Data-Driven Story Form Inspiration

**Explainers**

*Sub-heads can be questions, phrases or sentences.*

Take a data point on your beat and explain why it’s going up or down

* [Why is the Subway Service in New York Getting Worse?](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/31/nyregion/why-is-subway-service-in-new-york-getting-worse.html)

Or “6 reasons why” this trend is happening

* [6 Reasons That Pay Has Lagged Behind U.S. Job Growth](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/02/01/business/economy/wages-salaries-job-market.html)
* [Why a Border Wall Could Mean Trouble for Wildlife](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/24/climate/border-wall-wildlife.html)

Take a confusing, evergreen topic on your beat that you’ll refer back to often, and explain it

* [How Inflation Works (or Why Your Chicken Is Going to Cost More)?](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/02/14/business/economy/inflation-prices.html)

X “in three charts”:

* Evergreen topic; drawing attention to a few striking stats
  + [The New Toll of American Student Loan Debt, in 3 Charts](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/11/your-money/student-loan-debt-parents.html)
* In breaking news
  + [The Real State of the Union, in Charts](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/05/opinion/trump-state-of-the-union.html)

Sub-heads are sentences -- include data!

* [Deaths From Drugs And Suicide Reach a New Record in the U.S.](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/07/us/deaths-drugs-suicide-record.html)
* [No, Tariffs Aren’t Going to Pay Down the National Debt](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/07/business/no-tariffs-arent-going-to-pay-down-the-national-debt.html) (A1)
* [Homelessness in New York Public Schools Is at a Record High](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/15/nyregion/homeless-students-nyc-schools-record.html)
* [N.F.L. Quarterbacks Are Throwing Passing Yardage Off the Charts](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/01/sports/nfl-passing-quarterbacks.html)

Use numbers as sub-heads

* [How Jeb Bush Spent $130 Million Running for President With Nothing to Show for It](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/23/us/politics/jeb-bush-campaign.html)
* [Opioids, Car Crashes and Falling: The Odds of Dying in the U.S.](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/14/us/opioids-car-crash-guns.html)
* [The Investigations That Led to Scott Pruitt’s Resignation](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/18/climate/scott-pruitt-epa-investigations-guide.html)

Use “The Numbers Behind” a topic on your beat

* [The Numbers Behind America’s Heroin Epidemic](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/10/30/us/31heroin-deaths.html)

Or “By The Numbers”

* [N.B.A. By the Numbers: The League That Never Sleeps](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/04/sports/nba-season-by-numbers-recap.html)
  + Sub-heads are numbers
* [U.S. Open By the Numbers](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/22/sports/tennis/us-open-numbers.html)
* [Education By the Numbers](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/08/magazine/education-by-the-numbers.html)

Use ellipsis in sub-heads to explain a trend

* [The Markets Are Up, Unemployment is Down. How Much Credit Should Trump Get?](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/08/04/business/economy/the-economy-under-president-trump.html)

5 facts about X: great for tackling an overwhelming topic

* [In 19 States, It’s Still Legal to Spank Children in School](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/13/us/corporal-punishment-school-tennessee.html)

Reader questions:

* [Measles Outbreak in New York and Michigan: Your Questions Answered](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/20/us/measles-outbreak.html)

Timeline:

* [How Offense Took Over the N.F.L.](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/19/sports/nfl-offense-records.html)
* [Afghan War Casualty Report](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/01/magazine/afghan-war-casualty-report.html)

List: sub-heads are categories

* [Here’s What the Fed’s Halt on Interest Rates Means for Your Wallet](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/31/your-money/fed-rate-halt-consumer-impact.html)

List: sub-heads are examples of a larger trend

* [How Amazon Rattles Other Companies](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/12/22/business/amazon-stocks.html)

List with grade

* [An A- Grade for the U.S. Economy, but Failing Grades for Trump’s Other Policies](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/04/business/us-economy-trump-taxes-trade.html)

List of likely factors

* [N.Y.C. Special Election: 7 Factors That Help Decide the Public Advocate Race](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/24/nyregion/public-advocate-election-nyc.html)

Fact Check:

To settle a myth or debate:

* [Real Vs. Artificial Christmas Trees: Which Is The Greener Choice?](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/26/business/energy-environment/fake-christmas-tree-vs-real-tree.html)

Data used to fact check:

* [Border Crossings Have Been Declining for Years, Despite Claims of ‘Crisis of Illegal Immigration’](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/20/us/politics/fact-check-trump-border-crossings-declining-.html)
* [Kudlow Overstates European, Chinese and American Tariffs](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/18/us/politics/fact-check-kudlow-tariffs.html)

Annotation, fact check combo:

* [Before Trump’s State of the Union, a Look at How Last Year’s Promises Fared](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/03/us/politics/trump-state-of-the-union.html)

Annotation

Annotating lists:

* [Who Actually Listens to Halloween Music?](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/25/style/halloween-music-best-spotify.html)

Annotating a budget:

* [Citi Bike Is Up, Condoms Are Down: New York by Some Numbers](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/19/nyregion/nyc-numbers-statistics-performance-metrics.html)

**Takeaways**

From a report:

* [5 Takeaways From the Latest Campaign Finance Report](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/26/us/politics/campaign-finance-midterms.html)
* [The Number of Illegal Immigrants Has Dropped. Here Are 5 Takeaways](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/27/us/illegal-immigrants-population-study.html)

From large investigations:

* [Five Takeaways From Our New China Project](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/21/world/asia/china-rules-takeaways.html)

**Mini Stories:**

* [How a New Tax Plan Could Affect Those With Student Loan Debt](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/11/11/your-money/tax-student-debt.html)
* [The N.F.L.’s Obesity Scourge](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/17/sports/football/the-nfls-obesity-scourge.html)

**What We Know**

* [What You Need to Know About the New Spending Package](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/14/us/politics/congress-trump-border-deal-wall.html)
* [What We Know About Diet and Weight Loss](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/10/health/diet-weight-loss.html)

In breaking news, using data for the points we know:

* [The End of DACA: What We Know And Don’t Know](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/05/us/daca-what-we-know-and-dont-know.html)
* [The Paris Climate Deal: What You Need to Know](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/01/climate/paris-climate-change-guide.html)

Reporting on a number you don’t know, but want to:

* [There’s an Awful Lot We Still Don’t Know About Guns](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/03/02/upshot/what-should-government-study-gun-research-funding.html)
* [Reports of Breast Implant Illness Brought Federal Review](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/19/health/breast-implants-fda-illness.html)

Call out

* [Where Does Your Monthly Budget Go? We Want to Hear From You](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/04/18/business/budget-spending-across-the-country.html?rref=collection%2Fbyline%2Ftara-siegel-bernard)