure accommodates readers who impatiently scan print or web pages, searching for interesting elements. Segmentation may provide opportunities for graphic breakouts or eye-catching layouts.

▶▶ **The vision:** Minimize the feeling of being overwhelmed by too much information. Create layers of added value for readers who want more.

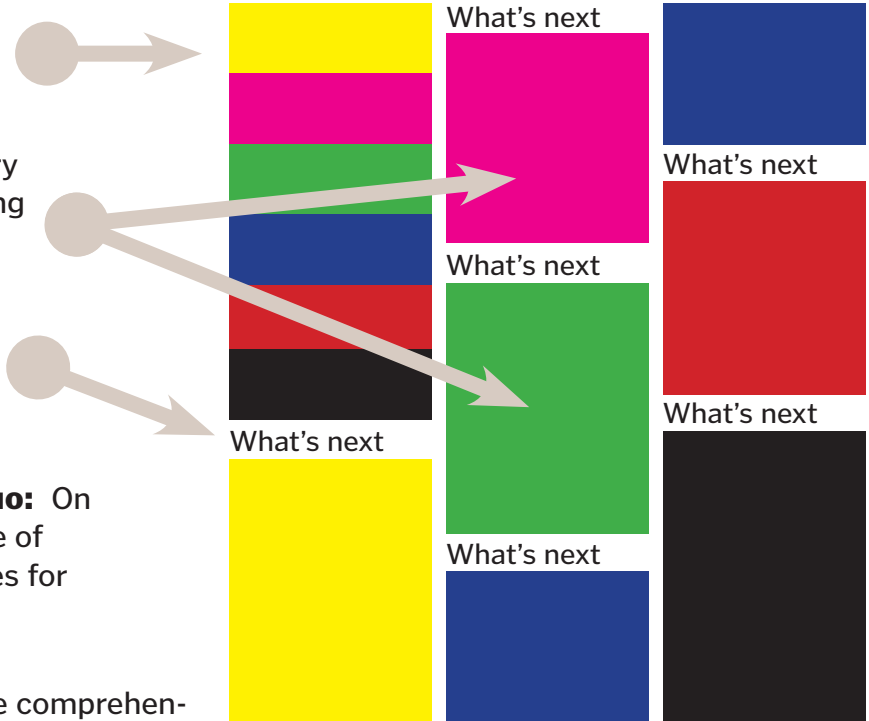
▶▶ **How this is different:** The mapped format strikes a better balance between the journalist’s obligation to report the most newsworthy elements first, and the reader’s need for an orderly presentation of unfamiliar material. The general shape of the mapped story will be comfortable for some writers and editors who intuitively prefer this approach. However, the deliberate use of this strategy is meant to satisfy and attract a larger reading audience.

▶▶ **Is it harder to write?** It’s best suited to stories longer than about 750 words, but it involves no change in the reporting process and requires no extra space. Writers will find it more difficult than a “notebook dump,” but easier than a feature. The format assumes the writer has enough command of the material to be able to organize it effectively.

▶▶ **Does it create a disjointed reading experience?** On the contrary, it tends to present information as a well-rounded, focused conversation.

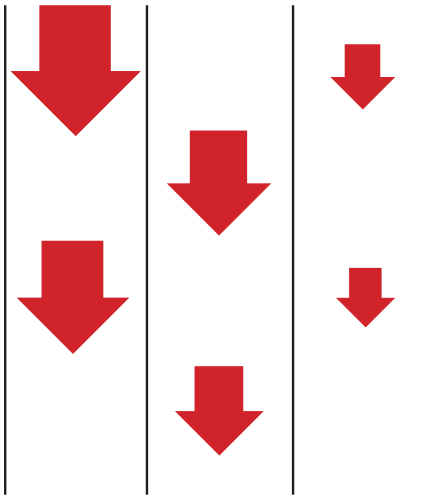
▶▶ **Does it work on all stories?** No. It’s best use is as an alternative to the inverted pyramid on longer news and news-feature stories.

Headline headline headline  
headline headline headline



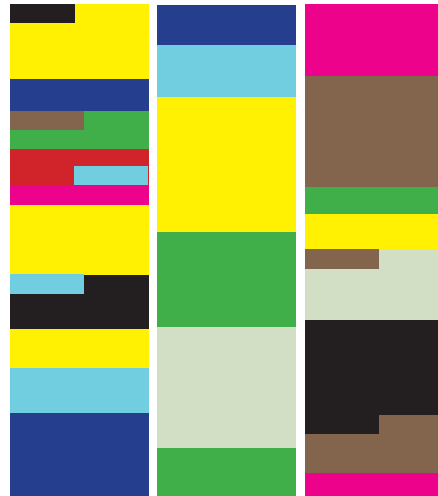
# Common structures in news writing

Headline headline headline  
headline headline headline



▶▶ **Inverted pyramid:**  
Ideas organized according to journalist's estimation of hierarchical importance.

Headline headline headline  
headline headline headline



▶▶ **Shapeless:**  
Information assembled quickly and accurately, but with no easily recognized foundation.

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headline headline headline



▶▶ **Block progression:**  
Elements well organized and presented in sustained chunks.

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headline headline headline



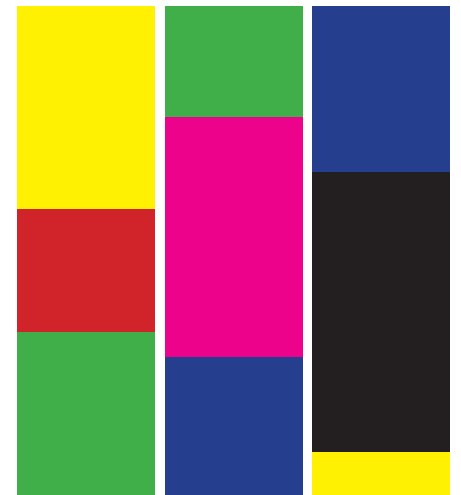
▶▶ **Whole and parts:**  
Begins with summary of all threads in the story, then rolls out one thread at a time.

Headline headline headline  
headline headline headline



▶▶ **Chronological narrative:** Presentation on a timeline, as if to re-create the story naturally.

Headline headline headline  
headline headline headline



▶▶ **Classic feature:**  
Begins with opening anecdote, followed by a theme statement. Explores threads in a circle-around fashion. Ends by revisiting the voice or theme in the opening.

Closest to the mapped format