Some Tips for Ledes & Nut Grafs

1. **Cut to the chase – get to the point.**
Bad: The City Council met for three hours yesterday before taking a break and then voted to raise property taxes by 25 percent.
Good: Property taxes will go up by 25 percent after a vote yesterday by the City Council.

2. **The WHAT is usually the best focus for the lede.** But always ask: What's the most important thing/the most newsworthy? THAT is the lede!
See above example

3. **Grab readers with the FIRST words – words that appeal to the eye and the mind.** Avoid bureaucratic or jargon as first words.
Eye-glazing/mind-numbing: Syracuse Common Council/ Onondaga County Legislature/ CNY Regional Transportation Authority (basically any governmental agency or group's name, any words that are a string of capital letters)
Eye- and mind-candy: Taxes/ Families/Children/Money (basically simple, human or emotional words)

4. **Shoot for strong verbs.**
As in "shoot" or "hike" or "go up" or "help"

5. **Shoot for SHORT ledes (25 words or fewer).**

6. **For the NUT GRAF, cherish what it does:**
✓ Summarizes the rest of the story.
✓ Sometimes includes some of the background/context.
✓ Telegraphs/foreshadows to the audience what will come next.
✓ Serves as an outline or roadmap for you, the writer (If you get lost in your story, look back up at the Nut Graf – it's what you've promised to tell about).

7. **To do GOOD Nut Grafs:**
   ✓ Be analytical about your notes/ info: Think through your info to find your main themes or points.
   ✓ In your notes, underline and number those three main themes.
      Find/number the supporting info (quotes, background) for each theme.
   ✓ Use the Rule of Threes: Look for the three main themes, other than the lede.
   ✓ For structure, think of the verbs for the themes: To pay, to promise, to praise.

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