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## The Body of a News Story

### Exercise 1: The Body of a News Story

#### *Section I: Second Paragraphs*

Second paragraphs are almost as important as leads. Like leads, second paragraphs must help arouse readers' interest in a topic. Critically evaluate the second paragraphs in the following stories. Judge which of the second paragraphs are most successful in (1) providing a smooth transition from the lead; (2) continuing to discuss the topic summarized in the lead; and (3) emphasizing the news—details that are new, important and interesting. Give each second paragraph a grade from A to F.

1. A Pinkerton courier was robbed at gunpoint and fatally wounded on Tuesday while leaving Merchants Bank with the day's daily transaction records.  
Edwin James, 59, of Bell Drive, was following standard bank procedures and carrying no money.  
(Grade: \_\_\_\_\_)
2. A 41-year-old teacher who fell and broke an ankle while stopping for a cup of coffee on her way to work sued a convenience store Monday.  
The teacher, Tina Alvarez, has worked at Macdonald Elementary School for 21 years.  
(Grade: \_\_\_\_\_)
3. Two young men are presumed dead after falling off a 9-metre rock formation into the Pacific Ocean at a California park Saturday.  
The men remain unidentified, and their bodies have not been recovered.  
(Grade: \_\_\_\_\_)
4. Police responding to a 911 call about a shooting at 10 p.m. Sunday discovered Ralph Beasley on Bennett Road with a gunshot wound to his head.  
County sheriff's deputies arrived at about the same time in response to a radio request for assistance. An ambulance was already at the scene, as were Fire Department paramedics.  
(Grade: \_\_\_\_\_)

5. A 32-year-old woman who said she smoked marijuana to ease the pain of a rare intestinal disease was charged Tuesday morning with possessing illegal drugs.  
Ruth Howland was stopped at the Toronto Pearson International Airport after a K-9 dog singled out her suitcase. She and her husband, Terry, were returning from Mexico.  
(Grade: \_\_\_\_\_)
  
6. Three gunmen who entered a restaurant on Wilson Avenue at 10:30 p.m. Tuesday held four employees and 12 customers at gunpoint while taking more than \$3,000 from several cash registers.  
Peggy Deacosti, the restaurant's hostess, was on duty when the robbery occurred.  
(Grade: \_\_\_\_\_)
  
7. Eileen Guion, 38, a food and beverage co-ordinator at Walt Disney World for 18 years, died at her home Tuesday of unknown causes.  
Although she was offered many other jobs at restaurants, she never accepted them. She once said, "I've loved working at Disney because I get to work with people from all over the world, and I think that is very neat."  
(Grade: \_\_\_\_\_)
  
8. Police are searching for a man who attacked a woman outside the Bayside Bar & Grill Thursday night.  
Terry Smythe, a bartender at the restaurant, said he heard a woman screaming outside the entrance at 9 p.m. Smythe darted to the foyer, where he saw the woman trapped in the entryway. Smythe said it was "kind of like a tug of war," with the assailant trying to pull the woman outside while waitresses tried to pull her inside.  
(Grade: \_\_\_\_\_)

### ***Section II: Transitions***

Critically evaluate the following transitions. Which would be most likely to entice you to continue reading the stories? Which provide a smooth, specific, informative, and interesting introduction to the next idea? Give each transition a grade from A to F.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Other students said they would tell their teachers about cheaters because cheating is not fair to those who take the time to study.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ But what should happen when a husband and wife disagree about having a baby?
3. \_\_\_\_\_ A concerned citizen then addressed the commission about the fence.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Next, the task force presented its plan for preservation and renovation of the downtown.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ In a flat, emotionless voice, Howard responded that he and Jackson stole a red Mustang convertible on the night of June 3, picked up the two 14-year-old girls, and took them to the motel.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Gary Hubbard, superintendent of schools, then addressed his concerns about security in the city's schools.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Police Chief Barry Kopperud said his department is trying to combat juvenile crime by changing the way officers interact with children.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ He then discussed prejudice as a problem that plagues society.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ She also spoke about the different religious celebrations and rituals.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Parents who love, care for, and respect their children don't raise delinquents, she said.

## Exercise 2: Writing Complete News Stories

Write complete news stories based on the following information. Be thorough; use most of the information provided. Because much of the material is wordy, awkward, and poorly organized, you will have to rewrite it extensively. Correct all errors in your rewrite.

1. A family that owns a farm about 2 kilometres outside your town has decided to sell it. It has been in their family for four generations. They often bring fresh eggs, produce, and other items to the farmers market in town to sell, which is held once a month on the first Saturday. The father of the family told you they are selling because their children are nearly grown and don't want to farm, and that they will be moving to another province to be closer to other family members, but he declined to say any more than that. A real estate developer is buying the property, and he wants to subdivide it for single-family homes and town houses. There would be a total of five hundred new homes as the developer, Eugene McIntry, President of McIntry Realty, has planned it. McIntery has submitted his subdivision plan to the county commissioners. The commissioners and the County Planning Commission are extremely worried about this giant new development. They don't believe their roads and their water and sewer systems can handle all those people. In fact, right now the water system and sewer system don't even run to the farm. The family that lives on the farm have a well and a septic tank for their house and another well for their barn. But, the county doesn't have any zoning, so the supervisors don't think they can keep McIntry from buying the farm and building all those homes. Plus, McIntry has threatened to file a lawsuit if the township tries anything to keep his plans from going through. He said he has a lot of money invested and doesn't want to lose it. Some nearby residents, however, are going to file a lawsuit of their own to keep him from building the houses. They are angry that they're peaceful, quiet stretch of road just outside the city will soon be filled with cars and their view will be ruined by hundreds of new houses. The residents' attorney, Hector Salvatore, says he is finishing up the suit and will file it in County Court next week. He said the residents also are afraid they will be forced to hook up to the water and sewer systems if they are expanded out to the farm, which means several hundred dollars out of each of their pockets, which he said is unfair and possibly illegal.
2. A bad accident happened this morning on the interprovincial highway that runs right along the western edge of your city. It is Highway 790. Apparently two tractor trailers collided and started a chain reaction crash. The city's Police Department is not done investigating the accident, which happened at 6:45 a.m. in the morning, but that is what they believe preliminarily. A total of 4 tractor-trailers and fourteen cars were involved, according to Sgt. Albert Wei of the police department. One of the tractor-trailers was a tanker hauling diesel fuel; it was very lucky, Wei said, that it didn't roll over or dump any fuel or catch fire. The truck part of the tanker was damaged when a car hit it, but the truck driver managed to get it stopped along the side of the road. He wasn't hurt, Wei said, but 2 people driving cars were killed and twenty other people were injured and taken to the hospital, four of them seriously hurt. The fire chief, Tony Sullivan, said those seriously hurt people had injuries that were life-threatening. One of the ambulance drivers told him that. Sullivan said his firefighters had to cut the roofs off three of the cars to free the drivers and passengers that were trapped inside. All five of the fire department's ambulances were on the scene, along with ambulances from four nearby city's fire departments. Also, the "Life Flight" helicopter from Memorial Hospital in your city was called to the scene and flew two of the worst injuries to the trauma center in Statesville, 50 miles away. Sullivan said

the crash scene looked like something from a war zone when he arrived, with bodies lying along the road, people covered with blood sitting next to their cars, emergency workers running from place to place trying to help the injured, and sirens wailing in the distance as more fire trucks and ambulances were called. He had never seen anything that bad in the 18 and half years he's been with the fire department. Wei said the police officers on the scene were having trouble figuring out which people were from which vehicles, and who were the drivers and who were the passengers. According to Wei, the accident, which happened in the northbound lanes, closed the entire highway, north and south. The highway was still closed at 10 a.m., the deadline for your story, and Wei had no idea when it would be open again. It created quite a mess for the rush hour traffic today, since people who normally would have used Highway 790 had to go on Highway 690, on the eastern side of the city, and that backed up traffic on 690 for three hours.

### Exercise 3: Writing Complete News Stories

Write complete news stories based on the following information. Critically examine the information's language and organization, improving it whenever possible. To provide a pleasing change of pace, use quotations in your stories. Go beyond the superficial; unless your instructor tells you otherwise, assume that you have enough space to report every important and interesting detail.

1. The president of your local school board is in trouble. David DeBecker has been a member of the school board for more than 20 years and president for nearly six years. He told school officials and local authorities that he has done nothing wrong. Police have charged DeBecker with theft, fraud, extortion, and obstruction of justice. DeBecker, 57, lives on a 15-acre estate on Meadowdale Road. The property includes an 18-room white brick mansion, a barn and stable, several work sheds, and a large pond stocked with fish. Police said this is what happened. DeBecker is part owner of a janitorial service incorporated as Best Bet Cleaning Services. DeBecker did not disclose the fact that he was part owner of the business when the company bid on the cleaning contract at your local high school. His partner, James V. Stimson, 43, of Jamestown Drive, is listed as owner and operator of the company. DeBecker runs his own accounting firm, DeBecker Accounting Services Inc. DeBecker became acquainted with Stimson seven years ago when Stimson came to DeBecker seeking financial advice. Stimson was in trouble with the federal government for owing back taxes and DeBecker was able to fix the problem but demanded to be made a silent partner in the lucrative cleaning business. DeBecker helped Stimson bid on the school cleaning contract and Stimson was awarded the contract as low bidder. DeBecker recruited students from the local vocational school to work with Stimson, but often did not pay the students. DeBecker would pocket the money instead. DeBecker also had the students work on his property to clean and do construction work on various projects. The students were not paid for the work. More than 35 vocational students were involved at one time or another in the scam. Best Bet Cleaning Services was being paid hundreds of thousands of dollars to do the cleaning work at the high school with the stipulation that vocational students be among the workers. The students were never told they were to be paid. They were told by Stimson that they were getting "business experience" as their compensation. Also charged with obstruction of justice is Ruth Gunderson who is accused of destroying email and other records in regard to the work done at the high school. Gunderson is the office secretary for Best Bet Cleaning Services. She is 45 years old and lives on Hillcrest Street with her husband, William Gunderson. Charges are pending against Stimson. A provincial court handed down the

indictments after a 14-month investigation. Authorities believe that DeBecker defrauded the school district of more than \$850,000 over the six-year term of the cleaning contract. DeBecker is free on \$250,000 bond. He faces up to 25 years in prison if convicted of the charges.

2. It was a potential tragedy that your city's police, rescue, and fire officials say was just barely averted. James Shanahan, his two daughters, Alyssa and Adrienne, and his wife, Mary, were travelling from Kenora, Ont. They were flying near your city when the plane they were in had to make an emergency landing. James Shanahan is a licensed pilot. He has been flying for 30 years. He has never had a problem in all that time. No one was seriously injured, but James Shanahan was admitted to Mercy Hospital for observation. Mrs. Shanahan was treated for a broken wrist and a laceration on her forehead and released. Adrienne suffered minor cuts and bruises. Alyssa was not injured. The plane was a four-passenger Mooney Executive 21 propeller-driven, fixed-wing aircraft. The undercarriage of the plane sustained minor damage. There was a small fuel spill, according to the fire department. "They were very fortunate. It could have been much worse than it was. There were a lot of startled people when that plane came at them," said Fire Chief Tony Sullivan. Police Chief Barry Kopperud said the Shanahans left Kenora early in the morning. The flight was proceeding normally until the plane was 100 kilometres east of the city. The plane began to wander off course and was contacted by the control tower at City Regional Airport. A girl's voice responded to the control tower. "The girl I talked to on the radio told me the pilot was having problems. She told me he had slumped in his seat and was unconscious. I could hear the passengers screaming in the background. It was really confusing. I think they were getting a bit panicky up there," said control tower flight manager Peter Jacobs. Police said James Shanahan lost consciousness as he was about to contact the tower to request an emergency landing. His wife, Mary, told police her husband began complaining about not feeling well. He told her that he felt dizzy and couldn't get his breath. She said he suddenly slumped over in his seat and the plane went into a shallow dive. "There was nothing I could do. I was in the back passenger seat with my daughter Adrienne. I couldn't reach the controls. And even if I could have, I don't think I could have helped because I never learned how to fly. I hate flying," Mrs. Shanahan said. Kopperud said Alyssa Shanahan was seated beside her father. It was she who responded to the towers call about the plane wandering off course. Alyssa pulled her father's arms away from the controls and his legs off the rudder pedals. She then took over the controls of the aircraft and called the tower for help to land the plane. Jacobs stayed in contact with Alyssa and gave her instructions on what to do. He talked to her the entire time and directed other aircraft away from the airport until the emergency was over. Alyssa was able to locate the airport and brought the plane down. When the plane landed, it overshot the runway and skidded across an open field. The landing gear of the plane collapsed and the plane plowed through a chain-link fence and came to a stop just three metres from the northbound lane of Trans-Canada Highway. The highway was crowded with traffic at the time of the accident. The accident occurred at 4:05 p.m., police said. No one on the ground was injured. Alyssa is 12 years old, 4 feet 3 inches tall and weighs 88 pounds. "I've been flying with my Daddy since I was a little girl. He taught me all about flying and even let me handle the controls sometimes. I was a little scared because I couldn't reach the rudder pedals very well. But I couldn't be too scared because I want to be a pilot like my Daddy someday. I was more worried about my Daddy because I didn't know what happened to him. I just wanted to get on the ground and get help for him," Alyssa said. Doctors at Mercy Hospital said Mr. Shanahan was in satisfactory condition after suffering an allergic reaction to a prescription medicine he had begun taking that morning.