

# Teaching Hard Things: The journalism 'intro'



Jonny Greatrex  
Multimedia Journalism

Teaching students the hardest skill in journalism – how to start your story -  
with the help of *Pulp Fiction*, *Forrest Gump* and *Cool Runnings*.

# **This session**

- Explain the hard thing and why it is hard to teach
- Show how I (try to) teach it
- You have a go
- Feedback

# The hard thing...the intro

The 'intro' is the industry term for the first line of a text-based news story

It is crucial

Generally no more than 25 words (although house styles differ)

It should explain what has happened or what will happen

It should use as few words as possible but be as newsworthy as possible

For example...

**EU Referendum**
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## EU referendum: Final push for votes on last day of campaign

 1 hour ago | [EU Referendum](#) |  1957


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Boris Johnson started a day's frenetic campaigning with a visit to Billingsgate fish market

**Politicians are making their final pitch for votes on the last day of campaigning before the EU referendum.**

David Cameron, Jeremy Corbyn and Tim Farron are addressing rallies arguing the UK will be better off and safer with a Remain vote in Thursday's poll.

### **LIVE** Last day of EU referendum campaign

 6 minutes ago

Watch: Behind the scenes of BBC debate



Leave and Remain - their key claims

**EU referendum poll tracker**


**50 top questions on the big vote**

**After EU referendum: What happens next?**

### Top Stories

#### Final push for votes in EU referendum

Politicians on either side of the EU referendum debate are making their final pitch for votes on the last day of campaigning.

 1 hour ago

**Granddad disowns daughter over Ellie's murder**



Jo Cox MP would have been 42 on Wednesday

Family and friends of murdered MP **Jo Cox** are urging everyone 'love like Jo loved' as they mark what would have been her 42nd birthday.

Worldwide gatherings are taking place on Wednesday to honour the Labour politician, who was **killed in the street** last week.

The MP shares the same birthday with **Bernard Kenny, the pensioner who was injured when he tried to save her life**. He will be 78

Organisers are hoping to show - like Jo's mantra - everyone has more in common 'than the things that divide us'.

One of the main events will be held at Trafalgar Square and another just yards from

## ★ Recommended In UK News



### EU REFERENDUM

EU referendum 2016 poll tracker: Is Britain heading for Brexit and what does the UK think of Europe?



### GLASTONBURY FESTIVAL

Glastonbury 2016 traffic and news: Live updates as festival closes main gate due to flooding



### SUICIDE

Young bank worker researched 'how to die painlessly' before friends found her lifeless body in parked car



### REFUGEES-1

Sudanese man who walked to UK through Channel Tunnel leaves court a free man



### BURGLARY

Home of Everton and Belgium striker Romelu Lakaku ransacked by burglars as he played in Euro qualifier

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Show

# Monkey escapes enclosure at Howletts Wild Animal Park near Canterbury

Comments | 16

by [Dan Wright](#) [dwright@thekmgroupp.co.uk](mailto:dwright@thekmgroupp.co.uk)

17 June 2016

A female monkey escaped from her enclosure at Howletts Wild Animal Park late this morning.

Keepers and specialist vets were called in to catch the primate, which was spotted sitting on top of its usual home.

The Javan langur, called Malang, managed to get out of her enclosure close to the park's administrative office and pavilion restaurant.



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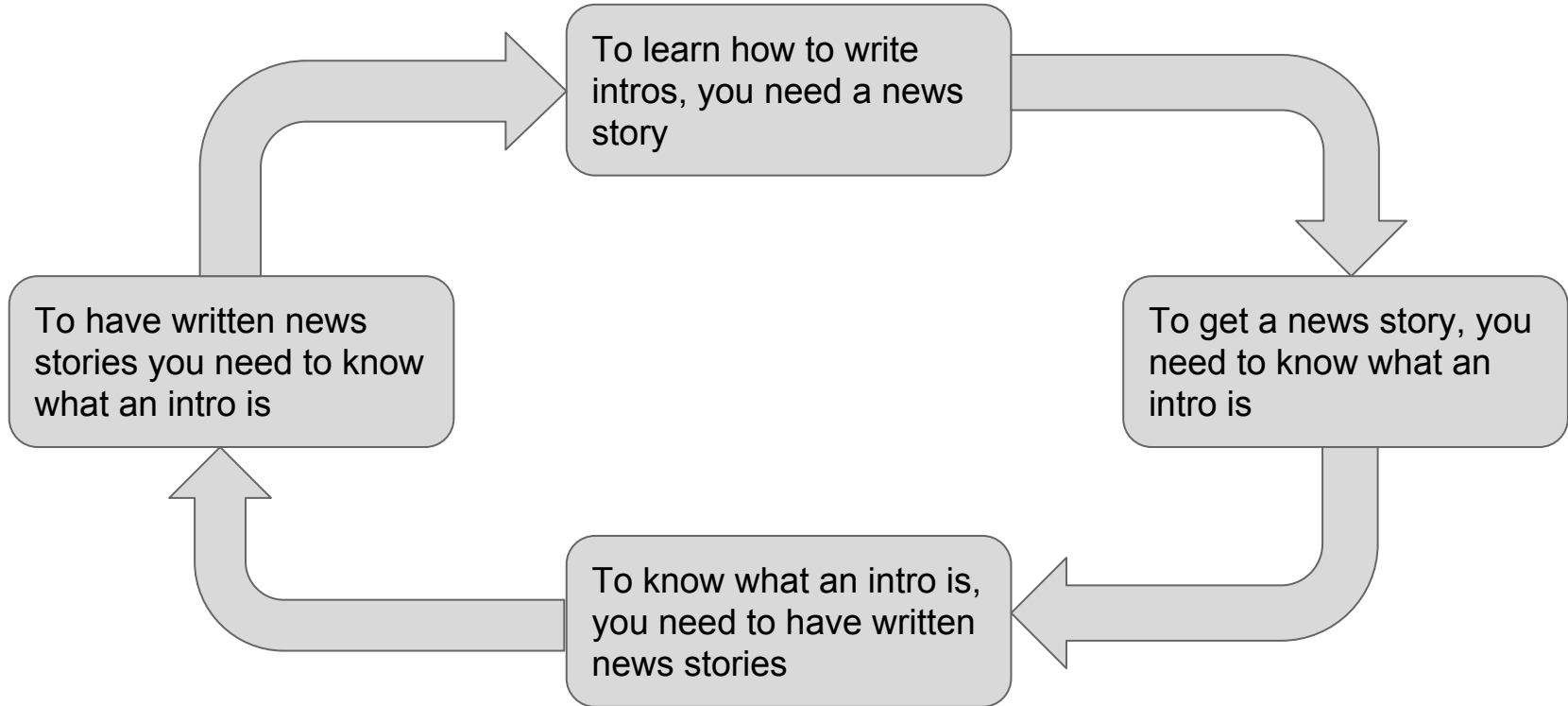
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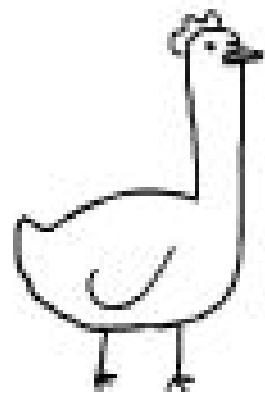
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Police officer still in hospital after M2 crash 50

£1,500 raised for crash victim with baby on the way 6

# Why is it hard to teach?







# And...

The intro is the first line of a story

But it is the last part of the journalistic  
process

Generate story idea

Research topic

Do interviews

Gather comment/responses

Pitch to newsdesk

Write copy

If you can't write the intro, it is not a  
—— story

# The solution?

Remove the need for students to have a news story

Replace it with their knowledge of their favourite films

Based on constructivist approach: Vygotsky, Piaget, Dewey, Vico, Rorty, Bruner

New information is linked to prior knowledge

Ask them to write one line about something which has happened - or will happen - in their favourite film

# From me...

## Cool Runnings

A ragtag band of Jamaican sprinters have launched a fundraising appeal for the country's first ever bobsled team.

## Forrest Gump

A Greenbow man has been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honour after saving his platoon in bloody battle in Vietnam.

## Pulp Fiction

A gangland hitman has been found dead at the home of missing LA boxer Butch Coolridge.

# From the students...

A young girl has killed her mother using telekinesis after the pair had a fight.

Carrie

A young clownfish has been kidnapped and taken hostage by a human dentist in Australia.

Finding Nemo

A banished general of the Roman Empire has returned home to find his wife and son hanged.

Gladiator

**Your turn.  
Five minutes.  
Write an intro  
using based  
on your  
favourite film.**

- No more than 25 words.
- It should say what has happened, or will happen
- It should contain the most important details
- It should be as short but as newsworthy as possible

**Feedback**