TWO YEAR MASTER'S DEGREE COURSE
(CBCS and in Accordance with NEP 2020)

SEMESTER - II

REPORTING FOR PRINT
JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION

Bhupen Hazarika School of Mass Communication

KRISHNA KANTA HANDIQUI STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY

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January, 2024

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Printed and published by Registrar on behalf of the Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University.

Headquarters: Patgaon, Rani Gate, Guwahati - 781 017

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Each unit of these blocks includes some along-side boxes to help you know some of the difficult, unseen terms. Some “EXERCISES” have been included to help you apply your own thoughts. You may find some boxes marked with: “LET US KNOW”. These boxes will provide you with some additional interesting and relevant information. Again, you will get “CHECK YOUR PROGRESS” questions. These have been designed to self-check your progress of study. It will be helpful for you if you solve the problems put in these boxes immediately after you go through the sections of the units and then match your answers with “ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS” given at the end of each unit in making your learning more active and efficient. And, at the end of each section, you will get “CHECK YOUR PROGRESS” questions. These have been designed to self-check your progress of study. It will be better if you solve the problems put in these boxes immediately after you go through the sections of the units and then match your answers with “ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS” given at the end of each unit.

COURSE INTRODUCTION:

In this course we are going to discuss the concepts on reporting for the print media. The unit provide a basic knowledge about the field of journalism. Here, we have discussed the concepts of news, reporting, interviewing and writing skills which are very necessary for being a good reporter and news writing etc.

The course is divided into twelve units, which are as follows –

UNIT- 1: CONCEPT AND DEFINITION OF NEWS
In this first unit of this course we will introduce you to the concept and definition of news.

UNIT- 2: NEWS VALUES
This unit is going to cover the news values which make a piece of information news-worthy.

UNIT- 3: CONCEPT OF REPORTING
This unit describes the concept and process of news reporting.

UNIT- 4: BEING A GOOD REPORTER
The qualities and responsibilities of a good reporter have been discussed in this unit in details.

UNIT- 5: SOURCES OF NEWS
In this unit we are going to discuss the various sources of news.

UNIT- 6: TYPES OF REPORTING
This unit aims at highlighting the different types of reporting – objective, interpretative and investigative.

UNIT- 7: BEAT REPORTING
The concept of beat reporting has been discussed in this unit. Some of the important beats have been explained in details.

UNIT- 8: INTERVIEWING AND NOTE-TAKING
Here we will discuss what is an interview, conducting an interview, text of interview, language for audio-visual interview and note-taking.

UNIT- 9: CONCEPT OF NEWS WRITING
This unit introduces you to the concept and process of news writing and column writing.

UNIT- 10: STRUCTURE OF NEWS
Here you will learn about the structure of a news story, the different elements of the news story and how to write a news story.

UNIT- 11: PRINCIPLES OF GOOD WRITING

This unit will give you an idea of the language and style of Indian media, language of print and cyber media.

UNIT- 12: WRITING FOR DIFFERENT AREAS

This unit will help you in learning the skills to report for different fields like sports, culture, politics, etc. Structure of a news story, How to write the copy

UNIT - 1 : CONCEPT AND DEFINITION OF NEWS

UNIT STRUCTURE

1.1 Learning Objectives
1.2 Introduction
1.3 Concept of News
    1.3.1 Definition
1.4 Types of News
1.5 Let us sum up
1.6 Further Reading
1.7 Answers to check your progress
1.8 Model questions

1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- describe news, and
- classify the different types of news

1.2 INTRODUCTION

With the boom of the news media viz. newspapers, news channels and news portals, news has become an important part of our daily lives. The term news must be familiar to all of you. But as a student of Mass Communication, your understanding of the term 'News' has to be deeper and more comprehensive than what the common man understands by this term.

In this unit you will learn about news not just from the point of view of a layman, but from the point of view of a journalist. Here we will introduce you to the concepts of news, the different types of news, qualities of news, sources of news etc.

We hope, after going through this unit, you will be able to have the basic concepts of news clear to your mind. So let us concentrate on the sections given below.

1.3 CONCEPT OF NEWS

"News" is probably one of the most commonly used terminologies in our day to day lives. All of us invariably use this term quite often while talking to our friends, families, relatives and other people, without perhaps, knowing what actually constitute news. Innumerable activities and events are happening simultaneously round the clock across the world. But have you ever thought why the news bulletin of the day carries only a handful of the events or activities that have taken place during the day, which we call as news? Have you ever tried to understand why out of the hundreds only a few items find a place in the newspaper that you read everyday and you invariably call them news? What about the rest of the happenings that fail to make it to the news media?

In a country of billions like India, why your television channel is obsessed with only a few faces, probably a few politicians, a few film stars, models, scientists, bureaucrats, etc. Why only a few people and events get reported, and not the rest? Why don't the media inform us about every little detail of whatever is happening at any place in the world and at any point of time as part of its responsibilities?

Well, in journalistic parlance the word "news" has certain connotations. All events, incidents, activities or happenings around the world can not qualify as news. In order to call something news there has to be certain elements present in that event or activity or incident. Therefore, let us first understand what can be called news.

1.3.1. Definition of news

It has been impossible to formulate one common and all encompassing definition of news which is universally acceptable. This is because the meaning and scope of news has been changing with the passage of time and also differs according to the political structure of the state.

Perhaps, the simplest way to define news is that, news is all that is happening around us in the different directions, north-east-west-south, and together all these make news. However, if one is to believe

this statement then he or she will have to maintain that every incident happening in our society, no matter how big or small or whether emanating from a renowned person or common men, must be considered as news. Yet, when we see the different news media, we can probably question the validity of this statement. Therefore, we need to reconsider this statement and modify it by saying that - News is something new, something relevant and important, something immediate or something unusual happening in our world that concern us or our society in some way or the other.

Now does this explain all the doubts creeping in your minds? There should be something fresh or new about the event like a discovery, an invention, an innovation, a new project taken by the government for the uplift of people, an impending danger, a natural disaster, an accident, a crime taking place in the society and so on and so forth. They always make good **news stories**. A new fashion in vogue, announcement of new products in the market, a change in habit or in taste of people of the society, etc are also news as they signify changing trends, eventually making them relevant for larger segments of the society.

News Story:
News report or material which goes into the newspaper. Not to be confused with tale or novel or fiction.

In fact, everything can be called 'news' provided it holds immense value for or affects the lives of larger masses. An unusual event like the records of the Guinness Book may also qualify for news. The actions and activities of members of Parliament or Legislative Assemblies is also of concern to people as they are people's representatives conferred with the power to rule and guide the masses.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines news as 'the report or account of recent events or occurrences, brought or coming to one as new information, new occurrences as a subject of report or talk. Therefore, having discussed all these we can draw a conclusion by defining news as information about an event that happens in the society, which affects the lives of the people or has the tendency to affect the lives of the people, directly or indirectly, or has immediate

value for larger segments of the society.

However, what we have discussed so far are only some of the characteristics of news. Apart from these, there are some other qualities as well, by which we can identify news. In journalistic parlance these qualities are called News Values.

LET US KNOW



Some Interesting Definitions and Quotes

- 'NEWS is what interests a good newspaperman.' - Geraid Johnson, The Sun, Baltimore
- 'When a dog bites a man it is not news, when a man bites a dog it is news.' - John Bogart
- 'News is something someone somewhere wants suppressed. All the rest is advertising.' - William Randolph
- 'For most times no news is good news, for the press, good news isnot news.'



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: Define 'news'.

_____

_____

_____

Q.2: 'When a dog bites a man it is not news, when a man bites a dog it is news.' Analyze.

_____

_____

_____

Q.3: What is the definition of news given by William Randolph?

_____

_____

_____

_____

1.4 TYPES OF NEWS

Having discussed about the characteristics of news let us now understand the different types of news found in news media. News is basically of two types-Hard News and Soft News.



Follow up stories: A sequence of news events that follows after a news break. Also known as Folo.

1. **Hard News:** Hard news is a news item which states plain, simple facts as it has happened. It usually answers the basic questions of 5W's and H
   - ✓ Who
   - ✓ What
   - ✓ When
   - ✓ Where
   - ✓ Why
   - ✓ How

Normally, a standard technique is followed while writing hard news. In case of print media, the inverted pyramid style is followed, i.e., the most important information is placed towards the beginning of the story and the less important ones are placed thereafter. In the broadcast media, the less important information are simply left out. The hard news writing style is usually followed while writing news about important public events, government actions, international events, economic and social affairs, crime, science and technology, environment etc.

If a fire breaks out in any part of Guwahati causing considerable damage to the property of the dwellers, including human lives, the information about this unprecedented devastation needs to be given immediately. Who, what, when, where, why, how?



Feature: A story with news value, but not hard core news. It gives new dimension to news, examines and dissects news giving opinions and comments

Similarly when a bomb blast takes place, the news about it would be immediately flashed in the news media in the form of hard news stating straight facts like where it happened, casualty, action taken etc. .

In today's parlance Hard news are also called spot news or breaking news, because the news organizations break out the news as soon as it happens, without delaying.

2. **Soft News:** Soft news includes a wide variety of news items. **Features**,

editorials, articles, etc fall under this category. Reactions and views are included in soft news apart from the plain facts. Stories that deal with human interest angles can rightly be termed as soft news. Soft news mostly emanates from the hard news. Normally the **follow up stories** of a major event, highlighting the angles not covered in the hard news items, mostly the human interest angle are such type of news.

The idea of such news stories is to arouse curiosity among the readers or viewers and heighten emotional appeal by presenting it in an interesting manner. Therefore the conventional news writing formula is not applied while dealing with soft news stories. The writer has the liberty to be extremely innovative and create an item that would attract as many readers as possible and at the same time create an impact in the minds of the people.

Let us take the example of a plane crash, say, in India. The media would definitely cover the event with due emphasis on the number of deaths, time, place and a narration of how the crash may have taken place and, if possible, also highlighting the cause of the crash. All of these information will be immediately covered in the form of hard news. However, as the days progress, a newer set of information may surface and reach the hands of a reporter working on the story. After investigating on the incident the reporter may find out there was a child of, say 3 years, who was travelling with his parents, and the child has survived the crash and could escape with minor injuries. Such news will be covered as soft news.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS- B

Q.4: What is the difference between hard news and soft news? Answer in about 50 words.

_____

_____

Q.5: What are the other terms by which hard news is also known?

_____

_____

Q.6: What are the 5Ws and 1H?



ACTIVITY 1.1

1) Read today's newspaper and identify the following :

i) Five hard news items.

ii) Five soft news items.



1.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you have been introduced to the basic concepts of news. Let us quickly recapitulate these concepts once.

- News is a true account of events, happenings and incident. News is something which has an immediate value for the larger segment of the society.
- There are two types of news, hard-news and soft-news. A news item which states plain, simple facts as it has happened is called hard news. Features, editorials, articles, etc fall under the category of soft news. Reactions and views are included in soft news apart from the plain facts. Human interest is an important concern in soft news.
- A news report should basically have six basic elements-who, what, when, why, where and how, popularly called 5 W's and 1 H.



1.6 FURTHER READING

1. **Journalists Handbook**, *M. V. Kamath, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi*
2. **Professional Journalism,** *M. V. Kamath*

3. **Handbook of Journalism and Mass Communication**, *V B Agarwal and V S Gupta, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi*



1.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No. 1: News is information about an event that happens in the society, which affects the lives of the people or has the tendency to affect the lives of the people, directly or indirectly, or has immediate value for the people at large.

Ans. to Q. No. 2: News is something new, something relevant and important, something immediate or something unusual happening in our world that concern us or our society in some way or the other.

Ans. to Q. No. 3: 'News is something someone somewhere wants suppressed. All the rest is advertising.' - William Randolph

Ans. to Q. No. 4: A news item which states plain, simple facts as it has happened. It usually answers the basic questions of 5W's and H. On the other hand, reactions and views are included in soft news apart from the plain facts. Features, editorials, articles, etc fall under the category of soft news. Human interest is an important concern in soft news.

Ans. to Q. No. 5: Spot news or breaking news.

Ans. to Q. No. 6: 5Ws- Who, What, Where, When, Why, H- How.



1.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Short Questions (answer in about 150 words)

Q.1 : Define news.

Q.2 : What are the difference types of news?

B. Long Questions (answer in about 300-500 words)

Q.1: "When a dog bites a man it is not news, when a man bites a dog it is news" – Discuss.

Q.2: What are the basic differences between hard news and soft news?

Q.3: Explain the concept of news in your words.

*****

UNIT - 2 : NEWS VALUES

UNIT STRUCTURE

2.1 Learning Objectives
2.2 Introduction
2.3 News Values
2.4 Objectivity and Authenticity
2.5 Let us sum up
2.6 Further Reading
2.7 Answers to check your progress
2.8 Model questions

2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- analyze different news values
- explain objectivity and authenticity of news

2.2 INTRODUCTION

News values are the characteristics of news. They are the qualities by which events qualify as news. And it is expected that all journalists regardless of whether they are involved in on-the-field reporting or placed at the **news desk**, have a clear idea about all the values that constitute news. Therefore, let us now try to understand the characteristics of news one by one.

News Desk: Desk where news is edited and processed. Also known as **Copy Desk**. In Journalism, Copy means the material written by a journalist or news supplied by a news agency or correspondent.

2.3 NEWS VALUES

The news value which is common to all the news items are:

1) Timeliness 2) Importance
3) Conflict 4) Impact
5) Prominence, etc.

They are discussed in details here,

Timeliness

News essentially has to be new, recent, on time. Old news is stale news and, therefore, of no value. Timeliness, however, is defined by the publication cycle of the news medium in which the information will appear.

- For a weekly news magazine, events that happened during the previous week are timely.
- For a daily newspaper, however, events that happened during the 24 hours since the last edition of the paper are timely.
- For the broadcast media, events that happened during the past few hours upto the last half hour are timely.

A timely presentation of events and happenings is a consideration that every newsman strives to achieve. Otherwise news loses its credibility and essence. Readers do not find it interesting to read stale news. Therefore, it is said that news is the most perishable commodity in the world. And that is the reason why the happenings of the day, including the major events taking place in the evening and late at night, will find a definite place in the morning newspaper.

This concern for immediacy has become more prominent in today's era of evolving technology. The television has reduced this time gap to an unbelievable 'news as it is happening now' situation. And the viewers are boggled by watching the seamless unfolding of events taking place at far flung places of the world the moment they break on their television screen. The online newspapers also keep on updating information or the content of the paper as and when events break out and simultaneously more and more information keeps on pouring in throughout the day adding more highlights and insights into a single event. Now-a-days news updates can be received through sms also.

Importance

Significant events that hold importance for the masses must be considered as news. Any important event like the presentation of railway or fiscal budget at the Parliament or in the State Assemblies, announcement of any kind of development project by the government, visits of Foreign ministers to our country or vice versa, a military threat by the neighboring countries, crime related stories etc. are all important events, information

about which needs to be delivered immediately to the people.

Conflict

Conflicts are parts of every society. When a society comprises multiple ideologies, multiple organs, innumerable ethnic communities, multiple languages, geographical terrains etc. then conflicts are bound to happen. The entire North east region, including Assam, is a testimony to conflicts of different nature and magnitude plugging at different points of time fueled by innumerable reasons. Nuclear war, terrorist activities, communal clashes, political turmoil, struggles for identities have become cause of concern for every society the world over and there have been excessive reporting about such incidents in every news media. Reports about such happenings are widely covered by local as well as national media because they are news worthy and arouse heightened emotions among masses. One, however, needs to exercise a lot of caution and restrain while reporting conflict as these issues are very sensitive. Media reports portraying the incident in an improper way can flare up the situation and cause further damage. At times the media also has to hold back from revealing certain information in order to help maintain peace.

Proximity

Similar to relevance the local news is always interesting for the masses, irrespective of where they stay. When a local event is featured in the newspapers or electronic media news bulletins, the readers find it engrossing because local events affect their immediate life and surroundings – weather, events, traffic, communication, market, health facility etc. It is a general tendency of people to remain abreast with what is happening in their locality, in their local markets, in their neighborhood and with the local people. That is the reason why all the newspapers devote a considerable amount of space for regional affairs. Also, to capitalize on the readership base, there has been a tendency of all the big national newspapers, in the past couple of years, to have local editions in probably every state of the country to cater to the needs and interests of the people of that particular state. Proximity, however, means more than a simple measure of distance. Psychological proximity is also important. So, if, say, an Indian is awarded

or gains recognition in a foreign country, it makes important news for us.

Prominence

Prominent persons, prominent events and prominent places always make news. You must have always been wondering as to why you always see the same faces — same politicians, same celebrities or the same places making inroads into the newspaper space and bulletin time. Popular politicians, popular film stars, sports persons, celebrities, socialites—they always make news. This is because the readers or the viewers adore them and want to know more about them, about their life styles, their likes and dislikes. They are the role models for many and hence, when their activities are covered by the media it is bound to draw the attention. Political bigwigs like the President, the Prime Minister, the Leaders of different political parties, spiritual gurus, sports persons, film stars, business barons etc, are always in the news.

Sometime, even prominent places make news. Like the metros of India-Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata and other major cities of India and abroad, make news. The events happening in these places are matters of concern for many and, hence, they raise curiosity. Prominent events like International Trade Fairs, Expos, Fashion shows, film festivals, international summits and conferences etc also make news.

Impact or consequence

The kind of impact an event is going to have on the minds of the people is also another characteristic of news. An event that causes or is capable of causing a great sequence of events affecting many persons is obviously newsworthy. Massive disasters, earthquake, floods, natural calamities, political debacles, economic turmoil, major accidents, crashes, inflation, hike of fuel prices, political party coming to or moving out of power, union budget, reservation or any shift in policy etc are all able to create greater impact on the lives of the common people. Similarly, consequence may measure disaster or progress. A fire that destroys a private dwelling is of small consequence in comparison to tsunami which killed thousands of lives in the coastal regions of India recently. When news about such incidents appear in the newspaper pages people become emotionally aroused and

such incidents affects the lives of the people in more ways than one.

Progress

Information relating to a country's development and prosperity always makes news. Every society has problems and issues that need to be highlighted by the media. Such information is always newsworthy. Therefore, success stories of individual or the society, victories and progress- they all make news.

Disaster

Any kind of disaster makes news. Disasters like earthquakes, flood, fire, erosions, volcanic eruptions, cyclones, etc. make news as such occurrences affect the lives of the majority. When such incidents occur they take away human lives, damages property and break the ecological balance. Such incidents stir the emotions of the larger segments of the society.

Human Interest:

These are stories that arouse some emotions in the audience - stories that are ironic, bizarre, uplifting or dramatic. For example, when a person saves another's life risking his own, it becomes news worthy or when a person achieves something big despite being a handicap it makes news.

Novelty

Stories that are unique, something that is new or unusual make news. For instance, when a couple got married underwater, it created news. Similarly Guinness world record events make news.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: What do you mean by news values? Name some important news values.

_____

_____

_____

Q.2 : Which of the following events have no news value for the media-

i) Indian Prime Minister visits China

ii) Foreign tourists visit India

iii) Price of commodities increase in Assam

iv) India wins football match against Pakistan

v) Your elder sister gives birth to a child

vi) Aishwarya Rai gives birth to a child

vii) You go to watch a football match

viii) Boy dies in Juvenile home

ix) Prime Minister goes to watch cricket match

x) HSLC examination begins

ACTIVITY- 2.1

1) Think of 10 major news items that were covered by the media in the past two days and identify which news value or values are found in each of these news items. Note down which news value was found in the maximum no of news items.

2) Open today's newspaper and go through the news items on the first page- Identify the news items having the following news values. Name the news value which is common to all the news items on the first page.

   1) Timeliness
   2) Conflict
   3) Prominence
   4) Importance
   5) Impact

2.4 OBJECTIVITY AND AUTHENTICITY OF NEWS

Journalism is a profession of news and news is a serious business. Newsmen, therefore, are required to present facts as they happen without tampering or adding any personal views or opinions. News means factual presentation of information without being judgmental. Objectivity is of prime importance in journalism. Objectivity in reporting and objectivity in news presentation is a virtue that every professional in this field should strive to achieve. One needs to remain cautious and well guarded against any kind of personal bias or opinions that might creep in while dealing with news.

The reporter has to remain more objective while reporting. Because when an incident occurs, it is the reporter who is sent first to the field to collect information. He not only gathers first hand information at the field, but also interviews people who have probably witnessed the incident and investigates by going deeper into the event in the pursuit of unearthing any hidden facts. Therefore, it is expected that the reporter does not temper with facts and figures and also remains cautious against biased opinions of the interviewees. He or she should not, at any cost, let his/her personal opinion to be reflected in the report.

There are specific columns in the newspaper such as the **editorial page** where comments or views of writers find place. If the reporter wants to give any personal judgment on any event he or she can very well write an opinionated piece for the editorial page. The reporter should not inter-mix news and views while making his report. If the reporter deviates, ethically, from his objectivity, the image of the newspaper gets diluted. Therefore, the reporter should strive to attain complete objectivity in reporting.

However, it may not always be possible for the reporter to remain absolutely unbiased or objective. As a human being, the reporter is vulnerable to various kinds of emotional as well as professional hazards, and can easily fall victim to subjectivity. And more often than not the reporter's personal opinion or bias is reflected in the newspaper. On some such occasions, the reporter's authenticity and even the reputation of the entire newspaper might be at stake. Nevertheless, the reporter should, as much as possible, try to achieve objectivity in his work.

Sometimes it may happen that when the reporter is investigating a particular happening and requires views of other people who may have been witness to that particular incident, the other person may try to pass his own judgment. In such cases the reporter should always check and cross check information, probably verify it from other sources so that the readers receive the truth and only the truth. Thus, objectivity is maintained at any cost.

Being objective also helps in being authentic. Facts are supposed to be authentic information. If the reporter, or for that matter any person in the news business, strives to achieve maximum objectivity, then this, in turn, also helps in being authentic as far as information is concerned. Facts are sacred in journalism. So the journalist should not try to dilute it by mixing it with personal opinions.

In today's era of profit driven media domain, there is an increasing tendency of the media organizations to try and influence the presentation of facts or news. The owners of the media houses always look at profit while dealing with news. They do not want to sacrifice their sources of profit generators by writing against them, even if they have proper proof of their involvement in any kind of mischievous activities. The media organizations

may also have a favored brigade of people in the society, whom they do not want to offend at any cost, crucifying the concept of objectivity. On the other hand, the news organizations may also attempt to nullify the image of the people who do dot come under their good book by writing maliciously against them. This kind of action on the part of the organizations sends a very bad message across to the people and in the long run there is every possibility of losing faith in the society.

Therefore, objectivity and authenticity are the virtues that every media organizations and also the professionals working in this field should try to achieve if they are looking for long time sustenance in the field.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.3 : What is Objectivity in news?

_____

_____

_____

Q.4 : How can the authenticity of a news item be ascertained? In a media house, whose responsibility it is to ensure that the news which are carried are authentic?

_____

_____

_____



2.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you have been introduced to the concept of news values. Let us quickly recapitulate them once.

- There are some basic qualities by which we can identify news. They include prominence, proximity, disaster, progress, impact, importance etc.
- News means factual presentation of information without being

judgmental. Objectivity is of prime importance in journalism. Objectivity in reporting and objectivity in news presentation is a virtue that every professional in this field should strive to achieve.

- The reporter should not inter-mix news and views while making his report. If the reporter deviates, ethically, from his objectivity, the image of the newspaper gets diluted.



2.6 FURTHER READING

1. **Journalists Handbook**, *M. V. Kamath, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi*
2. **Professional Journalism,** *M. V. Kamath*
3. **Handbook of Journalism and Mass Communication**, *V B Agarwal and V S Gupta, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi*



2.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS - A

Ans. to Q. No. 1 : News values are the qualities by the presence of which an event qualifies as news. They are the basic characteristics of any news item.

The news values are- Timeliness, importance, conflict, Relevance, proximity, prominence, impact or consequence, progress, disaster, human interest and novelty.

Ans. to Q. No. 2 :

i) Yes
ii) No
iii) Yes
iv) Yes
v) No
vi) Yes

vii) No

viii) Yes

ix) No

x) Yes

Ans. to Q. No. 3 : In news, objectivity is presentation of news as it has happened without the addition of any colour or personal opinion to it, so that the audience is left to form their opinion and an opinion is not imposed on the audience.

Ans. to Q. No. 4 : Authenticity of a news item can be ascertained in the following ways-

- Collecting first hand information instead of relying on rumors.
- Taking the information from reliable and credible source only.
- Checking and cross- checking the given information with other sources also.

In a media house, the entire news team is responsible for ensuring the authenticity of the news. It includes the reporter, the sub-editor, the editor and in case of radio and TV, the news producer and to a certain extent the news presenters also have to bear a part of the responsibility.



2.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Short Questions (Asnswer in around 150 words)

Q.1: Explain the concept of news value.

Q.2: What is the importance of objectivity and authenticity in news?

Q.3 : How can 'distance' be a news value ?

B. Long Questions (Answer in around 300-500 words)

Q.1 : Describe the various news values in details

Q.2 : Why is it important to ascertain objectivity in a news organisation / Give your opinion.

*****

UNIT - 3 : CONCEPT OF REPORTING

UNIT STRUCTURE

3.1 Learning Objectives

3.2 Introduction

3.3 Concept of Reporting

3.4 Exclusive news, Scoop

3.5 Let Us Sum Up

3.6 Further Reading

3.7 Answers To Check Your Progress

3.8 Model Questions

3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- define reporting
- discuss exclusive news, scoop, breaking news

3.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit you have learnt about news and the basic concepts related to news. In this unit you will learn about news gathering and its presentation, i.e., news reporting.

Reporting is not a very simple task. A reporter needs to be well versed in the concept and process of reporting and should possess certain qualities to be able to fulfill the task with ease and efficiency.

3.3 CONCEPT OF REPORTING

Reporting is the journalist's word for research, for the collection of data, for the gathering of facts. In every news organization, there are reporters whose task is to go to the field and collect information. When an incident occurs in a place, the reporter is sent to gather facts relating to that incident. He then comes back to the office and finally makes a report or news story by compiling the gathered information.

The reporter, while on field, collects information that he or she finds on the spot, interviews the people who probably have seen the event that happened and if the need be, goes deeper to find out more information so that an interesting news report can be produced. Therefore, in other words, reporting may also mean an act of research. The way a researcher does extensive study on any given topic and finally comes to a conclusion, the reporter, too, has to make an exhaustive study of the event before coming to a conclusion in the form of news. But what is important to remember is that this research has to be manifold. Until the facts are rigged out and all the points are established the reporter must carry out his or her investigation before arriving at a finality.

WHERE REPORTERS WORK

Reporters can be employed in a number of different organizations. The important amongst them are:

1. Newspapers: Newspapers employ reporters to gather news for their own use and deliver the news directly to the readers.
2. Wire Services/ News agencies/ News Bureaus: Wire services or news agencies like the Associated Press, Reuters, UNI, PTI etc. also employ reporters. These reporters gather news on behalf of the agency which distributes it to media houses that subscribe to its services.
3. Broadcasters: Broadcasters like TV and radio networks employ reporters for gathering news for distribution to network affiliates. Local radio and TV stations also employ their own news reporters for covering different news events.
4. Supplemental News services: Some newspapers have supplemental news services which apart from gathering news for their parent organization, also gather news for distribution to other newspapers. For example The New York Times News Service, Washington Post News Service etc. This concept is relatively new to India.
5. Magazines and periodicals: News magazines and periodicals also employ a large number of reporters.

6. Public Relation Firms and Corporate Communication wings of different agencies: This is another field which requires a huge news-gathering and news distribution network. Business, industry, Government, social service agencies, associations, special interest groups and educational institutions employ reporters for gathering news and writing stories about their own activities for distribution to newspapers.

3.4 EXCLUSIVE NEWS, SCOOP

Exclusive news:

Exclusive news is the news published in only one newspaper or broadcast by only one radio or television channel, which the other newspapers or other channels are yet to pick up. Exclusive news is the credibility of the newsmen as well as the media organizations. If a newspaper is able get a **scoop** or exclusive news, which other news organizations have failed to manage, then the credibility of the newspaper increases. It also enhances the credibility of the reporter in the organization itself, who has netted the scoop in the air before it could nestle in the hands of other reporters working for other media organizations.

Exclusive news is really an added feather in the hat of the reporter. In contemporary situation, when every media organization is vying for achieving niche in the market, the concept of exclusivity earns more prominence. Because, it is only through publishing or broadcasting more and more exclusive news that the news organizations can enhance their image. And in the process it ensures their place in the market. Otherwise, it becomes difficult for the news organizations to survive in the rat race, where there are too many competitors levering for success and making a name of its own.

Scoop :

A scoop is a news story, particularly a new or developing story with aspects of importance and excitement, and certainly an exclusive for the newspaper involved. Remember that all scoops are exclusive but all exclusives are not necessarily scoops. Exclusives are more concerned

about immediacy and the term is used for managing to get a special fact about some ongoing issue. Scoops on the other hand, can be out of nowhere, like sudden interesting discoveries.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q. 1. Define the terms:

a. Reporter

b. Reporting

c. Exclusive News



ACTIVITY

Meet a staff reporter of a local newspaper and find out (about his job profile) from him what does the job of a reporter involve?



3.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you have been introduced to the concept of news reporting. Let us go over to what we have learnt in this unit once again:

News is collected from the field by the newsmen, who are called **reporters** and the process is called **reporting**. Reporters are skilled people who move around the field and gather information.

Exclusive news is the news published in only one newspaper or broadcast by only one radio or television channel, which the other newspapers or other channels are yet to pick up.

A news story, particularly a new or developing story with aspects of importance and excitement, and certainly an exclusive for the newspaper involved is a scoop.



3.6 FURTHER READING

1. **Handbook of Journalism and Mass Communication** — *Vir Bala Agarwal and V.S. Gupta, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi.*
2. ***The Journalist's Handbook*** *– M. V. Kamath, Vikas Publishing Houses, New Delhi.*



3.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No. 1 :

a. A reporter is a person who gathers information from different fields and writes reports for publication in a newspaper, magazine, etc.
b. Reporting simply means to report. Reporting is the journalistic term for research in which the reporter has to deal with an event, investigate on it and find out the relevant information surrounding that particular event.
c. Exclusive news is the news published in only one newspaper or broadcast by only one radio or television channel, which the other newspapers or other channels in the race have failed to catch.



3.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Short Questions (Answer in around 150 words)

Q.1 : What is a scoop ?

Q.2. : Write a short note on reporting.

B. Long questions (answer in around 300-500 words)

Q.1: What do you mean by reporting? What is its significance for a media organization?

Q.2: What are the different places where reporters can be employed?

Q.3: Is it correct to use the terms reporter and correspondent interchangeably? Why?

*****

UNIT - 4 : BEING A GOOD REPORTER

UNIT STRUCTURE

4.1 Learning Objectives

4.2 Introduction

4.3 The News Reporter

4.3.1 Qualities

4.3.2 Responsibilities

4.4 Let Us Sum Up

4.5 Further Reading

4.6 Answers To Check Your Progress

4.7 Model Questions

4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- describe the qualities of a good reporter.
- describe the responsibilities of a good reporter.

4.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit you have learnt about news and the basic concepts related to reporting and reporter. In this unit you will learn about the qualities and responsibilities of a reporter.

As you already know, it is the reporter who reports. But reporting is not a very simple task. A reporter needs to be well versed in the concept and process of reporting and should possess certain qualities to be able to fulfill the task with ease and efficiency. It is also important for a good reporter to be aware of his responsibilities. So in this unit, you will be introduced to the concept of reporting and the qualities and responsibilities of a good reporter.

I hope that after going through this unit you will not only know what reporting is all about, but also be able to judge for yourself whether you have the qualities necessary to become a good reporter and be encouraged to inculcate those qualities in you.

4.3 THE NEWS REPORTER

Reporters are the first infantry men, who go to the field to gather information in order to compile news. They are the foot soldiers of the news world. They are the representatives of newspapers, news magazines, wire services, radio and television stations and the networks. They are the primary news source for the media organizations. They go out to the world and bring back the news of the day. They are the eyes and ears of the media organizations. They have to remain alert and keep their eyes and ears open to spot any development taking place in the society. Therefore, in addition to what we have discussed above, there are other qualities expected of reporters so that they can serve the organization they are working for better and also the society of which they are a part.

4.3.1 Qualities

News sense :

The first and foremost requirement of a reporter is news sense. He or she should be able to distinguish between news and non news. The quality of news sense should prevail all the time, both when he is on the field hunting for information and also when he is preparing the news while in office. He should be able to churn out public interests from publicity stunts. For instance on many occasions the business entities call for press conferences to ensure their visibility in the media and to promote their sale. But they often do so in the guise of indulging in a social cause so that their image is projected positively before the people while at the same time their sale is boosted. Therefore, ultimately it turns out to be a publicity stunt rather than a case of larger public interest and a clever reporter can easily find it out. He can distinguish a news from a non-news if he possesses the required news sense.

Clarity of expression :

Clarity of expression comes with clarity of mind. If the reporter is himself confused, there is every possibility that he may confuse

others. Therefore, the reporter should be clear about what he has in his hands in terms of facts. The golden rule is that 'whenever in doubt just leave it out'.

Having clarified the facts and figures collected from the field the reporter should be capable of bringing out a clear copy, without leaving any doubts in the minds of the readers. Adhering to a logical sequence is very important while dealing with copies. The reporter may have bundles of ideas woven in his mind, but giving a clear expression to those ideas are also equally important so that meanings may be perceived by the readers in the best comprehensible manner.



Beat :
A particular area of news assigned to a reporter, for example, the culture beat or the courtroom beat.

Objectivity :

We have already discussed the importance of being objective. Objectivity counts in the profession of journalism. It is the duty of the reporter to present the truth for the people. This holds true equally for the news organizations, whose responsibility lies in digging out the truth for the society. But if the reporter becomes biased and does malicious reporting by diluting it with personal views and partial comments then the entire mission of journalism as a profession becomes a failure.



Deadline :
The stipulated time during which the assigned work should be finished at all accounts by the professionals.

Accuracy :

Being accurate in terms of facts is of utmost importance in the profession of journalism. Tampering with facts is considered to be a moral crime in this profession. People have every right to know the truth and it is the duty of the reporter to bring it out for them, the way it exists. Therefore, the reporter should be careful while dealing with facts and figures. So truthfulness and moral integrity are necessary if one wants to become a journalist in the truest spirit of the term. Sometime, the reporter may unconsciously make silly errors while writing the copy although he may have collected correct information from the field. This could mislead the public. Therefore, he should be extremely cautious about what he is writing and double check for errors so that accurate information can be imparted to the people.

Alertness:

The reporter has to remain alert presumably in all situations. It helps to catch the scoop before it reaches the fin of another reporter. It also helps to keep abreast with all the happenings that are taking place in the jurisdiction of the **beat** one is working in.

Speed :

The journalists always have to work under tremendous pressure. On the one hand there is a pressure of meeting the **deadline** of submitting the copy and on the other hand there is the pressure of being completely objective, unbiased and accurate. The pressure also mounts when the reporter has to submit many stories within the deadline. Being lazy will definitely hamper his effective delivering of the assigned jobs. Therefore, the reporter should be able to work fast under any kind of situation.

Calmness :

This is also another quality that helps the reporter to serve better in any kind of situations. The reporter should be able withstand the mounting pressure of long and erratic work schedules and maintain his cool even amidst trying conditions. He or she should be able to handle any kind of professional hazards and maintain composure.

Curiosity :

Journalism is a profession where one deals with new happenings and developments all the time. Unless one has the lust for information he/she can not dig out good stories. A curious mind enables one to unearth facts on the basis of which he may produce authentic reports. Remember that news stories are not made in the air and they need an ever curious reporter to bring them before the readers. Only a curious mind can grasp good stories, supplement it with proper investigation and make interesting reports.

Punctuality :

Reaching on time or, in fact, before time is very important in this profession. When news breaks out, the reporter should be able to reach the spot instantly. This enables him to catch the event better,

without missing out on relevant facts. Punctuality also helps in building a faithful bondage with the sources. Sources are to be groomed with great care. If the reporter fails the sources by reaching late on a number of occasions, the chances are that the reporter will have to lose the trust vested upon him by his source and in the process also dilute his credibility. Reaching the office on time and submitting copies on time may help the reporter earn a good image among the fellow employees in the office as well.

Patience :

As mentioned earlier the reporter has to work at odd hours and under odd working environment and most of the time under loads of pressure. Therefore, keeping cool, and not losing patience would definitely help him to discharge his duties and responsibilities in the best professional manner.

Imagination :

A reporter is a real story teller and he should have the skill to narrate the story for the readers in the most interesting manner. For this he has to be extremely creative and imaginative. Imagination helps in proper creation. As a journalist you will have to design your story in a clever manner so that the reader's curiosity and attention remain intact till the last breath of the story.

Farsightedness :

A reporter with farsightedness can envisage the future. It helps the reporters to identify the processes and people that will be important in future. It is one quality that helps in determining the importance of an event and enables him to think ahead of time and prepare accordingly.

Self-discipline :

Imposing self discipline while at work helps the reporter in many ways. It enhances his rapport in the office, on the field and also among his sources.

Integrity :

It implies strong sense of honesty and strict adherence to a stern



Breaking News/ Flash News: Unexpected, unplanned occurrences, a train accident for instance. A story that has to be covered urgently, quickly and without any advance preparation.

code of ethics. Since the reporters are more exposed to unethical practices and temptations in the field as compared to other professionals, therefore, this quality helps the reporter to do away with all the immoral influences prevailing in the field.

Fearlessness and frankness :

The professions of journalism demands fearless and frank reporters, who are willing to go anywhere, face anybody and ask any kind of questions (even unpleasant ones) to get the information right and expose wrong do ers in front of the people with proper grit and frankness.

Tactfulness :

The reporters should be capable of handling any kind of situation skillfully and deal with all kinds of people. A reporter should have flexible and sociable personality and should have a nature that relishes a variety of experiences. He should have an understanding of human behavior and emotions. This will help him/her in developing contacts that are so essential for news gathering.

Mobility and outgoing nature:

The mobility should come with ease for a reporter as it is the job of a reporter to move around in search of news. The lust for news may require him/her to move along the gruesome terrains, climb the steepest mountains, journey past the deepest jungles, plunge into the ocean, walk along the hottest desert, or for that matter go to any corner above the ground. Therefore, the reporter should love to travel or love to move around. This will really help him to go anywhere to spot news, especially **breaking news or news flash**.

Diligence :

The reporters have to be diligent workers. Their jobs require painstaking exertion of effort, alertness and dedication. They should seek perfection, love their jobs and work hard to deliver spotless pieces of work.

Team spirit :

A newspaper is a product of contribution of many people. The same

goes for a television or radio **news bulletin.** Therefore, the reporter should have the zeal to work in a team. As a member of the team he/she should know in clear terms, the role and responsibilities vested upon him and deliver them in the best way possible. All his actions should be oriented towards strengthening the output of the team, in the process ensuring individual as well as collective growth of the entire organization.



News Bulletin :
A brief update or summary of current news, as on television or radio or in a newspaper.

Well read :

A reporter must have adequate knowledge about the surroundings and the society he lives in. Especially in contemporary scenario one has to be better read or well informed about the surroundings in order to tap the changing attitudes of the society and changing media situation. He/she should be aware of the past, present and also should be able to predict upcoming social trends.

Command over the language :

To be a good reporter one needs to have a good grasp over the language. In fact, this is the most essential requirement for everybody working in the field of journalism, not only the reporters. Because journalism is the profession in which control over the 'pen' counts the most, no matter whether you are working in print or electronic media and in whichever language media you are working. Needless to mention that since the reporters are all the time writing news stories, they should have commendable hold over language in order to create worthy copies.

4.3.2 Responsibilities

As a member of the press, certain responsibilities are vested on the shoulders of the reporter. And the reporters are expected to carry them out in the finest manner. Now, let us discuss about the responsibilities that lie on the reporters.

In all respect a reporter has three types of responsibilities.

1. Responsibilities towards the organization
2. Responsibilities towards the source and

3. Responsibilities towards the society

Responsibility towards the organization :

Like any other organizations media houses are also bound by policies, rules and regulations. All the members of the organization, including the reporters, are supposed to follow the organizational dictum. As an employee of the organization the reporter has the mammoth responsibility to reflect the organizational behavior through his dedication towards work and loyalty towards the organization.

Responsibility towards the sources :

A reporter's responsibility towards his source lies in keeping them in good faith, maintaining a cordial relationship and shouldering their responsibilities when asked for. It may not always be an easy task, since the reporter has to maintain a huge network of sources. However, the reporter has to do his best to keep their trust. Once the source loses faith on the reporter, he/she will never come again to help in future. Therefore, utmost care is to be taken while dealing with sources.

Responsibility towards the society :

In this field of journalism one works for the larger interest of the society. And as a member of the media, a reporter should pay utmost importance to serve the society better in the true sense of the term. It is his duty to maintain the trust and credibility imposed upon him by the readers. Therefore, as a reporter, one should always attempt to reflect his sense of responsibility towards his readers and the society through his credible and authentic work. As a reporter your responsibility towards the society lies in being accurate, unbiased and factual. Apart from that, the reporter should also try to create awareness by coming up with good stories on development issues.



LET US KNOW

There are different types of reporters:

1. Beat Reporter : assigned to cover a particular beat

or place such as police station, court, hospital, secretariat, stock market etc.

2. General Assignment Reporter – waits in the newspaper office for news breaks like speeches, interviews with visiting celebrities, a development relayed by a beat reporter etc. and reports as and when assigned.
3. Special Assignment reporters : given a specific assignment to conduct an investigation or develop a series of articles.
4. Rewrite Reporter : duties include taking notes from another reporter over phone and writing the story or rewriting another reporter's poorly written story etc.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: Enlist the qualities required for becoming a good reporter?

_____

_____

_____

Q.2: What do you mean by news sense?

_____

_____

_____

Q.3: What are the three basic responsibilities of a reporter?

_____

_____

_____



ACTIVITY

1. Read through the list of qualities of a good reporter. As you read, stop after each point to analyze which qualities you have in yourself and which you will have to cultivate. Make a note of your analysis.



4.4 LET US SUM UP

Let us go over to what we have learnt in this unit once again:

News is collected from the field by the newsmen, who are called **reporters** and the process is called **reporting**. Reporters are skilled people who move around the field and gather information.

There are certain qualities required to become a reporter. News sense, objectivity, discipline, swiftness, command over the language, patience, diligence, punctuality, integrity, mobility, tactfulness, creativity, etc. are a few of the qualities that the reporter should posses.

Another important thing a reporter should have is a sense of responsibility towards the organization he/she is working for, towards the society he/she belongs to or serving for and towards the sources he/she builds in due course of time, who share valuable information with him/her.



4.5 FURTHER READING

1. **Essentials of Practical Journalism** — *Vir Bala Agarwal, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi.*
2. **Handbook of Journalism and Mass Communication** — *Vir Bala Agarwal and V.S. Gupta, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi.*
3. ***The Journalist's Handbook*** *– M. V. Kamath, Vikas Publishing Houses, New Delhi.*



4.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS - A

Ans. to Q. No. 1: The qualities required for becoming a good news reporter are — News sense, objectivity, discipline, swiftness, command over the language, patience, diligence, punctuality, integrity, mobility, tactfulness, creativity, etc.

Ans. to. Q. No. 2: News Sense is the basic quality of a reporter by virtue of which a journalist can identify an event having news value and differentiate between news items and non-news items.

Ans. to. Q. No. 3: The three basic responsibilities of a reporter are towards his

a. Organisation b. Society c. Sources.



4.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q.A. : Short questions (answer in around 150 words)

Q.1 : What are the responsibilities of a reporter towards its sources ?

Q.2. : Why is it important for a reporter to be puntual and curious ?

Q.3 : Is it necessary for a reporter to have command ones language ? Why ?

B. Long questions (answer in around 300-500 words)

Q.1: 'The news reporter has to inculcate a number of qualities in order to qualify as a good reporter.' Justify.

Q.2: What are the qualities of a good news reporter? Discuss in detail

Q.3: The job of a news reporter brings along with it a host of responsibilities. Explain.

Q.4: What is the difference between the terms reporter, correspondent and stringer?

*****

UNIT 5: SOURCES OF NEWS

UNIT STRUCTURE

5.1 Learning Objectives

5.2 Introduction

5.3 Concept of source of News

5.3.1 Source for a reporter

5.4 How reporters gather information

5.4.1 Various Sources

5.5 Let Us Sum Up

5.6 Further Reading

5.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

5.8 Model Questions

5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- define the source of news
- analyze the source for a news organization
- discuss the source for a reporter

5.2 INTRODUCTION

You must have heard of the great battle of Kurukshetra. Dhritarashtra was offered Divya drishti by Shri Krishna, which was declined by the king. He wanted to hear reports of the war from Sanjay. Sanjay hence, started narrating the war scene to Dhritarashtra, thus, becoming the first war correspondent. His reporting was correct, descriptive, factual, impersonal and narrative.

We get lots of stories from out of near about 500 media organizations throughout the world 24X7. Have you ever thought about how the reporters get information about the stories that appear in television news, in newspapers, in radio bulletins or on the internet? We call a news report a news story. Unlike fiction, these are factual stories - events that have

happened or things that are going to happen. Like a good story-teller, the reporter has to narrate the story before the reader or listener or viewer.

In this unit we would like to give you the concept of source of news including the relationship among the source, the reporter and the news organization.

5.3 CONCEPT OF SOURCE OF NEWS

According to the Encyclopedia on Journalism Sourcing, a source is a person, publication, or other record or document that provides information. Outside journalism, sources are from time to time known as “news sources”. Official records, publications or broadcasts, officials in government or business, organizations or corporations, witnesses of crime, accidents or other events, and people involved with or affected by a news event or issue are few examples of sources of News.

According to Shoemaker (1996) and McQuail (1994), there are a multitude of factors that tend to condition the acceptance of sources as bona fide by investigative journalists. Reporters are expected to develop and cultivate sources, especially if they regularly cover a specific topic, known as a “beat”. Beat reporters must, however, be cautious of becoming too close to their sources. Reporters often, but not always, give greater scope to sources with little experience. For example, sometimes a person will say they don’t want to talk, and then proceed to talk; if that person is not a public figure, reporters are less likely to use that information. Journalists are also encouraged to be cynical without being. As a rule of thumb, but especially when reporting on controversy, reporters are expected to use multiple sources.

5.3.1 Source for a Reporter

Reporting or Journalism is one kind of writing that tells people about what already happened, but they might not have known stories. Journalists may work at newspapers, magazines, and websites or for TV or radio stations.

Journalism comes in several different forms like news, opinion etc. News can be categorized into different forms as Breaking news, Feature stories, Enterprise or Investigative stories, etc. Likewise, opinion can be categorized into Editorials, Columns, and Reviews. On the contrary online journalism can be formed into Blogs, Discussion boards, Wikis.

But journalism should follow the 7 C's of communication rule. These are as follows:

1. **Completeness -** The complete information should be in journalism writing. It should convey all facts required by the audience. It persuades the audience.
2. **Conciseness -** Conciseness means wordiness, i.e., communicating what the journalist wants to convey in least possible words without forgoing the other C's of communication.
3. **Consideration -** Consideration implies "stepping into the shoes of others". Information for the dissemination must take the audience into consideration, i.e., the audience's view points, background, mind-set, education level, etc. It should be an attempt to envisage audience, their requirements, emotions as well as problems, ensuring that the self-respect of the audience is maintained and their emotions are not at all harmed.
4. **Clarity -** Clarity implies emphasizing on a specific message or goal at a time, rather than trying to achieve too much at once.
5. **Concreteness -** Concrete communication implies being particular and clear rather than fuzzy and general. Concreteness strengthens the confidence.
6. **Courtesy -** Courtesy in message implies the message should show the journalist's expression as well as should respect the target audience. He should be sincerely polite, judicious, reflective and enthusiastic.
7. **Correctness -** Correctness in communication implies that there are no grammatical errors in communication.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: Define source.

Q.2: What do you mean by 7 c's of communication?

5.4 WAYS TO GATHER INFORMATION

Now the main question is how the journalists get their news stories. There are three main ways to gather information for a news story or opinion piece:

- **Interviews:** Talking with people who know something about the story you are reporting. Whenever the journalist will be interviewing someone, observing the happenings or reading about something, he should write down the answers to the "Five Ws" about that source: *Who* are they? *What* were they doing? *Where* were they doing it? *When* they do it? *Why* did they do it?
- **Observation:** Watching and listening where the news is taking place.
- **Documents:** Reading stories, reports, public records and other printed material. The people or documents journalists use when reporting a story are called "sources." In the story, reporter always tells the readers what sources they have used.

Here we would like to categorize the source. The information from field can be called **Primary source**, acquired through interview or observation as we mentioned above. Primary sources are often difficult to use appropriately. While they can be both reliable and useful in certain situations, they must be used with caution in order to avoid original research. Materials based purely on primary sources should be avoided. All interpretive claims, analyses, or synthetic claims about primary sources must be referenced to a secondary source, rather than original analysis of the primary-source material.

Whereas the **Secondary source** is a document or recording that relates or discusses information originally presented elsewhere. A secondary source contrasts with a primary source, which is an original source of the

information being discussed; a primary source can be a person with direct knowledge of a situation, or a document created by such a person. Secondary sources involve generalization, analysis, synthesis, interpretation, or evaluation of the original information.

Primary and *secondary* are relative terms, and some sources may be classified as primary or secondary, depending on how it is used. An even higher level, the tertiary source, such as an encyclopedia or dictionary, resembles a secondary source in that it contains analysis, but attempts to provide a broad introductory overview of a topic.

Tertiary sources such as compendia, encyclopedias, textbooks, obituaries, and other summarizing sources may be used to give overviews or summaries, but should not be used in place of secondary sources for detailed discussion. Although Wikipedia articles are tertiary sources, Wikipedia employs no systematic mechanism for fact checking or accuracy.

According to the Encyclopedia of Journalism Sourcing, off-the-record material is often valuable and reporters may be eager to use it, so sources wishing to ensure the confidentiality of certain information are generally recommended to confer the “terms of use” before really revealing the information, if possible. Some journalists and news organizations have policies against accepting information “off the record” because they consider it hinders with their ability to report honestly, or because they believe it may be meant to mislead them or the public.

Even if they cannot report certain information directly, journalists can use “off the record” information to uncover related facts, or to find other sources that are willing to talk on the record. This is particularly helpful in investigative reporting. Information about a surprise event or breaking news, whether on or off the record, is known as a “tip-off”. Information that leads to the uncovering of more interesting information is called a “lead”.

5.4.1. Various Sources

The source of sources sometimes is not disclosed for several reasons to protect confidentiality:

- In some cases serious harm might happen to the source if their identity is exposed.
- The eagerness of other possible sources to share information with reporters may be damaged if confidential sources are identified.
- The public perception of journalistic truthfulness and integrity is spoiled when assurances about privacy are breached.
- The so-called “chilling effect,” which serves to discourage sources in the future from stepping forward with unknown information for fear of warning or reprisal.

Reporters collect the information from various sources for their news item. The following are the main sources:

a) **Listening:** A reporter can get good information by listening to others. While traveling in a bus, the reporter overhears the conversation between two passengers. He can get a clue to a story.

b) **Covering events:** Reporters cover the events like Cricket match, International Film Festivals, Seminars, etc. for their publications, channels or new bulletins. The coverage depends upon the importance and magnitude of the event. A small panchayat level meeting will be covered locally, whereas a state level function will get wider coverage. If it is a national event, it will receive nationwide attention.

c) **Press Conferences:** Another major source of news is the press conference. Leaders of political parties hold press conferences regularly. Ministers also hold press conferences to announce various programmes and policies of the government. Business houses arrange press conferences to launch their new products. Organizations and Associations also held press briefings.

d) **Reports and Statements:** These are other major sources of news items. Various commissions and committees submit their reports to the Government which are a goldmine as far as news reporters are concerned. Statements or press releases by leaders and businessmen also make news.

e) **Parliament and Assemblies:** Parliament and state assemblies when in session generate lot of news. Questions in both the houses of parliament, proceedings, calling attentions, zero-hour mentions, debates and various acts passed by the parliament also make news. The general budget and railway budget are presented in parliament. State budgets are presented in state assemblies.

f) **Police sources:** The police are in charge of law and order. So the police always maintain a close vigil about various activities of citizens. Reporters get details about crime, accidents etc. from police sources.

g) **Interviews:** Interviewing people connected with an event or incident is a very common practice used by reporters to get details. Television reporters take the opinion of people which are called reactions. Occasionally, reporters of newspapers and channels conduct long interviews with important people. Whether in a formal, sit-down interview setting or an impromptu meeting on the street, some sources request that all or part of the encounter not to be captured in an audio or video recording ("tape"), but continue speaking to the reporter. As long as the interview is not confidential, the reporter may report the information given by the source, even repeating direct quotes. It is called 'NOT ON TAPE'.

h) **Anonymous source:** The use of anonymous sources has been a controversial subject for many years. Some news outlets insist that anonymous sources are the only way to obtain certain information, while others hold strict prohibitions against the use of unnamed sources at all times. News organizations may impose safeguards, such as requiring that information from an anonymous source be corroborated by a second source before it can be printed. In journalism, ascription is the recognition of the source of reported information. Journalists' ethical codes normally aim the issue of acknowledgment, which is

sensitive because in the course of their work journalists may receive information from sources who wish to remain anonymous. In investigative journalism important news stories often depend on such information. For example, the Watergate scandal that led to the downfall of US president Richard Nixon was in part exposed by information revealed by an anonymous to investigative reporters.

i) **Online sources:** The reporter can use various online/web information as his source. He uses emails, facebook, orkut, twitter, search engines and many more. There are a few reasons to use online sources. These are as follows-

1. These are valuable first person accounts.
2. They are instant, and in real time. The journalist does not have to wait.
3. They offer a varied range of impressions.
4. The information are from across the world. A journalist can get an idea of what is happening elsewhere. It will add to his knowledge and give him better comprehension of an event.
5. There is no cost involved. A journalist does not have to make phone calls, or make personal visits. The story is there in front of him flowing endlessly on the screen.
6. The journalist needs no permission. The online information is in the public domain, and the journalist can reproduce the conversation.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.3: How online source is useful for the journalist?

Q.4: What are the various sources? Briefly discuss any one of them.



ACTIVITY 5.1

1) Try to take an interview of a Journalist on 'Source'. Prepare a report on it.



5.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you learnt about the sources of information/news for the reporters, how they gather information and their ways of reporting. Here is a quick recap to what we studied in the unit:

- Reporting or Journalism is one kind of writing that tells people about what already happened, but they might not have known stories.
- Journalists may work at newspapers, magazines, websites or for TV or radio stations.
- According to the Encyclopedia on Journalism Sourcing, a source is a person, publication, or other record or document that provides information.
- Outside journalism, sources are from time to time known as "news sources". Official records, publications or broadcasts, officials in government or business organizations or corporations, witnesses of crime, accidents or other events, and people involved with or affected by a news event or issue are few examples of sources of news.



5.6 FURTHER READING

1. **Professional Journalism**, *MV Kamath*
2. **Hand Book of Journalism & Mass Communication**, *Virbala Agarwala*

5.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to . Q. No. 1: According to the Encyclopedia on Journalism Sourcing, a source is a person, publication, or other record or document that provides information. Outside journalism, sources are from time to time known as “news sources”. Official records, publications or broadcasts, officials in government or business, organizations or corporations, witnesses of crime, accidents or other events, and people involved with or affected by a news event or issue are few examples of sources of News.

Ans. to . Q. No. 2: In journalism, 7 C’s are the rules to be followed by a journalist. They imply – completeness, conciseness, consideration, clarity, concreteness, courtesy and correctness.

Ans. to . Q. No. 3: The online sources are important for a journalist because these are valuable first person accounts, they are instant, and in real time. The journalist does not have to wait. They offer a varied range of impressions. The information are from across the world. A journalist can get an idea of what is happening elsewhere. It will add to his knowledge and give him better comprehension of an event. There is no cost involved. A journalist does not have to make phone calls, or make personal visits. The story is there in front of him flowing endlessly on the screen. The journalist needs no permission. The online information is in the public domain, and the journalist can reproduce the conversation.

Ans. to . Q. No. 4: Various sources are listening, events, press conferences, reports and statements, Parliament and assemblies, police sources, interviews, anonymous sources and online sources.

Press Conferences: A major source of news is the press conference. Leaders of political parties hold press conferences regularly. Ministers also hold press conferences to announce various programmes and policies of the government. Business houses arrange press

conferences to launch their new products. Organizations and Associations also held press briefings.



5.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Short Questions (answer in arund 150 words)

Q.1 : What are the 7C's of communication ?

Q.2 : What is the meaning of primary source and secondary source of information ? Give examples.

Q.3 : Write a note on the online sources of news.

Q.1: Do you think the source should be mentioned every time in the news articles?

Q.2: For getting information on an accident, discuss what would be the source of news for you.

Q.3: How can primary source and secondary source be used in your feature article?

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UNIT - 6 : TYPES OF REPORTING

UNIT STRUCTURE

6.1 Learning Objectives

6.2 Introduction

6.3 Types of Reporting

- 6.3.1 Objective
- 6.3.2 Interpretative
- 6.3.3 Investigative

6.4 Let Us Sum Up

6.5 Further Reading

6.6 Answers To Check Your Progress

6.7 Model Questions

6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- explain the different types of reporting.

6.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous units, you have been introduced to the concept of reporting and the qualities, duties and responsibilities of a reporter. In this unit we shall go a little deeper into another dimension of reporting, i.e., its types.

Whether it is a newspaper or news agency, no media house can do away with reporters. And it is one activity where, even in this highly mechanized age of news production, human beings cannot be replaced by machines. Therefore, it is very important for aspiring journalists like you to understand this field very well. Reporting is basically of three types – **objective, interpretative and investigative**. You will be familiarized with all of these concepts in this unit.

This unit will be your first step towards practical journalism and will help you understand the reporting field in detail. So, let us start with the different types of reporting.

6.3 TYPES OF REPORTING

6.3.1 Objective Reporting

Objective reporting refers to the plain presentation of facts as they have happened. Objective reporting does not involve contextualizing, backgrounding, analyzing or opinionating. Here the reporter only reports what he has seen or observed without any kind of subjective inputs.

The following points can well summarize the concept of objective reporting:

- Balance and even handedness in presenting different sides of an issue
- Accuracy and realism in reporting
- Presenting all main relevant points
- Separating facts from opinions, but treating opinion as relevant
- Minimizing the influence of the writer's own opinions, attitudes or involvement.
- Avoiding slant, malicious or devious purposes.

Here is an example of a typical objective report: This report was published in *The Assam Tribune*, April 8, 2008.

AAU scientists probing mushroom deaths

By a City Reporter

GUWAHATI, April 7 : The team of scientists from the Assam Agricultural University probing into the poisonous mushroom case in Golaghat and other districts found that the mushroom consumed by the affected people was of a very poisonous variety named Amanita Phalloides Vaill.

The State Minister for Agriculture, Pramila Rani Brahma instructed the Vice Chancellor of the Assam Agriculture University SS Baghel a few days back to conduct an enquiry into the Golaghat incident, where seven people died eating poisonous mushroom obtained from the Jungles of Bahupathar.

While questioning the people of the village and examining the quality of mushroom consumed by them, the team of experts comprising scientists and officials of the State Agriculture Department and the Health Department found that this poisonous variety, flourished after the season's first showers, was the cause of the deaths.

6.3.2 Interpretative Reporting

Interpretative reporting combines facts with interpretation. Many a time the reporter has to interpret certain events for better understanding of the readers. It means providing background information relating to a particular incident or happening. Apart from the facts gathered from the field, the reporter, sometimes, needs to make the news more illuminating by providing background information so that the readers can perceive it better and understand the meaning of it. As such, the reporter delves into reasons and meanings of a certain development and gives information along with an interpretation of its significance.

The entire event may not unfold in a day. It is a continuous process and often one event leads to another. In order to understand the occurrence of an event we need to understand the previous, or the course of events that led to the latest one. And it is the reporter, who interprets the event by telling the readers about the past history or the course of action that led to the happening of the event. This adds more insights into events and the reporter has to keep a track of all the events of the past, present and also at times should be able to forecast the future. Thus, interpretative reporting brings out the hidden significance of an event and separates truth from falsehood.

Let us go through an example to clarify this point. This report was published in the news portal ibnlive.com on June 27, 2008.

Cong-SP look for mutual benefits, set for alliance

Sumit Pande/ CNN-IBN

New Delhi: In what is rapidly developing as one of the biggest political

crisis for the Congress-led UPA Government, there has been no breakthrough in the negotiations over the Indo-US Nuclear deal.

The Left parties have rejected last ditch attempts by the UPA to allow the deal to go through and a break up seems inevitable.

Preparing for it's separation plan with the Left, the Congress-led UPA Government is now on the lookout for new allies. And there are enough indications that the Congress' former adversary, Mulayam Singh Yadav is slowly drifting towards the UPA.

He is a product of the famous JP Movement against the imposition of Emergency. Thirty years after the Emergency, Samajwadi Party President Mulayam Singh Yadav was seen sharing a platform with others who had struggled against Emergency. He shared his experiences with the crowd, but conspicuously missing in his speech were the names of then prime minister, Indira Gandhi and the Congress party.

Unlike the other United National Progressive Alliance (UNPA) partners - like the Telegu Desam Party and the Asom Gana Parishad - the Samajwadi Party has not committed itself to the nuclear deal. Mulayam Singh is keeping his cards close to his chest and thereby keeping the Government on tenterhooks.

"The final draft is not yet ready. Let the Congress complete the draft. The UNPA will meet on July 3 to take a final decision on whether the we will be supporting the nuclear deal or not. Whatever decision will be taken, it will be taken keeping UNPA in mind not just Samajwadi Party," Mulayam Singh said.

Cornered by Mayawati in Uttar Pradesh, Mulayam Singh needs allies to take on the BSP in UP in the next general elections and for him, Congress, with Ajit Singh's RLD, could form a formidable combination againt Mayawati.

In return, the Congress could get support from the 39 SP Lok Sabha MPs to save the Government and the nuclear deal. The Samajwadi Party's 39 MPs could bail the Government out in Parliament in case the Left withdraws support.

UPA leader, Ram Vilas Paswan says that they would like to keep the Samajwadi as an option because in his words: "We don't want to lose wickets, but at the same time we want to score runs."

Meanwhile, Samajwadi Party General Secretary, Amar Singh, is returning from his trip to the US on Sunday. Next week, after the UNPA meet, Mulayam Singh is likely to announce his decision on the issue, perhaps, just before the Prime Minister's departure for the proposed G8 summit.

6.3.3 Investigative Reporting

When a news reporter has to dig deeply beyond what is stated in the hard news in order to find out the exact facts of an event, or, in short, investigates beyond what meets the naked eye, then it is called investigative reporting. Investigative reporting means investigating on any happening. Investigative journalism is in-depth and involves long-term research and reporting. It reveals information not known to the public and which others want to keep secret. Mostly investigation is done in case of major happening or when larger public concern is involved or in matters that involve public figures or celebrities. In any kind of reporting, the reporter does some sort of investigation to dig out information which otherwise is not available. Without preliminary investigation the reporter cannot make a sound copy or report. However, in case of some stories, especially relating to certain scams or misappropriation of public money, the reporter has to investigate properly to get the relevant information in order to come out with a good copy. Also, in such cases, information is difficult to come by and the reporter has to invest both time and energy to dig out facts.

Renowned American journalist Robert Parry says, "Investigative reporting is to journalism what theoretical research is to science, having the potential to present new realities and shatter old paradigms – how people see and understand the world around them – which, in turn, can transform politics."



Sting Operation: Originally a legal term meaning a deceptive operation designed to catch a person committing a crime. A typical sting will have a law-enforcement officer or cooperative member of the public to play a role as criminal partner or potential victim and go along with a suspect's actions to gather evidence of the suspect's wrongdoing. Now a days it is a device commonly used by journalists to gather evidence to support investigative stories.

True enough, the significance of investigative journalism in today's world is great. The unearthing of a dramatic set of new facts can overcome long-maintained lies, can expose deceptive leaders and shake a corrupt government to its foundation. Done right, investigative journalism is a huge threat to powerful elites trying to manipulate a population. Modern journalism, despite its many anomalies, is considered the most effective monitor and upholder of democratic values. And investigative reporting is certainly the most powerful instrument to fulfill this obligation. Investigative reporting believes in the watchdog role of the media and focuses on the accountability of institutions and individuals wielding power.

The seeds of investigative journalism in India were sown by Arun Shourie, after he was appointed as the executive editor of *The Indian Express* in 1979. He was well known to have introduced a new style of aggressive, independent investigative journalism in our country. In a series of remarkable exposes, Shourie and the Indian Express uncovered corruption in the highest echelons of the government and exposed several major scandals.

This kind of reporting is now-a-days seen more frequently in the audio-visual medium than in the print medium, particularly in the form of **sting operations** carried out by under cover reporters.

One, however, has to exercise great caution while engaging in investigative journalism. One of the most important requirements of this type of journalism is that the effort has to be determined, patient, careful and fair. It is also important for investigative reporters to maintain a high level of ethical conduct. Or else investigative journalism can do more harm than good. They should seek the truth and report it as fully as possible. Investigation should be done with the intent to catalyse reforms and never with malicious intent. If it is done only to create sensation or get hold of a scoop or simply to defame anyone, then it can greatly endanger journalistic credibility.

As well-known free lance journalist and media educationist Arun Sadhu puts it, "For investigative reporting to flourish, what is

required is: an independent and pluralistic media which is fearless, committed to democracy, universal human values; journalists with commitment who can identify problems and have the grit, perseverance, patience and skills to do research, and owners and editors professionally non-partisan and without vested interests."

It also involves a great deal of risk as one may have to face dangerous situations, and go to dangerous places in order to get to the heart of the story – terrorist camps, brothels, war scenes, jungles and at times even engage in illegal activities and suffer the consequences.

All of you must be aware about American journalist Daniel Pearl who was kidnapped and later murderer by terrorists when he was in Pakistan investigating the case of **Richard Reid**, the shoe bomber, and alleged links between Al Qaeda and Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) in January 2002. He was on his way to interview a radical Islamic leader Mubarak Ali Shah Gilani when he was kidnapped.

The reporter may have to take recourse to deception, hidden camera and **entrapment** also to uncover facts. Here, mention may be made of the portal tehelka dot com which ushered in a new era of investigative journalism in India by the use of sting operations for the first time in 2000. It broke new grounds when by meticulous probing, the portal uncovered the corruption in cricket and India's defence establishment. The use of secret cameras to record illegal deals and the exposure brought down the reputation of even those who played as captain for the country. Though it brought down the celebrities from their pedestals and, in the process, dismayed millions of cricket lovers, it showed the extent of rot in the sport.

When Tehelka exposed the level of corruption in the defence establishment, talking to politicians, army officers and some fixers of arms deals, it shocked the public. The visuals of party leaders, and senior army officers eager to take bribes from a fictitious company, whose antecedents were not even verified created a storm



Richard Reid:
Al-Qaeda member convicted on charges of terrorism and currently serving a life sentence in the United States for attempting to destroy a commercial aircraft in-flight by detonating plastic explosives contained in his shoes.



Entrapment:
the illegal act of tricking someone into committing a crime so that they can be arrested for it

in Parliament. An inquiry commission was set up to probe the charges levelled by the portal, which was asked to submit all the evidence it had to the retired judge heading the commission.

Another such instance is the 'Operation Duryodhan', a sting operation lasting nine months carried out by the news channel AAJ-TAK and investigative portal Cobrapost in 2005. It captured on camera eleven members of Parliament of India accepting money to table questions on the floor of the Parliament. This was the first such sting operation in the history of Republic of India, and all the members were expelled from the parliament. Ten of them belonged to 14th Lok Sabha while one was from Rajya Sabha.

Another important sting operation which deserves mention is Aaj Tak's expose of bribe-taking by several personnel of Tihar Jail in 2005. The Aaj Tak expose revealed how in violation of the Jail Manual, unauthorised persons could easily gain admission into the high-security prison; information could be obtained about the inmates and money and other goods could be passed on to them. It just showed "how easy it was for inmates to obtain various favours and what makes the stay in Tihar Jail one of the most comfortable prison experiences anywhere in the world".

Consequent to the expose, two Deputy Superintendents, four Assistant Superintendents, three Head Warders and four Warders of Tihar Jail were suspended and the entire jail went through a massive security overhaul.



CHECK YOUR PRGRESS

Q.1: What are the three different types of reporting?

_____

_____

_____

Q.2: Define the following:

a. Objective Reporting

b. Interpretative Reporting

c. Investigative Reporting



ACTIVITY 6.1

1. Read today's newspaper and identify the objective reports on the front page. Note down the topic of each of them.
2. Similarly identify all the interpretative reports published in the newspaper and note down the topics. Now try to rewrite each of them as objective news reports stating only bare facts.
3. Go over the newspaper for an entire week and find out the investigative reports. How many did you find?



6.4 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have learnt about the different types of reporting. Here is a quick recap:

- There are three types of reporting – objective, investigative and interpretative reporting.
- When a reporter reports an event in an objective way, i.e., representing only the truth as he has seen it without adding any personal colour to it, it is called Objective reporting.
- When the reporter has to interpret the news for better understanding of the readers by providing more facts, especially background information, it is called interpretative reporting.
- When a news reporter has to dig deeply beyond what is stated in the hard news in order to find out the exact facts of an event, or, in short, investigate beyond what meets the naked eye, then it is called investigative reporting.



6.5 FURTHER READING

1. **Essentials of practical journalism** — *Vir Bala Agarwal, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi*
2. **Fundamentals of Journalism –** *K.B. Dutta, Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi*



6.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No. 1: The three different types of reporting are – objective reporting, interpretative reporting and investigative reporting.

Ans. to Q. No. 2: a. Objective Reporting: When a reporter reports an event in an objective way, i.e., representing only the truth as he has seen it without adding any personal colour to it, it is called Objective reporting.

b. Interpretative Reporting: When the reporter has to interpret the news for better understanding of the readers by providing more facts, especially background information, it is called interpretative reporting.

c. Investigative Reporting: When a news reporter has to dig deeply beyond what is stated in the hard news in order to find out the exact facts of an event, or in short investigate beyond what meets the naked eye, then it is called investigative reporting.



6.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Short Questions (answer in around 150 words)

Q.1. : What are the risks involved with investigative journalism ?

Q.2. : What is objective reporting ?

Q.3. Write a note on interpretative reporting ?

Q.1: What are the different types of reporting? Explain giving examples.

Q.2: Discuss the significance of objective reporting.

Q.3: 'No news can be completely objective'. Comment.

Q.4: 'Investigative journalism is the most challenging form of journalism'. Do you agree with this statement? Give reasons in support of your answer.

Q.5: When does the need for interpretative journalism arise? Explain giving examples.

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UNIT - 7 : BEAT REPORTING

UNIT STRUCTURE

7.1 Learning Objectives
7.2 Introduction
7.3 Beat Reporting
7.4 Some Important Beats
7.5 Let Us Sum Up
7.6 Further Reading
7.7 Answers To Check Your Progress
7.8 Model Questions

7.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- define Beat reporting
- name the important beats

7.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you have been introduced to the different types of reporting. In this unit we will learn about beat reporting and some of its important types.

Reporting is basically of three types – **objective, interpretative and investigative**. Apart from them there is another concept called **beat reporting**. You will be familiarized with this concept and forms in this unit.

7.3 BEAT REPORTING

One very common word you might hear in the news room is ‘beat’. As a reporter many people will ask you which ‘beat’ you cover. Reporters always have to work in beats. Beats are the specialized areas of operation for the reporters assigned by the organization in which the reporter works. Since it is not humanly and physically possible for a single reporter to cover multiple areas, each reporter may be assigned a single or couple of beats.

And the reporter is expected to cover all the developments or happenings taking place under the jurisdiction of his beat. The reporter can not afford to miss any significant or insignificant event falling under his assigned beat/ beats. If the reporter working in a particular organization by chance fails to spot a significant event falling under his/her purview, which the other reporters working for other news organizations have managed to cover, it amounts to the loss of credibility, not only for the reporter, but also for the newspaper or news channel as a whole.

The classification into beats is compulsory for every news organization. In every newspaper there is a variety of news items that are published in a day. One may find news related to economics, health and hygiene, education, environment, art-culture-literature, trade and commerce, women and child, sports, science and technology, crime, social issues etc.

Moreover, newspapers also have specialized columns and supplements on special issues and subjects. For all these the services of the reporters are essential to fill up both the regular and special columns. Reporters are placed at the city or place from where the publication is carried out or correspondents are located at various places in order to report events taking place at centers other than the one where the newspaper is published.

Moreover, in many other large organizations further classifications are made, depending upon the requirements like local, regional, national and international news. The reporters are supposed to operate in selected areas assigned by the senior person, usually by the chief of bureau or any senior person like the editor or news editor. A single reporter may be given to handle more than one beat and on many occasions an important beat may be shared by many. This varies from organization to organization. Therefore the task of the reporter is enormous and very crucial for the organization.



LET US KNOW

Here are some important tips for a beat reporter:

1. Learn how things work in your own beat.

2. Cultivate sources. Never betray their confidence.
3. Keep abreast of all recent developments in your beat.
4. Be persistent. Push your sources for more information.
5. Anticipate developments.



CHECK YOUR PRGRESS

Q.1: What is a beat?

_____

_____

_____

Q.2: What is the reason behind assigning different beats to different reporters?

_____

_____

_____



ACTIVITY 7.1

1. Visit a local newspaper office and meet a senior journalist. Find out from him what kind of beat division is followed by his newspaper. Also find out the criteria based on which the beats are assigned to the individual reporters.

7.5 SOME IMPORTANT BEATS

Crime/ Police :

Crime is a usual phenomenon that takes place in every society. And the newspapers or the news channels are supposed to report about any kind of crime taking place in the society.

When working under this beat the reporter should keep good contacts with police stations, police officers and also with the crime branches of the different investigating agencies, both Government and non-governmental

organizations, operating in the society. The crime reporter should also have good contacts in the state and district level courts where the legal course of action takes place against the different types of crimes.

Legal/ Court :

The court beat is a major beat for any newspaper as it is the source of a great number of stories. The court beat is allied to the crime/police beat since criminal cases are tried in the courts. But court reporting is not about crime alone. Many civil or non-criminal cases are also tried in the courts. A reporter who is assigned the court beat has to cover all cases whether civil or criminal and has to look after both the lower court and the higher court.

A court reporter needs to have a good understanding of the judicial system and should know the hierarchy of the courts. Developing a good network of sources in the court and among the police is very essential for a court reporter. He has to be fully aware of all important ongoing cases and keep a file of arrests. He has to understand what goes on in the **grapevine** but should have the ability to differentiate between official records and grapevine rumours.

Another important thing a court reporter needs to keep in mind is that he has to remain within the rules and regulations of the legal system and learn to respect the sanctity of the court. He has to be careful not to commit **contempt of court** and thus avoid punishment.

Culture/ Entertainment :

Culture is a part of every society and without a distinct and individual culture a society can not exist. And media, being a part of a society, has to give due importance to the cultural aspect of the society that it belongs to. Media has to highlight the courses of culture, its process, its developments and many other issues related to it so that people remain abreast and understand their own culture. And now with the emergence of what we call the ‘global village’, the importance of cultural reporting has increased manifold. People want to know not just about their own culture, but also about foreign cultures. People are also hugely influenced by foreign cultures and often sprinkle their own lives with elements from other cultures. The entire world has changed today as a result of intermingling of cultures and

the mass media can be attributed with a major part of the credit for this.

Today the media devotes considerable space to covering this area. Hence, it has become a very important beat for every media entity. Now a days the newspapers also publish separate pages and also supplements devoting to many areas of culture like songs, drama, cinema, folk songs, dance, folklore, language, behaviour, food habits, life styles, fashion, ethnic materials, norms, ethics, values and so on and so forth.

Normally, anybody who has interest, good contacts in the field of culture and has good understanding of his or her own cultural way of life, is assigned with this beat.

Political:

This is also another important beat for every newspaper and electronic news bulletin. Especially considering the Indian media scenario, all the Indian media are obsessed with political news. Most of their newspaper pages and bulletin time is occupied by political news. Political activities and political discourses do hold coveted positions in every society and hence even the media across the world do give emphasis on covering political matters with serious intent. So much so that there has been a tendency to undermine all other important matters confronting the society.

However, political beat in this situation, becomes one of the most important beats for every media house. Therefore, usually a senior reporter is assigned this task of covering this beat. The person who handles this beat, must be a senior man, having long years of experience of working in the field of media and who understands the political situations and happenings well. He should have better grasp and reflexes over political matters and course of action. He also should have good contacts in the political field, in State Legislative Assemblies, Parliament etc.

Business:

Now-a-days, business plays a crucial role in every society. There has been a surge in activities everywhere around the world related to business, trade, commerce, finance, etc. Especially in today's globalized world, business and financial matters have occupied centre stage. With the emergence of free market economy, 'business' has become everybody's

business rather than being confined to a few financial experts. There has been so much in the offing in regards to all these areas that it becomes overtly necessary for people to broaden their knowledge and strengthen their understanding about the issues and processes that surround these areas in a way not done before. Therefore, media has also started taking these issues seriously and with a lot of emphasis. In this connection the business beat is considered to be an extremely responsible and serious one.

The person who is willing to take the responsibility of this important beat upon his shoulder should keep this in mind that he must have clear understanding about the matters related to business and finance, the dynamics of the stock market etc. He should have up to date information about the business activities taking place not only in his own society but also else where. He should have proper knowledge about the dynamics of business and also have a network of reliable sources in Government and non government organizations, corporate bodies, political circles and every where.

Sports:

Sports is also one of the most coveted beats in every media organization. Every media organization gives due weightage to covering the areas of games and sports. All the newspapers devote one or two pages of a total newspaper to sports related news. Therefore, anybody covering this beat holds mammoth responsibility. The person who has some understanding about the rules and tactics of different games and sports is normally assigned with this beat. The person handling this beat must be aware of the sporting scenario of the country and of other countries as well and also should be able to understand the issues and problems engulfing the sports scenario the world over. It is expected that he also knows about the players and has good contacts with the players as well as the people and different organizations related with sports.

Education:

Education is another important beat due to the sheer number of people that are involved in this field — students, teachers, guardians, researchers and, of course, policy makers. News about the different

schools, colleges, universities, and other institutions of technical and higher learning and the educational scenario in general make very good, important and relevant news content. A good education reporter will cover important activities in different educational institutions and will try to bring out stories about the unusual developments, if any, in the field to education. Government policies on education are very important issues that need to be covered. New trends and problems pertaining to the field are also important topics for news.

A person who covers the education beat needs to have a good understanding of the education scenario, and must have good contacts in different educational institutions and in the education department.

Science and Technology:

Science and technology is increasingly shaping and revolutionizing our lives everyday. We cannot possibly think of our lives without the contributions of scientific and technological developments. Therefore, understanding science is a cultural necessity and is a part of general cultural knowledge as art and drama. The public needs to know what scientists are doing and how their work is influencing the society. Science reporting intends to inculcate a scientific temperament among the readers and to encourage them to have a rational and analytical mindset in explaining various phenomena in their everyday life.

Science and technology news includes noteworthy scientific discoveries about nature and all major advancements that take place in the field of technology. Discovery about stars, atoms or about human body or mind, discovery of major drugs, breakthrough in fusion research, space shots, etc make good science reports. What a science reporter usually looks for are the milestones in the progress of science and technology.

Specialization in the field of science is often an advantage for a science reporter, but a science reporter need not necessarily be a specialist. What is essential is a background in science and a scientific temperament. Since science is not something static and new things are developed everyday, so a science reporter should have the willingness and zeal to make himself a student of science everyday and update himself about the

new developments. A science reporter should also be aware of the major areas of ongoing scientific research. But perhaps the most important quality of a science reporter is the ability to write the highly technical scientific news for the common readers in an understandable way. He should be able to digest an abstract theory and express it in a readable and understandable form.

Development:

A very important beat in the present context of media coverage is development reporting. By development report we mean a report in which development or underdevelopment in a particular field is highlighted. Development is measured in terms of improvement in the living conditions of the people, of the society, of the nation. As such, development includes issues like removal of poverty, lessening of disparity between religions and classes, building up of technological infrastructure, modernization of society through shedding feudalism, tribalism and superstition, and gradual achievement of economic self-reliance. A development reporter will be required to cover all such developments and also the lack of it. Rural reporting is a very important aspect of development reporting. Development reporters should also pay due importance to issues relating to social evils, deprivations and try to represent the unrepresented sections of the society.

A development reporter needs to maintain regular contacts with different organizations and institutions, government departments, development agencies, NGOs, voluntary organizations etc. It is absolutely necessary for a development reporter to acquire basic understanding of terms used in agriculture, environment, science, economics and other related subjects. A development reporter cannot afford to be guided by personal prejudices, likes and dislikes. Also he should never rewrite official handouts, but use them as his raw material and develop a well researched story on his own.

The most important aspect of development reporting is human development reporting. It must concern itself with people since it is the people who are building the nation. It must show them how to improve their condition in the society.

Disaster/ Accidents/ Fires:

Stories about accidents, fires and disasters are very common and form a major part of news content. Major accidents, fires and disasters almost always make front page headlines.

Beginners in the field are most often assigned this beat. These are hard core hard news stories and are relatively easy to cover in the sense that they do not require any specialized knowledge on the part of the reporter. It is enough for the reporter to have the basic reporting skills. A keen power of observation and the ability to interview people to find out details is necessary. Eye witness accounts are very important for these kinds of stories.



CHECK YOUR PRGRESS

Q.3: Name ten important reporting beats.

_____

_____

_____

Q.4: Write down the basic qualities of a beat reporter?

_____

_____

_____



ACTIVITY 7.2

1. Consider your own skills and qualities and think which beat you would be suitable for. Also write why you think you are suitable for that particular beat.
2. Collect and study the structure of five news stories each from the following beats:
   a. Sports
   b. Business
   c. Science and Technology
   d. Crime/ Police
   e. Court/ Legal
   f. Development
   g. Education
   h. Politics



7.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have learnt about the different types of reporting beats. Here is a quick recap:

- Reporters have to work in specialized areas of interest, called beats. When a reporter is assigned with a certain beat or beats, he/she is expected not to miss any event, whether big or small falling under the purview of that particular beat.
- Some of the important beats are crime/police, politics, sports, culture, entertainment,etc.



7.6 FURTHER READING

1. **Essentials of practical journalism** — *Vir Bala Agarwal, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi*
2. **Fundamentals of Journalism –** *K.B. Dutta, Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi*



7.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No. 1: Beats are the specialized areas of operation for the reporters assigned by the organization in which the reporter works. For example, Sports beat, science beat, crime beat etc.

Ans. to Q. No. 2: There are numerous areas that a newspaper has to cover in a day. And it is not humanly and physically possible for a single reporter to cover multiple areas. So different reporters may be assigned with a single or couple of beats. And the reporter is expected to cover all the developments or happenings taking place under the jurisdiction of his beat or beats. The reporter can not afford to miss any significant or insignificant event falling under his assigned beat/beats.

Ans. to Q. No. 3: Ten important beats – Sports, Crime, Legal, Business, Education, Development, Health, Science and Technology, Entertainment, Politics.

Ans. to Q. No. 4: The basic qualities of a beat reporter are:

i. Thorough Knowledge about his own beat.

ii. Ability to cultivate and maintain sources in important areas.

iii. Willingness to continuously update oneself about recent happenings in his beat.

iv. Ability to write simply and understandably for the common man who may not be an expert in that area.



7.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. : Short Questions (answer in around 150 words)

Q.1. : What is a beat ?

Q.2. : Write a note on the following :

(a) Culture /Entertainment Beat

(b) political Beat

(c) Business Beat

Q.3 : What are the responsibilities of a reporter covering the science & Technology Beat ?

B. : Long Question (answer in around 300-500 words)

Q.1: What do you mean by beat reporting? What is its significance?

Q.2: Name the different beats of reporting. Discuss any two of them.

*****

UNIT-8 : INTERVIEWING AND NOTE TAKING

UNIT STRUCTURE

8.1 Learning Objectives

8.2 Introduction

8.3 Interview

- 8.3.1 What is Interview?
- 8.3.2 Preparing for Interview

8.4 Conducting the interview

- 8.4.1 Telephone interview
- 8.4.2 Face to face interview

8.5 Text of interview

8.6 Language for Audio-visual Interview

8.7 Note Taking

- 8.7.1 Note taking for Print Media
- 8.7.2 Note taking in meetings
- 8.7.3 Note taking for electronic media – radio

8.8 Let us sum up

8.9 Further Reading

8.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

8.11 Model Questions

8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- explain how to prepare for an interview
- describe how to formulate questions for an interview
- compile an interview for print media
- differentiate between language for print and audio-visual interview
- outline the process of note taking.

8.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit you will learn about the use of English language in the context of interviews. It is said that good reporting is about 80% interviewing. As such interviews play a very important role in news gathering, apart from being stand alone pieces of newspaper publication or TV and radio programmes. And the success of an interview depends on the capability of the interviewer to ask questions. Rather we can say that the kind of answers we get depends on the kind of questions that are asked.

Here we will deal in detail with the role of language in conducting a successful interview and how a slight maneuvering of language to rephrase a question can bring forth a completely different answer. We will also learn about how an interview can be presented in the print media to make it an interesting piece to read.

And the first step towards a good and fruitful interview is proper and detailed planning. So let us begin this unit by learning how to prepare for an interview.

8.3 INTERVIEW

8.3.1 WHAT IS INTERVIEW?

An interview is a conversation between an important person and another or others who want to know about actions, programmes, policies, etc. of the interviewer, It is an objective based inter-personal communication between two individuals. An interview demands direct interaction with the objective of eliciting information, which is not available from the written records or other sources.

Getting interviews can be rather difficult for the interviewer. The person, whom the interviewer would like to approach, may be reluctant to part with important information. The interviewer is often

confronted with two different kinds of problems.

(a) He or she is aware of the fact that the public has the right to know about something and the interviewer is one of the primary persons for getting it for them. He or she faces the problem of living up to the expectation of their his readers.

(b) He or she is also aware of the fact that the interviewee is not legally bound to disclose any information to the interviewer.

In such situations, the interviewer has to play different kinds of roles to suit the situation. At times, the interviewer becomes a flatterer; They flatter the interviewee to extract important information. At other times, the interviewer, become a bully forcing the information out from the interviewer. Yet at other times, they become something like your most-obedient-servant whom the interviewee would oblige with pieces of information. Hence, there is the need for a variety of approaches and techniques to interview a person.

8.3.2 PREPARING FOR INTERVIEW

The first step in preparing for an interview is to know well about the interviewee and the subject you are going to discuss with him. Once the initial research is done, prepare a list of possible questions so that you are not at a loss during the interview and don't miss out on important topics. Properly phrasing the questions is as important as the question itself. If you do not use the right combination of words for phrasing the questions, then you might not get answers that satisfy the purpose of the interview.

PHRASING THE QUESTION

As you might already know from your reading of the previous units, there are two types of questions:

- ✓ **Open - Ended Questions**
- ✓ **Close - Ended Questions**

Open – Ended questions are those that leave a lot of scope for the respondent to speak his/ her mind. They elicit answers that are more exploratory and flexible. Very often in answer to such questions,

the respondents reveal much more than they intend to or they realize they are revealing. It also provides scope to the respondent to avoid giving a direct answer to a controversial issue by twisting the answer. e.g.

- What is your response to the allegations made against you?
- What is your take on the music of the North-East?
- Please tell us briefly about the inception of your political career.
- As a leading sports organizer would you tell us about your achievements?
- Tell me something about your childhood and the memories you cherish.
- Would you share your experiences on working in the international arena?
- A lot of changes have come up in the musical scene of the state. Do you feel that these changes augur the beginning of an era of decline for the music industry of Asom?

Close – Ended Questions are those which elicit specific responses. Usually they are answered by a simple yes or no or very pin pointed specific response. e.g.

- Have you been able to make any arrests so far?
- Who is your favourite sports personality?
- Name five items in your closet you can't do without.
- Are you in support of the statement made by your teammate?
- Why did you leave the Congress and join BJP?
- Who is the prime suspect in this murder case?
- Which was the first film in which you were involved as a music director?

It is important for you to remember that a good interview usually is a balanced blend of open and close ended questions put forth at the appropriate time. It is the expertise of the interviewer in maintaining this balance that determines the success of the interview. Sometimes when open ended questions do not elicit the desired response, the same question has to be rephrased to make it a close ended question

which can trap the respondent into answering the question. At other time, the case may be the other way round. A respondent might outright refuse to answer a controversial close ended question. In such a situation the interviewer can shift to other topics for a while and come back to the same question after a while, having rephrased it as an open ended question.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: What are the different types of questions used in an interview? Define Open ended questions and Close ended questions.



ACTIVITY

1) List ten open ended questions you would like to ask in an interview with the captain of the Indian cricket team.

_____

_____

_____

2) List ten close ended questions you would like to ask in an interview with a leading singer of Assam, say for e.g. Zubin Garg or Angaraag Mahanta.

_____

_____

_____

8.4 CONDUCTING AN INTERVIEW

Interviews can be either telephonic or face to face. We shall discuss both types of interviews here.

8.4.1 TELEPHONIC INTERVIEW

A direct approach to telephone interview is just to pick up the telephone and call the person. Tell the person what you want. “Hello is that Mr. Baruah? I’m Kalita from Times of India and I’d like to talk to you about your films”.

The trouble with such an approach is that the interviewer can always hang up. He or she may be irritated by your phone call and say “Sorry, at the moment I’m driving a car”. He or she may even say “Sorry. I’m tied up with something important” and before you can ask him or her “When can I call back Mr. Baruah?” he or she had already hung up.

Before you ring up the person, do a thorough job of research. Find out all you can about the person, using all available resources. After doing your home- work, you may like to ring up the person. Here are certain rules of telephonic interviewing behaviour:

- Greet the person with a ‘Hello’ and identify yourself by name and organization and immediately ask a question that is likely to produce an answer
- Be fair, honest and business-like; ask the questions that have to be asked.
- Note down the answers
- After the interview is over, run a check on whatever information has been gathered.

You will remember that you do not have all the time in the world. You have to meet the Editor’s deadline for presenting your news story. You are aware of the fact that you will be given a maximum of two columns of a 15 cms frame to present your news story. Within that frame you have to give an 18 pt headline, a photograph of the interviewee of minimum 2 x 3 cms.

As a news reporter, you will require the skill to sift through the mass of information and construct a printable story complete with the relevant quotes and references within the prescribed length. Here is a news-story based on the films of ten time National Award Winner Jahnu Barua. Imagine that the news story was developed by Kavita

of Times of India (TOI). The source of her information was a telephonic interview with the famous Film Director. Most of what Mr. Barua had informed Kavita is in quotes. These quotes will give you a fair idea of what questions Kavita had asked Mr. Barua.

I want a film on my dreams: Jahnu Barua

Inspired by legendary Japanese Director Akira Kurosawa, ten time National Award winner Jahnu Barua wants to make a film based on his dreams.

"Just like Kurosawa, may be some day I will also be able to give a shape to my dreams through cinema," says the veteran director Jahnu Barua of Maine Gandhi Ko Nahin Mara fame.

Kurosawa's Dreams (1990), acclaimed by critics all over the world, was based on eight of Kurosawa's dreams. The movie dealt with subjects such as fears and insecurities of childhood, parents who are as olympian as gods, the seductive nature of death, nuclear annihilation and environmental pollution.

"My dream," Barua said, "is to turn the North- East into a united and peaceful region." Admitting it is a difficult task, he said, "My experiences of life has made me realise that nothing is impossible. I am a dreamer and I considered myself to be a lucky one".

He feels all human tragedies in the region can be avoided, "We should learn from our mistakes and stand together without losing one's identity", he added.

Terming North-East as the "best socio-cultural" part India he said the people there are "most humane"; he said the people should put their differences aside and compete with the rest of the world as one united team. "I always try to project the rich socio-cultural heritage and bio-diversity of the region through my films," said Barua.

His new film Har Pal starring Preity Zinta, Shiney Ahuja and Dharmendra, slated for a May release, has a major portion shot in Shillong.

The film is about a Khasi (a Meghalaya Tribal) girl and the music is based on North-East folk music. His next venture is Anjane Dost, a

short 10-minute film which is part of a 10-movie series produced by a media group. The film is set in Mumbai and is about two strangers who gradually develop a relationship. Jahnu Barua also has one English and one Assamese movie on the cards. His other Hindi movie Butterfly Chase set in Jammu & Kashmir is also ready for release.

"I always believe that we as film makers have a social responsibility," says Barua.

A recipient of a number of international film awards, Barua was conferred with the Padmashri in 2003, for his out standing contribution to Indian cinema. His Halodhiya Choraye Baodhan Khai (catastrophe) won the President's Swarna Kamal award for the best feature film in 1987. Hkhagoroloi Bohu Door (It's a long way to the sea) also brought him the Swarna Kamal Award for best director in 1996.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



Q.2: Imagine that you are Kavita of Time of India News Service. Here is the transcript of the telephone interview that you had with Jahnu Barua. Some of the questions as well as the answers are left out. Read the transcript carefully and supply the missing bits of questions or answers and write them down.(TOI= Kavita; JB= Jahnu Barua)

TOI : Hello, Is that Mr Jahnu Barua ? I' m Kavita from Times of India News Service.

JB : Yes. What can I do for you?

TOI : Can you give me a few minutes of your precious time? I know how busy you are.

JB : Anything you want to know?

TOI : If you don't mind my asking Mr. Barua, who has been your greatest inspiration behind your success as a film director?

PB : Well, I must name _____

(1) _____

Just like him, may be some day I will also be able to _____

(2) _____

TOI : Can I ask you Mr. Barua: What _____?

JB : My dream is to turn the North East into a united and peaceful region.

TOI : But don't you think that it is rather challenging?

JB : Well, (3) _____

TOI : There has been so much of human tragedies in this region.

JB : (4) _____

TOI : What is your impression on the North East?

JB : The North East has a rich socio- cultural heritage.

As a film maker, I always try to (5) _____

TOI : What do you think about the social responsibility of film makers

JB : (6) _____

TOI : Thank you. Mr. Barua. It was nice talking to you.

8.4.2 FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW

Face-to-face interview is simply conversation and, therefore, the rules of conversational behaviour are very much applicable even in face-to- face interviews. Paul Grice (1975[1],1978[2]) offers a set of maxims that are generally followed in conversation. The maxims are merely strategies and precepts that are helpful to keep a conversation going. These maxims include :

(a) The maxim of co-operation. This maxim implies that both the interviewer and the interviewee must co-operate in getting the information across.

(b) The maxim of quantity. This maxim implies that the person must make his contribution as informative as (but not more informative) than required. Being informative would presume giving someone new or unpredictable knowledge when occasion arises

(c) The maxim of quality: This maxim implies that the interviewee

must be truthful. He should not say what he believes to be false, or that which lacks adequate evidence.

(d) The maxim of relation: This maxim implies that the information has to be relevant to the topic under discussion.

(e) The maxim of manner: This maxim implies that the person must avoid ambiguity of expression and must to brief and to the point. Besides, the presentation must be orderly.

These are general rules of conversation. However, it is possible to identify some more practical rules for persons to conduct interviews. These could include:

(a) Before interviewing a person, get as much information about him/her as possible.

(b) Open gently. Let the interviewee get warmed up. Unless you are on deadline, save your tough question.

(c) Be a good listener. Forget yourself. Don't try to impress your interviewee with your knowledge or your accent.

(d) If the interviewee stops talking, don't interrupt. He may be thinking of something useful for the topic.

(e) Get anecdotes. Assemble all the descriptive material you can handle.

(f) Look for non- verbal cues. Follow up gently with a remark, a question, to encourage comment.

(g) Play to the ego of the person without being too obvious about it.

Most of us are familiar with the interview session of the Chief Minister (Amrish Puri) and a TV reporter (Anil Kapoor) in the Hindi feature film *Nayak*. It is one of the most frequently telecast feature films famous for the TV interview, You will recall how smugly the CM breezes into the studio, leafs through the election manifesto with the aims of an I know-it-all interviewee until the bombshell drops in the form of TV footage of violence in the city and the CM's voice at the background ordering police officials to be lenient to some party or the other who had helped him. The CM in the interview studio is stunned into silence. What do you think of this interview? It gives us

food for thought as to the limits that an interviewer must take note of the 'Lakshman rekha' of probing questions if any.

However, interviewing for the radio is slightly different. Three types of interviews are used for radio interviewing:

(a) Spot interview

(b) Field interview

(c) Studio interview

A brief description of each type follows:

(a) Spot interview: Spot interviews are usually brief and limited in scope. A radio or a TV reporter confronts you with a microphone and asks you at the site of an event in this case, a fire accident. "Do you suspect that the fire is not an accident?"

(b) Field interview: Field interviews can be longer than spot interviews. A reporter may interview the chairman of the Education Board in his office on the results of the HSLC/AHM examinations, a farmer in his sugarcane field and so on.

"This year there is a noticeable improvement in the performance of rural students. What do you think could be the reason?"

(c) Studio interview : Studio interviews are fairly formal. Most of you are familiar with Tim Sebastian's interviews titled 'Hard Talk'. The CM's interview in the feature film "Nayak" referred to earlier belongs to this category.

In TV interviews all the three types exist. However, the essential part of a TV script is that the visual component is very important, It becomes equally important to blend the audio and video components so as to leave a harmonious impact on the viewers.

8.5 TEXT OF INTERVIEW

Once the most difficult and challenging part of the interview, i.e., the actual interviewing process is over, it is now time for a less challenging yet equally important stage. This stage is to make the interview ready for presenting to the readers. Even a very well conducted interview may not make interesting reading if it is not presented to the readers in an attractive

manner. Just like it is important to properly garnish a well cooked meal before serving, so is good presentation important to a well conducted interview.

We should always remember that the readers will be looking out for engrossing reading material in a newspaper or magazine which is full of yards of readable stuff. So, the catch is to grab the reader early and compel him to hold on till the end. As such the introductory paragraph of the interview has to be gripping. If it is a personality based interview, you can write a few lines about the interviewee and introduce him/ her or a certain aspect of his/ her personality to the readers in such a way that the reader cannot help but read on. The length of the introduction can vary depending upon requirement and space available. While some intros can be very long some can be of just 2-3 lines. Read for instance this intro to an interview on singing sensation **Angaraag Mahanta** by **Priyanka Sharma** published in The Sentinel's Sunday Magazine *'Melange'* on 23rd March, 2008.

His stupendous performance in the recent SAARC festival was the latest one in his list of accomplishments adding one more feather to his cap; his voice is fresh and virgin radiating a lot of energy and weaving a magical web for the audience — already he has significant fan following in his homeland Assam, and now he is all set to rule the hearts of all Hindi music lovers making his foray into Bollywood.

Yes, he is Angaraag Mahanta, the new musical sensation of nature's very own land - Assam. He has already made his friends go crazy with his evergreen hit number, Mon Mur Udi Gusi Jai from his Assamese album, Jonaaki Rati.

After a span of three years of performing in music concerts, in places and platforms as diverse as New Zealand, Kenya, Jodhpur Folk International festival and SAARC concert – Angaraag, popularly known as 'Papon' among his fans across the country, has now chalked out plans for making his presence felt among Hindi pop music lovers.

Besides providing scores for many regional films in Assam, Angaraag, son of the famous singer duo of Assam, Khagen Mahanta and Archana Mahanta, has also composed music for the feature film The Last Monk *that has been screened in various film festivals across the globe.*

Well-versed in Indian classical music and traditional music of Assam, the 32-year-old singer cum composer speaks about life and his musical career with Priyanka Sharma. Following are the excerpts of the interview:

Now read this intro, which gives a very brief opening to the interview.

This week we speak to the Assam Association Delhi Secretary and NEDFi representative in Delhi, Manoj Das. A multi faced personality he speaks about life outside Assam, NEDFi and the Assam Association Delhi which is turning dreams into realities for the Assamese population of Delhi.

On the other hand, if the interview is based on say, an issue of current relevance, it would be more appropriate to introduce the issue first and the respondent simultaneously.

Here we have as example an intro to an interview of an important person on issues of national importance. Notice how both the issues and the interviewee have been skillfully introduced to the readers.

At a time when it is increasingly difficult to find a lucid thinker on India's foreign policy, ***Brajesh Mishra****, India's former National Security Advisor, is a treat to meet.*

Mishra, who was against the India-US nuclear agreement, now tells rediff.com *Managing Editor* ***Sheela Bhatt*** *that the United Progressive Alliance government should go ahead and sign the deal. His current stance is at variance with his earlier views over the matter and the views of the Bharatiya Janata Party, which still opposes the deal.*

He was linked to the BJP after his retirement from the Indian Foreign Service. Today, he stands alone in the saffron crowd owing to his support for the deal.

In an exclusive two-part interview, Panditji, as Mishra is known in his inner circle, lays out the nuances, in his inimitable style, on issues like the India-US civil nuclear deal and prospects of stability in Pakistan. The Prime Minister's Office will be pleased to read the way Mishra supports the deal using his unique blend of experience and wisdom.

Once the intro is done, the rest of the presentation is basically kept similar to the actual interview. Only some corrections may be made in the

language to make it appropriate for publication. Verbal interviews are usually kept very colloquial for ease and comfort of both the interviewer and the respondent and also to build up a rapport between the two. This is also important for maintaining an easy flow for the interview. While some newspapers and magazines, prefer to remove this colloquialism while publishing to make it sound more formal, while others choose to keep up the original flavour of the interview to give more credibility and appeal to the entire exercise. You will get an idea about this in some sample interviews given for your reference.

If the interview is a stand alone, then the only way to present is a question-answer format. But if it is supposed to form part of a news story or feature, then the reporter or editor can decide whether it is to be put entirely in direct speech, or completely in indirect speech or to use a combination of both.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.3: What are the different ways in which an interview can be used in the print media?

Q.4: What is a stand alone interview? What do you mean by an interview intro?



ACTIVITY

1) Interview a local lady entrepreneur in your town. Then write down the interview for publishing in a local newspaper.

2) Write two different intros for this interview. Keep one intro short and crisp and the other one a little long and detailed.

8.6 LANGUAGE FOR AUDIO-VISUAL INTERVIEW

In the previous sections, we have mainly talked about interview for print media. With the growth and growing popularity of the audio-visual media, interviewing for this media has also become as important as that for print media. But interviewing for this media is a little more challenging as compared to that of interviewing for print media. Also, due to the difference in the demands that both these media pose, some differences arise in case of interviewing too.

While the basic rules of interviewing remain the same, the main difference is seen in case of language and in presentation. Another important fact to be noticed is the time factor. Print media interviews can go on for as long as the interviewer and the interviewee can afford and till the interviewer is satisfied that the purpose of the interview has been achieved. This is not possible in case of audio-visual media as they have to be fitted into a particular time slot. Also the chronology and flow of questions have to be properly maintained in case of audio-visual media. More and thorough preparation is required and there is less room for mistake. The interviewer's presence of mind is very important as although questions can be decided in advance, the exact chronology will depend on the way the interviewee answers the questions. As such, completely new questions may emerge as the interview progresses. Print media interviews are more flexible and mistakes are admissible as these can be covered up easily in the final presentation. Also the exact set of questions can be prepared beforehand and handed over to the respondent for answering.

When we are conducting an interview for the audio-visual medium, we have to consciously remember that we are being heard and being seen by a mass audience. What we are saying is either being transmitted live to the audience or is being recorded for transmission later after necessary editing. Unlike print interview, there is no separation between the interviewing stage and the presentation stage. The interview will be presented as it is taken. In case of recorded interview, there is scope for editing, but that is minimal and done only when absolutely necessary. Too much editing derails

the flow of the interview.

So, the bottom line is preparation – detailed and thorough preparation. The topic is to be properly researched and all questions are to be prepared in advance. Only decision to be taken on the spot is when to ask which question and how to react to what answer. Even the rough chronology of the flow of questions has to be preplanned.

Special care has to be taken regarding the language used during the interview. It will differ depending on the kind of interview it is and the kind of show it is meant for. For instance, if it is a celebrity interview for a talk show, the language will be much more informal and casual. An interview with the Prime Minister on a news channel regarding an issue of national importance, on the other hand, will be in a more formal language. However, 'formal' here does not mean the language as it is used in writing. It will be formal in the sense of being official. But the style will be colloquial and not like that of a written interview.

Here is an example from the popular talk show **'Walk the talk'** on NDTV 24x7 in February, 2004. 'Walk the Talk' host **Shekhar Gupta** spoke to Congress President **Sonia Gandhi**. Only a part of this interview has been provided here for your benefit. This interview being a classic example has also been quoted in *Essentials of Practical Journalism* by Vir Bala Agarwal. As you read through the interview, you may try to notice the ease of language used in the interview and how Shekhar Gupta is casually talking to his guest as he would talk to any other person. He is not simply asking questions, he is making conversation.

Shekhar Gupta (SG): Since you know my guest today so well, let me first tell you about this remarkable setting. This is Swaraj Bhawan, part of the larger Anand Bhawan Complex in Allahabad, the home of the Nehru-Gandhi family, and my guest today, someone who carries that formidable dynasty on her slender shoulders, if I can put it like that.

Thank you for finding the time in the very busy election season

Sonia Gandhi: Very, very busy. In fact I have been touring Uttar Pradesh, Orissa and other states…only yesterday I was in Benaras, Badhoi, Mirzapur. And its going to carry on like this till the end.

Shekhar Gupta: Life changes a great deal. Let me go back to where it began, when did you first come to Anand Bhawan?

Sonia Gandhi: I came to Anand Bhawan in 1970 and that was when Indiraji dedicated Anand Bhawan and Swaraj Bhawan to the nation, in terms that it became a museum, open to the public. That was 1970, I had been married for two years, I was mother of a young baby, Rahul.

Shekhar Gupta: Tell me, what did you learn from your mother-in-law? She was a tough woman.

Sonia Gandhi: She was a very strong woman, but she had a very gentle side to her…..a side that, very few people know. She had an eye for detail. If somebody was unhappy or unwell, she would immediately notice and she would immediately do something about it. Perhaps by jotting down two lines. For instance, I remember when I got married, my mother came to the wedding and stayed for a month. And when she was going, it was obviously a sad moment for me. And my mother-in-law sent a little note to me: 'Hi Sonia, this is just to tell you that we all love you'. And that totally melted me. It gave me a lot of strength, that I am loved and cared for.

Shekhar Gupta: Do you have any recollections from the time of her responses to things that were happening in India which showed her character to you….something that made her angry, something that made her very determined?

Sonia Gandhi: She was at her best when faced with challenges. If she was pushed to the wall, there was pressure on her, she would come out and really fight back

Shekhar Gupta: Give me some examples…..

Sonia Gandhi: When there was a split in the party…..

Shekhar Gupta: 1969

Sonia Gandhi: Yes, she came out and fought. I remember the elections for the president at that time.

Shekhar Gupta: Sanjeeva Reddy and Nijalingappa…..Reddy was the presidential candidate.

Sonia Gandhi: Yes, that was a time when she came out strongly and aggressively.

Shekhar Gupta: Was that the first time when you saw her as the iron woman as she came to be known as later?

Sonia Gandhi: Yes

Shekhar Gupta: And the Bangladesh war, do you recollect any of that?

Sonia Gandhi: Yes, Bangladesh war was a very exciting moment for all of us, we lived every moment of that crisis in our family. And I remember when Mujibur Rahman came to Delhi from London, there was a big reception at the airport, even though I was about to delivery my other child the next day, I made it a point to be there at the airport. There was such excitement. Etc.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.5: Enlist the basic points of difference between a print media interview and a television interview.

Q.6: What kind of language should be used in a television interview?



ACTIVITY

1) Watch an interview on a chat show on TV and note down the details of how the interviewer introduces the guest and how he takes forward the conversation with the guest.

---

2) Prepare a list of questions for interviewing a local MLA on the developments of his constituency.

8.7 NOTE TAKING

Note- taking is an indispensable part of interviewing. For that matter, it is indispensable wherever a correspondent has to collect materials for a news- story either for the print media or for the electronic media.

8.7.1 NOTE TAKING FOR PRINT MEDIA

Note taking for the print media can be quite individualized. There are some reporters who after asking a question in the interview session take down everything that is uttered including the redundant expressions like 'as a matter of fact', "in the ultimate analysis", not to speak of "you know", "You see" etc.

Again, there are some reporters who prefer to listen to the interviewee with great attention. They take down only what they consider to be relevant. Such reporters insist that they remember everything they hear.

Taking down notes in detail can sometimes spare us the burden of an extra phone call to double check something that ought to have been written down in the very first interview. Besides, it gives us a chance to review the interview later before finalizing the draft.

However, there are speakers who are rather verbose. You have to listen attentively to catch his strand of thought. While taking down notes, it would be more helpful to develop a personalized version of speed writing. If you are not good at short hand, you may have to develop your own abbreviations on symbols to be quick in taking down notes.

Let us assume that you are interviewing Team India's ODI captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni. You prefer to take down notes on what Mr Dhoni spoke in your own variety of short hand.

Reporter: Going by comments attributed to you the other day. if seems you are quite and angry young captain.

MSD : -not the type to run down anybody- the contribution of seniors- can't be neglected- I don't relate- having the best team for conditions

expected- players who will win- I did give my views- every captain does that more so when all 5 selectors aren't on tour.

Reporter : But.....

MSD : Got misinterpreted- happened- dislike controversies- don't like- landed in one- didn't use 'senior' yet headline- I've been sharing dressing room with the seniors- excellent relations with them.

In the revised form the above two extracts of MSD would read as follows:

The following excerpts :

Q. *Going by comments attributed to you the other day, it seems you're quite an angry young captain...*

A. I'm not the type to run down anybody and, frankly, you can't ignore the contribution made by the seniors... The seniors can't be neglected... Having said that, because of everything that's going around, I wish to emphasise that I don't relate to this business of seniors and juniors.. For me, it's all about having the best team for the conditions one is expected to face... It's about having players who'll win you matches, not seniors and juniors... I did give my views to the selectors (before the tri-series squad was picked), but every captain does that, more so when all five selectors aren't on tour.

But.....

(Interrupting) What I said got misinterpreted....It has happened... I don't like controversies and certainly don't wish to get into one myself... As it turns out, I've landed in one controversy.. I didn't use the word 'senior' anywhere in that interview (to a cricket portal), yet the headline and that... I've been sharing the dressing room with the seniors for quite a few years now... I have, I believe, excellent relations with them.

8.7.2 NOTE TAKING IN MEETINGS

1. Get a copy of the agenda of the meeting from the organizers.
2. Examine each item and get some background of the speakers

and their approach to the problem

3. If handouts of speeches are circulated get hold of a copy
4. Take notes on key issues raised by different speakers.
5. Seek balance. Take down notes of both sides and also take down crucial quotes.
6. Think of the lead you are going to use to develop your news-story.

8.7.3 NOTE TAKING FOR THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA-RADIO

1. Use a conversational style of writing that is simple and lucid. Keep the sentences short. So that the listener can group the meaning easily. Use active voice.
2. The notes rephrased must be listenable as the written word must be readable. It follows the rules of good conversation
3. Radio news is spoken not read.

To illustrate the difference between two different types of not- taking- for the print media and for the radio- the following extract is taken.

Print Media

Washington : Nuclear war between India and Pakistan would cause more than slaughter and destruction- it would knock a big hole in the ozone layer, affecting crops, animals and people worldwide, US researchers said on Monday. Fires from burning cities would send 5 million metric tonnes of soot or more into the lowest part of Earth's atmosphere known as the troposphere, and heat from the sun would carry these blackened particles into the stratosphere, the team at the University of Colorado reported. (TOI, Apri 9, 2008).

Electronic Media:

US researchers state that nuclear war between India and Pakistan is likely to cause more than slaughter and destruction. It will knock a big hole in the ozone layer. Consequently, crops, a nimals and people will be affected world wide. The researchers also report that fires from burning cities will send 5 million metric tonnes of soot or

more into the lowest part of the earth's atmosphere known as the troposphere. Heat from the sun will carry these blackened particles into the stratosphere.

The language of print media illustrates the fact that note taking for print media requires the reporter to focus on what experienced journalists call "the five W's" (who, what, when, where, and why). On the other hand, the language of the electronic media illustrates the fact that note taking for electronic media requires the reporter to focus on "four C's", namely clarity, correctness, conciseness and colour.

Another notable distinction between print and electronic media is that while print media prefers the use of the past tense. in the electronic media, the present tense is prefered. This is understandable because so far as print media is concerned, printing takes place only after the event had taken place.

But so far as electronic media is concerned, news is broadcast concurrently with the event happening. For example, in a newspaper we will have an item "Police fired on hundreds protesters in a Tibetan area of western China, killing eight people, overseas activists groups said."

The broadcast news story if related when the activist groups have made the statement will use the present tense. "Overseas activists have reported police firing on hundreds of protesters in a Tibetan area of western China, Killing eight people".

In the context of note- making, it would be useful to state that with the emergence of what is known as *Internet Journalism*, the whole business of news production is fast changing. In this climate of rapid change, telephone, fax, pen and writing pad will give way to multi-media e-mail. On-line journalism is fast emerging and bringing almost a paradigm shift in the news business.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS- 5

Q.7: Name one notable distinction between print media and electronic media.

Q.8: What are the four C's of note taking for electronic media?



ACTIVITY

1) Attend a meeting where a noted dignitary has been invited and try to take down balanced notes of what he says.



8.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you have been introduced to the basics of use of the English language for interviewing and note taking. You have been told about how to prepare for an interview, frame questions and ask the right questions at the right time. You have learnt that there are two types of questions – Open ended questions and Close ended questions and that the right combination of open and close ended questions make a good interview. You have also learnt about how to reproduce an interview in the print media giving a good and effective intro. You have also learnt about interviewing for the audio-visual media and the kind of language to be used in such media. Since note taking is an inseparable part of interviewing, it has also been discussed in this unit.



8.9 FURTHER READING

1. **Essentials of practical journalism** — *Vir Bala Agarwal, Concept Publishing House, New Delhi*

2. **News Writing –** *George A. Hough, Kanishka Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi*
3. **Common Errors in English –** *Asian Books*



8.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No. 1: Open Ended Questions and Close Ended Questions.

Questions which are designed to draw exploratory answers are called Open ended questions. E.g.- How did you get into theatre?

Questions which elicit specific responses are called close ended questions. Usually they are answered by a simple yes or no or very pin pointed specific response. E.g. – Do you watch movies?

Ans. to Q. No. 2: a. Akira Kurosawa.

b. Give a shape to my dreams.

c. I am certain that nothing is impossible.

d. We should learn from our mistakes and stand together without basing our identify.

e. project this heritage through my films.

f. We, as film makers, have a social responsibility.

Ans. to Q. No. 3: As part of news stories and features, as part of personality profiles, as stand alone interviews.

Ans. to Q. No. 4: A stand alone interview is one which is in itself a self sufficient write up for a publication and not used as part of another news story or feature. It is usually written in question-answer format. The initial part of an interview write-up where the interviewee or the issue in discussion is briefly introduced to the readers is called the interview intro. Intro here stands for introduction.

Ans. to Q. No. 5: The basic points of difference between print media interview and audio-visual media interview are:

Sl. No.	**Print Media Interview**	**Audio-visual media Interview**

1.	All questions can be prepared in advance	Many more questions can emerge as the interview progresses
2.	Chronology of questions can be changed later on during presentation	Chronology remains the same as during the interview
3.	Duration of interviewing is flexible	Duration of interview is pre decided depending upon the time slot allowed for telecast.
4.	Interviewing and presentation are done in two separate stages	There is no separation of these two stages
5	There is huge scope for editing	There is less scope for editing
6	Language is more written and formal	Language is colloquial and conversational.

Ans. to Q. No. 6: Conversational and easy language should be used for audio-visual media interviews.

Ans. to Q. No. 7: One notable distinction between print and electronic media is that print media uses the past tense and electronic media, the present tense.

Ans. to Q. No. 8: The four C's of note taking for electronic media are clarity, correctness, conciseness and colour.

8.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

A : Short Question (answer in around 150 words)



Q.1 : What is the meaning of telephonic interviewing behavour ?

Q. 2 : What is the importance of note taking ?

B : Long Questions (answer in around 300- 500 words)

Q.1: "A good interview should be a perfect blend of open ended and close ended questions". Discuss.

Q.2: What is the significance of open ended questions and close ended questions in an interview?

Q.3: You have been asked to interview the Chief Minister of you state.

Prepare a list of ten open ended questions and ten close ended questions you would ask.

Q.4: You have just interviewed your favourite actor. Write a brief intro for the interview.

Q.5: How is language and presentation of print media interview and Audio-visual media interview different? Why?

Q.6: Interviewing for print media and interviewing for audio-visual media are not the same. Justify.

Q.7: Discuss the main differences of note taking for print and electronic media.

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UNIT-9 : CONCEPT OF NEWS WRITING

UNIT STRUCTURE

9.1 Learning Objectives

9.2 Introduction

9.3 Characteristics of a good news report

9.4 A few well-written news reports

9.5 Column writing

- 9.5.1 Columns and columnists
- 9.5.2 Types of columns
- 9.5.3 Column writing tips

9.6 Let us sum up

9.7 Further reading

9.8 Answers to check your progress

9.9 Model questions

9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- discuss the characteristics of a good news report
- explain the concept of column writing
- innumerate the different types of columns
- elucidate the do's and don'ts of column writing

9.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous units we have discussed about news and news reporting. We have also discussed about the structure of news and the elements of news. In this unit we shall discuss about news writing, the characteristics of a good news report. We shall also go through some well-written news reports so that you can see how good news reports read. We shall also discuss about another genre of writing which are found in the pages of a newspaper – column writing. We shall study about columns and columnists, types of columns and discuss some important things to keep in mind while writing columns.

So let us begin the unit with a discussion on the characteristics of a good news report.

9.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD NEWS REPORT

You must already be familiar with the concept of news by now. So in this unit we will discuss about news writing. As you all know that news is always written in inverted pyramid structure and it must contain the basic elements of 5Ws and 1H. The pyramid serves as a guide for how to include information in the story. But writing in structure alone cannot assure the making of a good news report. Today let us study about what other ingredients are required for a good news report. For ease of discussion, let us divide the job into two stages:

- The preparatory stage (before writing)
- The writing stage

Preparatory stage: Let us first discuss about the preparatory stage. This is the most important stage in news writing as without proper planning and preparation; it is not possible to write a good, structured, comprehensive and meaningful news report. A good report definitely needs good preparation.

- The first step would be to understand the purpose of the story. The basic purpose of any news report would be to inform the audience.
- So, based on this understanding the next step would be to do appropriate research, i.e., collect the necessary information.
- Visit the people and places that you need to and absorb what you see.
- Then think in what way you would need to write for a common man to understand what you have seen and heard.
- Conduct interviews if necessary and take down appropriate notes and record important quotes.

Writing stage: Once you have the necessary preparation, you can now start writing. Here are the characteristics which your report must have:

- **A headline that captivates the reader:** The headline is the first thing that any reader would read in a newspaper simply because of the font size. So, it is important to cash upon this advantage and

write a headline that would grab attention right away. It has to capture the essence of the story and at the same time tease, provoke and arrest the attention of the reader compelling the reader to want to read the story that follows.

- **A good, appropriate lead:** A lead is the opening statement in a news story. So, it is very important that the lead tells the most important aspects of the story and in the process leads the reader into the rest of the story. There is nothing better than a funny, clever, or surprising statement that a reader cannot ignore. It also has to be self-containing in such a way so that even if the reader is short of time and is unable to read the rest of the story, the important message should have been conveyed to the reader through the lead itself. It must address the issues of who, what, when, where, and why.
    - o It should be short, preferably having 35 words or less
    - o Should be limited to one or two sentences
    - o Starting the lead with “when” or “where” should be avoided unless the time or place is unusual. It is ideal to start with “who” or “what.”
- **Short body paragraphs:** Paragraphs should be short and crisp as far as possible. Ideally, they should be limited to 60 words or less. Each paragraph should not have more than three sentences and definitely not more than one idea. Readers lose interest when they see long paragraphs.
- **Short and simple sentences:** As a golden rule the optimum number of words to use in a sentence is 14 to 16. It makes reading easier, faster and more comprehensible. Long sentences should be broken down into two or three small sentences. If using a long sentence becomes unavoidable, it must be neutralized by placing a short sentence before and after it. It also helps to vary the length of the sentences. Stories become dull when sentences are all the same length.

- **Emphasis on correct grammar:** It is important that correct grammar is used in news writing. There can be nothing more unprofessional than silly grammatical mistakes in the news report. Ensure that there are no mistakes in terms of use of tenses. Use active voice avoiding passive voice as far possible. Check for proper agreement of verb with subject. Write in third person.
- **Correct spellings and punctuations:** Carefully avoid spelling mistakes. A dictionary should be a constant companion for a journalist. One should also be very cautious with punctuations, taking care to put them in the proper places. Improper punctuation can alter the entire meaning of a sentence.
- **Simple vocabulary:** It is essential for the vocabulary to be simple. One has to remember that readers do not carry the dictionary around. Technical terminologies and jargons are to be used sparingly and properly explained and simplified whenever used.
- **Consistency in style:** The style has to be consistent with the stylebook of the newspaper and in its absence, the Associated Press stylebook.
- **Subjectivity:** It is important not to impose one's personal opinion on the reader. News should be written only to inform the reader correctly without adding personal colours to it. Interpretation should be left to the discretion of the reader. And the journalists' personal opinions should be reserved for opinion pieces.
- **Accuracy of information:** The information provided in the news report should be double-checked for accuracy. Incorrect, unverified information signals irresponsible behaviour on part of the newspaper. It is the responsibility of the journalist to be absolutely sure before giving out any kind of information. If one is not sure of something and is also not able to verify the same, it is better to avoid writing about it.
- **Creativity:** One has to remember that there are many newspapers competing for the reader's attention. Therefore, creativity goes a long way in ensuring that. Whether the reader prefers your newspaper

over the other newspapers on the stands depends on how creatively you can present it to the readers, making it stand out among the other reports in other newspapers on the same issue. If you can provide a new angle and a new way of putting it, that when you get an edge over the others in the competition.



ACTIVITY 9.1

Go through the news items in the section that follows and explain in the context of the discussion above why these news items have been termed well-written.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: What are the characteristics of a good headline?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q.2: What is lead?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q.3: The number of words in a paragraph in a news story should be limited to ——————————words or less.

Q.4: Starting the lead with ——————— or ——————— ——— should be avoided unless the time or place is unusual.

9.4 A FEW WELL-WRITTEN NEWS REPORTS

Now let us go through well-written news reports. The first one is from the November 11, 2011 issue of The Seven Sister's Post.



5,000 women 'abducted' from Assam in 3 years

■ GAUTAM DEBROY
NEW DELHI, NOV 10

IN the past three years, more than 5,000 women from Assam have been kidnapped, and most of them pushed into prostitution by traffickers. Ranked fourth in the country after Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and West Bengal, the state has earned this dubious distinction, in statistics recently released by the Union home ministry.

The rising figures of abducted women has sent the alarm bells ringing in New Delhi, and the home ministry has asked the Tarun Gogoi government to place the ever-mushrooming maid placement agencies and their agents proliferating under constant monitoring.

"Instances of alleged human trafficking by placement agencies have been reported. These cases are registered and investigated as per law," said minister of state for home Mullappally Ramachandran.

Lost and never found

Uttar Pradesh: 12,880
Rajasthan: 5,867
West Bengal: 5,684
Assam: 5,352

**Figures represent number of women kidnapped from 2007-09*
**Source: Statistics available with the Union home ministry*

Former chairperson of the National Commission for Women Girija Vyas says that women trafficking cases from the Northeast is a matter of serious concern because it's increasing by the day and there's no signs of seriousness to tackle it.

"Government — both at Centre and state — must make people aware about the growing menace besides strengthening the international border," she told the **Seven Sisters Post**. "What's more alarming is that women from the region are lured to foreign countries as well unlike their counterparts from other parts of the country," she added.

As only 591 people were convicted during the same period for their involvement in the women kidnapping cases, the menace seems unabated.

"In maximum cases the kidnapped women become victims of human traffickers," said a senior home ministry official.

A senior Delhi Police official told this correspondent on condition of anonymity that several women from the Northeast, especially Assam, are forced to become "sex slaves" or hired as domestic help in states like Haryana, Rajasthan and Punjab.

On October 6, a 14-year-old girl from Hajo was rescued from a Haryana village in a joint operation by cops from New Delhi, Haryana and Shakti Bahini — an NGO fighting ► Turn on P3

Continued from P1

against trafficking of women.

The girl was reportedly lured out of Assam on the pretext of marriage. Later, Sabnam (name changed) was sold off for ₹25,000. The problem is compounded by the fact that on most occasions, these cases of kidnapping go unregistered. "Poor people, especially in rural areas hesitate to come to the police station to lodge complaints. The girls lured out of Assam are forced into flesh trade by the human traffickers," said senior superintendent of police (CID), Assam, NN Haque. He said after the Union home ministry report, all district police headquarters have been asked to keep close tabs on placement agents. "We are also in touch with our counterparts in other states," Haque added.

Recently, several women from the Northeast were rescued from brothels in various metros. On July 18, Munna Choudhury, owner of Rajdhani Placement Agency at Rajouri Garden in Delhi was arrested for running a human trafficking racket by the Delhi Police's Crime Branch. In that incident, nine girls from Assam were rescued. Munna is a resident of western Assam's Udalguri district.

> "Poor people, especially in rural areas hesitate to come to the police station to lodge complaints. The girls lured out of Assam are forced into flesh trade"
>
> **NN Haque,** SSP, CID

According to the home ministry statistics, 1,471 women from Assam were kidnapped in 2007. However, only 225 human traffickers were convicted in that year. In 2008, 1,789 women were kidnapped, while 248 persons were convicted. In 2009, 2,092 women were kidnapped, but only 118 traffickers were convicted.

Deputy commissioner of police, Delhi, Ashok Chand said placement agents procured girls through brokers and agents from rural Assam and brought them to Delhi and got them employed as domestic helps. "These girls had no knowledge about their salary and never really got to contact their parents after coming here," Chand said.

According to another senior Delhi Police official, agents were paid ₹12,000 per girl as commission by the placement agency, which then charged ₹20,000 to ₹25,000 from employers engaging the girls as domestic helps.

Bodoland movement...

Continued from P1

got a piece of the cake."

"We don't want tall talks, we

The next one is from the November 11, 2011 issue of The Hindu. This report received first page coverage as the lead story in the newspaper and the journalist covering the story Manas Dasgupta got byline credit for the story.

First whiff of justice for Gujarat riot victims

Special court convicts 31 for Sardarpura massacre of 2002, in which 33 Muslims were killed

Manas Dasgupta

MEHSANA: A special court here on Wednesday sentenced 31 persons to life imprisonment and fined them Rs.50,000 each for burning 33 Muslims alive at Sardarpura in Mehsana district during the 2002 communal riots in Gujarat.

Special court judge S.C. Srivastava, who is the Principal District and Sessions Judge of Mehsana, however, acquitted 42 other accused, 11 of them for lack of evidence and the remaining 31 got the benefit of the doubt. But the 31 accused have been asked to submit a solvency bond of Rs.25,000 each and not to leave the country without the court's permission.

The court did not accept the prosecution's charge of criminal conspiracy under Section 120 (B) of the Indian Penal Code, which could have attracted the capital punishment, against any of the accused and concluded that the incident took place on the spur of the moment, on the night of March 1, 2002, two days after the February 27 Godhra train carnage.

Of the 76 accused in the Sardarpura massacre, two died during trial. One male was found juvenile, and the case against him is going on in the juvenile court.

Legal experts said the verdict created legal history as it was the first case, in which a large number of people were convicted for mob violence. It broke the record of the Bhagalpur riots case, in which 14 persons were convicted.



HISTORIC VERDICT: *With anxiety writ large on their faces, relatives of the accused wait for the verdict outside the district court in Mehsana, about 40 km from Ahmedabad, on Wednesday.* – PHOTO: AP

The special court was constituted by the Gujarat High Court at the behest of the Supreme Court after it asked nine of the most gruesome cases of massacre in the communal riots to be specially investigated by a Special Investigation Team (SIT), headed by the former Director of the Central Bureau of Investigation. Sardarpura was the first judgment delivered among all the post-Godhra massacre cases in the state.

The 31 convicted have been charged with murder, attempt to murder, rioting and other offences under the IPC, while the charges of criminal conspiracy against them were dropped by the court. Among the IPC Sections applied included 302 (murder) read with other Sections , attracting punishment from one month to 10 years of imprisonment, all to run concurrently.

Among the 31 convicts were 30 from the Patel community and one 'Prajapati,' one of the "other backward communities." They included the then sarpanch of the Sardarpura village, Katrabhai Tribhuvandas Patel, and a former sarpanch Kanubhai Joitaram Patel.

After the Godhra incident, in which 59 Hindu passengers, mostly Karsevaks, were burnt to death, riots broke out across the State.

According to the relatives of the victims of the Sardarpura violence, a mob of over 500 people surrounded a lane named Sheikh Vaas, where the Muslims of the village lived, on the night of March 1, 2002. Fearing the worst, 70 residents took shelter in the only 'pucca' house in the locality, owned by one Ibrahim Sheikh. The mob attacked the house and set it afire. It later threw in an exposed electric wire. While 33 people, including 20 women and 11 minors, were charred to death, the rest were rescued by the police some three hours later.

9.5 COLUMN WRITING

9.5.1 Columns and columnists

Column is a series of feature or articles by a particular journalist/ author that appears regularly in a newspaper, magazine or any other publication, including blogs on a particular field of interest. It usually has an identifiable heading and carries the name of the writer or editor. The topic for columns could vary from politics to theater to food or could contain letters from readers, answers to readers' queries, etc

Columns are essentially opinion pieces which offer commentary and opinions. They often provide a combination of fact-based information and opinion. Most columns appear on a daily or weekly basis and at times on a monthly basis, particularly in the case of magazines.

A person who writes a column is called a columnist. Columnists have a great deal of expertise on their subject and have often been reporting on the subject for years. Many columnists later reprint their columns in book collections.

Writing columns is very different from other forms of writing. This is owing to the fact that columns have dedicated readerships, something which news and or features lack. A columnist develops a following because of his readers' interest in the topic that he/she writes on. A sense of trust always builds up between the columnist and the readers. To be a columnist is a great honor at the same time requires a great amount of dedication.

To be precise a column meets the following criteria:

- It is a regular feature in a publication
- It is personality-driven by the author
- It explicitly contains an opinion or point of view

A column can last from three months to three years or even more. There have been columnists whose columns have sustained for even twenty years.

Some of the best known columnists in the country include Khushwant Singh, Shobha De, Tarak Mehta among others. Khushwant Singh's column *With Malice towards One and All*, which is carried by not just one but several newspapers, is one of the most widely-read columns in the country.

Shobha De, a freelance writer and columnist is known for her columns in *The Week* although her columns appear in many publications. Her columns mostly explore the socialite life in Mumbai and the lifestyles of the celebrities.

Sevanti Ninan, Editor of *The Hoot* is well known for her column *Media Matters* in *The Hindu.* She writes on media related issues.

Tarak Mehta is another columnist, writer and playwright whose column *Duniya Ne Undha Chasma* is very popular. He writes mostly in Gujarati. A very popular comedy show on SAB TV called *Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah* is based on his column.

Another popular columnist is Jigg Kalra who writes on food and nutrition. His column *Platter Chatter* was the first restaurant column in Delhi. He writes another column called *The Weekend Review* for the *Hindustan Times*.

In Assam, Dr. Homen Borgohain the well-known writer, editor is one of the best known columnists in the state. He presently writes the very popular *column Prothom Kolom*.

Dr. Anuradha Sarma Pujari, Editor of the *Sadin* and popular Assamese writer wrote her first column in *Asam Bani* and was entitled *Kolikotar Chithi*.

Another popular column which appears in *The Assam Tribune* is the *Third Eye* by Indrani Rai Medhi.

Media Matters - Headlines you will never see

SEVANTI NINAN

There are varying degrees of ethical deficit in media organisations. But neither the government nor civil society will do anything about it because they all need each other…

Last fortnight, a new documentary screened in Delhi had a packed hall in thrall. Called "Brokering News", it glided effortlessly through a succession of soundbites and TV news clips to suggest a range of unethical practices prevalent in the media. The existence of election-time paid news, of complicity between stock market experts and the TV channels that feature their tips, of cosy deals that enable each newly released film to get varying degrees of prime time pre-release exposure, of increasingly political ownership of channels, of seductions to journos, abundant 'reviews' of new gadgets and automobiles, and so on.

This documentary has been made by Umesh Aggarwal for the Public Service Broadcasting Trust, and will be shown on Doordarshan, which will doubtless be delighted to air it.

It was a brisk film built largely on circumstantial evidence and assertions of a general kind. Business journalist Sucheta Dalal saying for instance that "Every single aspect of news is for sale," or film maker Mahesh Bhatt saying that the publicity a film gets is what it negotiates, not what it deserves. Or sports journalist Pradeep Magazine revisiting the cosy relationship that existed between media houses and the Indian Premier League until things went sour for the IPL. The documentary had a compelling case study and specific accusations were levelled by a journalist who said he quit in disgust.

The audience loved it.

Not an issue

In a country consumed with the issue of corruption, the discussion on degrees of ethical deficit in the media never moves beyond first base. Noteworthy, but unsurprising. Media corruption is not an issue that the State wants to tackle seriously for the same reason that corporate corruption is not an issue for the media until it becomes impossible to ignore. You need each other. Where would a politician be without publicity of any kind, where would a media house be without corporate advertising?

There is also another reason why the State will not stick its neck out on this issue. When a media house is raided, the community shrieks about

the violation of press freedom. This has happened in some notable cases since the late 1990s.

During the Anna agitation, Law Minister Salman Khurshid asked on Headlines Today why Team Anna's draft of the Lokpal Bill had not called for investigation of corruption in the media and the NGO sector. The anchor asked him in turn why the government had not chosen to investigate those who figured in the Radia Tapes. And the good Minister said that if they did so the government would be criticised. "Now you are asking why the government has not investigated. If we go ahead with the investigation, we would be accused of being insensitive. If we do, there would be a mass movement for the media."

The major difference between corruption in public life and corruption in media is that one has become a raging issue, and the other not enough of an issue. To the extent that you need the media to make corruption an issue, media corruption will never become a big ticket item on the national agenda. And the interesting thing is, to the extent that civil society cannot fulfil any of its own agendas without using the media to ride on, it will leave media corruption well alone. In the list of problems Indian NGOs work like gnomes to address, those involving media abdication or transgressions are very hard to find.

We did not invent media corruption, nor do we have a monopoly on it. Trawl the Net and you will find journalists from Kenya, the Philippines and Nepal speaking on the subject. The Philippines too has paid news.

And then corruption is a not sufficiently nuanced word to describe the problem. Paid news and journalists, big and small, on the take are the relative uncomplicated face of it. What of journalists not doing their job, and going only after soft targets rather than big corporate or government fish because their owners need advertising from them?

At the bottom of the pile, corruption exists because journalists are not paid enough, at the top it is at the management level and because the advertising the channel or paper is able to summon is not enough to cover costs, particularly since the cover price is low and no costs are

covered at all. You sell a newspaper that costs Rs. 15 to produce at Rs.3.

Competitive market

Desperate measures to finance escalating costs of production are also happening because hordes of players enter the media sector for a variety of reasons. There are no less than 40 news channels across the country financed by political parties or families, according to this documentary. A highly fragmented market that shows no signs of consolidating.

The more expensive news gets to produce, and the less advertising there is to go around, the more shows you will get on gadgets and cars and movies. And fewer news crews going off to the countryside to report what is happening to ordinary people. Not reporting is not a cognizable offence, but it undermines the reason for the existence of journalism in a free society.

So who will bell the cat? Not civil society, not government, not the corporate sector, not the media themselves, not the political class. We should look around at other societies to see what mechanisms they have come up with and pursue a variety of solutions. Until then we will titter every time the Radia Tapes soundbites are played, but nothing will change on the ground.

Sevanti Ninan's column *Media Matters* in *The Hindu*, September 24, 2011

9.5.2 Types of columns

Let us now discuss about the different types of columns.

Advice column

It is a column written by an advice columnist. The columnist often comes to be known as the agony aunt or agony uncle. Such columns give readers the opportunity to ask questions and seek guidance in different areas of their life like relationships, work, sexuality, fashion, career, etc. Advice columnists are generally experts in their field and they answer readers' queries on their problems.

The earliest advice columns appeared in American newspapers who published letters written by lovers seeking relationship advice. Now-a-days there are even columns by astrologers, numerologists, tarot card readers who give solutions to readers' problems.

One of the best known advice columnists in India is Suhel Seth for his column *Survival Strategies* in *The Telegraph*'s Sunday supplement *Graphiti.*

Editorial columns

The editorial column is also known as an op-ed (Op – Opinion; Ed: editorial) piece. It is a forum for columnists to express their opinion on a variety of topics which could be of interest to readers. The newspaper's editorial board usually steers opinion and debates on current events and topics. The topics may be political, social, and legal or it may simply voice the columnist's opinion on something he feels is wrong and needs to be corrected.

Reviews

Review columns provide readers with information about a product or service (particularly something recent or newly introduced to the market) from the point of view of the columnist who is an expert in that field and whose opinion would matter to the readers. Review columns could be on book, movies, theatres, art exhibitions etc. Review columns often help readers decide whether or not to buy a certain book, watch a particular movie or even eat at a certain new restaurant.

Film critics will view new releases, and offer their opinions in their column. Food critics will dine at restaurants and provide a review of the restaurant's food and service.

A book reviewer will read the book and offer an analysis based on content, style, and merit.

Gossip Column

This is a type of column where the columnists provide the latest chitchat about celebrities and other prominent people. They focus on celebrities' relationships, families and personal scandals. The

columnist often go to the extent of conjecturing up stories about celebrities' private lives or what they may do in the future. Such columns are mostly found in newspapers and celebrity magazines.

Humour column

A humour column carries regular essays about funny topics or serious matters that are parodied. It may include poking fun at people in the news such as politicians and celebrities or the columnists may draw from personal experiences in their everyday life. Hyperboles and exaggeration are common writing techniques used by humor columnists.

Metro Columns

Such columns deal with local issues like urban and regional planning, local government issues, crime, legal affairs and controversial news, among many others. Such columns often encourage citizens to get involved in their community affairs.

Community correspondent column

These are columns produced by community correspondents (rural correspondent or country correspondent; generally not a regular member of the newspaper staff but a stringer). Such columns focus on community events from a personal viewpoint. These writers have little professional journalistic training.

Sports Columns

Sports columns are invariably found in almost all newspapers. Sports columnists offer their expert opinions on games, developments and controversies in the sports world. These columns are generally written by sports journalists and even by former star athletes or coaches. Former India cricketer Sunil Gavaskar is a well known sports journalist.

Business Columns

Business columns discuss about issues in the business world. Common topics include corporate developments, stock-market trends, investments and economic transitions. They offer useful analysis of trends and prove to be a helpful resource for businessmen, investors and the public at large.

Food Columns

One of the very popular and widely read columns in newspapers and magazines these days are the food columns. They may be focused on recipes, health trends or aspects of nutrition, restaurant reviews, and major developments in the food industry. They are generally targeted towards the foodies or people who love food and gourmet eating.

9.5.3 Column writing tips

Column writing is considered to be the most difficult type of writing, simply because of the fact that it requires good thinking.

To become a good column writer, good articulation is very important but at the same time that alone is not enough. The columnist's opinions must be such that they make sense enough to be taken seriously, provide insight and be convincing. Also very crucial is the presentation. It must be entertaining.

It takes a lot of practice, knowledge as well as the ability to critically analyze a particular issue. Consistency is also crucial to a column writer. One needs to maintain the same tone of voice throughout all the writings and stay focused on the issue at hand. Another very important thing is to keep the commitment. It needs dedication, discipline and the ability to meet deadlines.

Here are some useful tips for writing columns as discussed by **Oon Yeoh**, who is a well known Malaysian writer, editor and New Media consultant:

1. Write with conviction: Put forward your opinion as something you truly believe in. Argue your case with conviction. Come down hard on one side of an issue. Be unequivocal. Never ever sit on the fence.

2. Maintain your focus: Make your column about one thing and one thing alone. Don't muddle the message. Maintain your focus. That's the only way to make a strong impression on your readers and to convince them that your point of view is correct.

3. Understand opposing viewpoints: Be mindful of the opposing argument. Anticipate objections to your point of view and deal with them convincingly with sound reasoning. If you're not familiar with the opposing view, you will not be able to argue your points well.

4. Refer to facts: Your arguments, however logical, will not carry much weight unless they are accompanied by facts that support your position. Don't overdo this and inundate your readers with statistics and figures. But do make use of facts from reputable sources.

5. Use analogies: Analogies are useful for illustrating a point, especially when the topic you are writing about is somewhat complicated or technical. Using a simple analogy from everyday life makes the issue more understandable and relevant to the reader.

6. Be critical: People like reading columnists who dare to criticize real life people – not just nameless concepts and policies. Naming names might create a bit of controversy but as long as you do not libel anyone and don't go overboard in your criticism, it works well to make your column an interesting and exciting read.

7. Do reporting. It's possible to write columns without doing any reporting but the best columns typically involve some form of reporting. When you report, you get on the ground and you gain a better sense of what's really happening. When you write from an ivory tower, it shows.

8. Localize and personalize: Localize your story whenever possible. Also tie it to some personal experience – yours or that of someone you know. This makes an otherwise esoteric and distant topic more real, relevant and memorable to the reader.

9. Be passionate: Generally, people don't like to hear a soft or passive voice when they read a column. So be aggressive – even arrogant, to an extent. People want to see passion. They want to feel energized. If the issue doesn't seem to excite you, the writer, it's certainly not going to excite the reader.

10. Provide a solution: Last but not least, don't just raise an issue. Have the conviction to suggest a solution. Columns that criticize certain policies but offer no solutions are useless. People read columns because they want to gain insight and answers. If you don't provide those, you've failed as a columnist.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.5: What is a column?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q.6: A person who writes a column is called a _____.

Q.7: What are the three criteria that a column needs to meet?

Q.8: Sevanti Ninan, Editor of *The Hoot* is well known for her column _____ in *The Hindu.*

Q.9: Jigg Kalra is a popular _____ columnist.

Q.10: What is an advice column?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q.11: What is the content of a gossip column?

_____

_____

_____

_____



9.6 LET US SUM UP

- News is always written in inverted pyramid structure and it must contain the basic elements of 5Ws and 1H. But writing in structure

alone cannot assure the making of a good news report. There are some ingredients which are required for a good news report.

- News writing can be studied in two stages
    - The preparatory stage (before writing)
    - The writing stage
- The preparatory stage is the most important stage in news writing. A good report definitely needs good preparation. Next comes the writing stage.
- The characteristics which a good news report must have are:
    - A headline that captivates the reader
    - A good, appropriate lead
    - Short body paragraphs
    - Short and simple sentences
    - Emphasis on correct grammar
    - Correct spellings and punctuations
    - Simple vocabulary
    - Consistency in style
    - Subjectivity
    - Accuracy of information
    - Creativity
- Column is a series of feature or articles by a particular journalist/ author that appears regularly in a newspaper, magazine or any other publication, including blogs on a particular field of interest. It usually has an identifiable heading and carries the name of the writer or editor.
- Columns are essentially opinion pieces which offer commentary and opinions.
- A person who writes a column is called a columnist. Columnists have a great deal of expertise on their subject and have often been reporting on the subject for years.
- There are different types of columns:
    - Advice column

- Editorial columns
- Reviews
- Gossip Column
- Humour column
- Metro Columns
- Community correspondent column
- Sports Columns
- Business Columns
- Food Columns

- Column writing is considered to be the most difficult type of writing simply because of the fact that it requires good thinking.
- To become a good column writer, good articulation is very important. It takes a lot of practice, knowledge as well as the ability to critically analyze a particular issue.
- Point to remember in writing a column
  - Write with conviction
  - Maintain your focus
  - Understand opposing viewpoints
  - Refer to facts
  - Use analogies
  - Be critical
  - Do reporting
  - Localize and personalize
  - Be passionate
  - Provide a solution



9.7 FURTHER READING

1. Essential of practical journalism - Vis Bala Agarwala, Concept publishing House, New Delhi

2. News writting - George A. Hough, Kaniska Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi



9.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No.1: The headline should grab attention right away. It has to capture the essence of the story and at the same time tease, provoke and arrest the attention of the reader compelling the reader to want to read the story that follows.

Ans. to Q. No.2: A lead is the opening statement in a news story. It tells the most important aspects of the story and in the process leads the reader into the rest of the story.

Ans. to Q. No.3: 60 (sixty)

Ans. to Q. No.4: "when" or "where"

Ans. to Q. No.5: Column is a series of feature or articles by a particular journalist/ author that appears regularly in a newspaper, magazine or any other publication, including blogs on a particular field of interest. It usually has an identifiable heading and carries the name of the writer or editor.

Ans. to Q. No.6: columnist

Ans. to Q. No.7: The three criteria which a column requires to meet are:

a. It is a regular feature in a publication
b. It is personality-driven by the author
c. It explicitly contains an opinion or point of view

Ans. to Q. No.8: Media Matters

Ans. to Q. No.9: Food

Ans. to Q. No.10: Advice column is a column which gives readers the opportunity to ask questions and seek guidance in different areas of their life like relationships, work, sexuality, fashion, career etc. It is written by advice columnists who are generally experts in their field and they answer readers' queries on their problems.

Ans. to Q. No.11: Gossip column is a type of column where the columnists provide the latest chitchat about celebrities and other prominent people. They focus on celebrities' relationships, families and personal

scandals. Such columns are mostly found in newspapers and celebrity magazines.



9.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q.A. : A shor Questions (answer in around 150 words)

Q.1 : What is the preporatory stage of writing a

Q.2 : What are the different types of columns ?

Q.3 : How is an advice column different from an editorial column ?

B. : Long Questions (answer in around 300-500 words)

Q.1: Discuss the characteristics of a good news report.

Q.2: Explain how news writing is different from column writing.

Q.3: Explain some of the emerging trends in column writing.

*****

UNIT - 10 : STRUCTURE OF NEWS

UNIT STRUCTURE

10.1 Learning Objectives
10.2 Introduction
10.3 Structure of a News Story
10.4 How to Write The Copy
10.5 Let Us Sum Up
10.6 Further Reading
10.7 Answers To Check Your Progress
10.8 Model Questions

10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- explain the structure of a news story
- define the significance of each element of a news story
- enlist the rules for writing each element of a news story
- write a news story

10.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous three units, you have been introduced to the concepts of news and news reporting. In this unit we shall go a step further and learn about news writing.

As you have already learnt, the duty of a journalist does not end with reporting alone. A good journalist should also be well versed in the skills of news writing and should be able to present the news for the readers in a simple and understandable manner. In this unit we shall learn how to write a good news story. A news story has different elements and each element has its own place and significance. Also, news writing is very different from other creative writing and there are different principles to be followed while writing a news report. All of these will be dealt with in this unit.

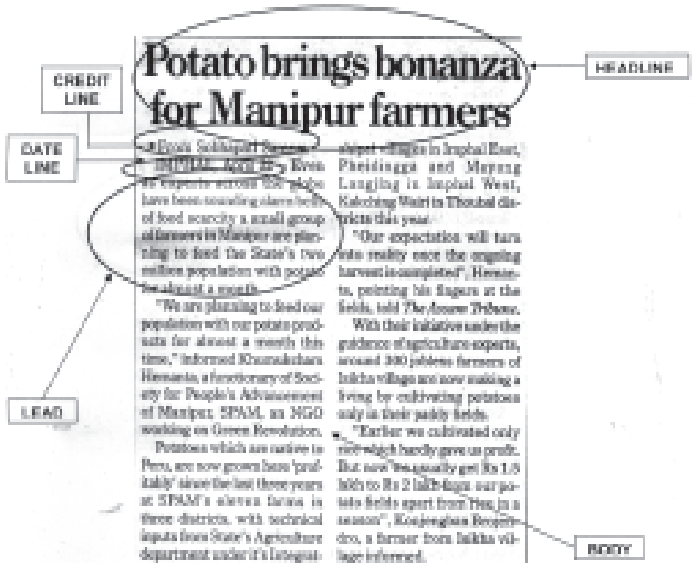
This unit will serve as your guide to the basics of news writing. A thorough understanding of these basic concepts along with regular reading of newspapers and ample practice of news writing will definitely sharpen your news writing skills and contribute towards making you a complete journalist. So, let us go into the first section of this unit, i.e., structure of a news story.

10.3 STRUCTURE OF A NEWS STORY

News writing is a skill that every journalist is required to develop and hone with experience. There are certain techniques or parameters upon which news writing is based. And every news organization follows these basic techniques despite the fact they may all have individual styles of news presentation. The very first step towards learning this technique is to learn the structure of a news story or news report. In the most basic sense, a news report has the following elements:

- ✓ Headline
- ✓ Byline/ Credit line
- ✓ Dateline
- ✓ Lead
- ✓ Body
- ✓ Conclusion

The last element, i.e., conclusion is present in case of soft news stories only. Hard news reports do not have conclusion. Now consider the following two news reports. The different elements have been marked with arrows for your benefit.





In the above examples, all the elements of a news story have been identified for you. Let us now learn about these elements in detail and understand the significance of each of them.

Headline:

You all must be familiar with the term headline. It is that part of a news story which first catches the eye of the reader. As you can see in the examples, it is the title of the news story and it is the most visible element. It is always written in a font few sizes bigger than the rest of the news story. The headline identifies the reader's area of interest and introduces and summarizes the story. It is usually after reading the headline that the reader decides whether or not to read the rest of the story. Sometimes headlines try to create curiosity through interesting use of language and prompt the reader to read the full story. There are different types of headlines based on nature and significance of the story. We will be discussing these in later units.

Byline/ Creditline:

You must have seen that below the headline, on the left hand side, it is written 'From Sobhapati Samom' in the first example and in the second example it is written 'by a staff reporter'. This is called the byline or the credit line and it identifies the source of the story. In the first example where the person's name is written, it is called the byline. In the second example,

there is no mention of the person's name, but simply that it is from a staff reporter. This is called the credit line. It could also be 'by our correspondent' or 'our bureau' or 'by our special correspondent' etc as applicable.

Dateline:

Below the credit line or byline, just before the actual news story begins, you would have seen the date of the story along with the name of a place. This is the dateline. The date mentioned is the date on which the event has taken place and on which the reporter has filed the story and the place mentioned is the place from where the reporter has filed the story.

Lead:

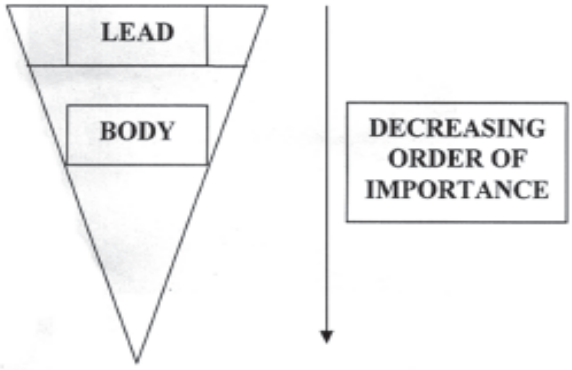
Just where the dateline ends, starts the main part of the report. The first paragraph of the news story is called the lead. It is usually written in bold or in a font larger than that used in the rest part of the story. However, this varies from publication to publication. The lead usually tells the story in a nutshell and gives the important information, particularly the most important of the 5W's and H.

Body:

It gives the elaborate details of the event including all the 5W's and H and the related explanations of the event. The body is the part where the actual story is narrated. The body describes what the story is all about. Usually the lead provides just the gist of the actual event, the body gives a description in order of importance of information and finally the story is drawn to an end with a concluding paragraph, probably threading the important parts of the story or giving a general conclusion.

News stories are constructed in the **Inverted Pyramid style** in order of importances. This is a formula used by all media organization. Inverted Pyramid style is mostly applicable to hard news stories and most hard news stories follow this structure religiously. However, on rare occasions feature stories and other soft stories can be written in this style as well. In this style the most important points of a story are told in the beginning, that is, in the lead itself. It is followed by the body in which the rest of the relevant information are presented in descending order of interest or order of importance. Of course in this style there is no conclusion. The most important

or interesting facts are arranged in the lead or immediately after the lead. The least important points are narrated in the end.



Reasons for applying Inverted Pyramid style:

In fact, there are reasons for following this formula by news organizations.

From reader's point of view:

The main reason for writing the story in this fashion is consideration of a reader's convenience. Many a time the reader does not have enough time to go through the entire story or for that matter all the stories published in a day's newspaper. They just scan the first few paragraphs of all the news items, mostly the important ones, published in the front page and then turn to the other pages in accordance with their interests.

If the stories are written in such a manner that the information is scattered all throughout the story and the readers have to struggle to find out the most important ones, the reader's concentration is reduced and they leave the story half way. Many a time, even important stories are ignored by readers for this reason. On the other hand, if the stories are written in the inverted pyramid style, then even if the readers leave the story midway, probably after reading the first or second paragraph at the most, they are still able to get the most important points.

From editing point of view:

Editing of stories is a must exercise as the stories are required to be brought to shape and size in accordance with the available space and style of the newspaper. Reporters always write their stories in a hurried situation

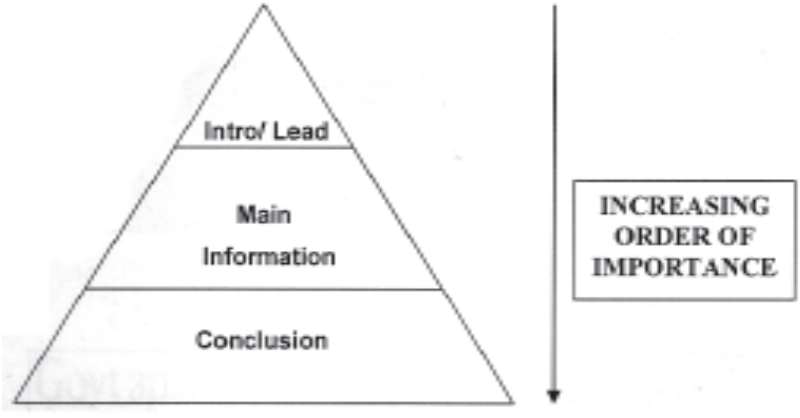
as they have to meet the stipulated deadline for submission of reports. Therefore, their reports are bound to carry errors, which need to be corrected later at the desk. Also in most of the cases, the reporters have the general tendency to include all the facts and figures they have found in the field while writing the copy, without taking into account the limited space specified for their stories.

In such situations following the inverted pyramid style helps in many ways. If the story is written in inverted pyramid style, then most of the important points are carried in the beginning. So when the desk people take the copy for editing they may do so by **cropping** the story from below so that the more important points remain intact. Only the lesser important details are eliminated in the editing process, as in the inverted style, the facts are presented in order of importance.

Cropping:
Editing or deleting portions of a news story or a photograph.

Therefore, for all these reasons the inverted pyramid style is a very effective technique of news presentation.

For features and other soft news items, the style mostly used is the **Pyramid style** of writing. Pyramid style is the classic style for academic writing. It starts by laying the foundations. It starts with less significant details and the story building towards a climax, leaving the most important information for the end. Finally, it caps the work off with a brief conclusion.





CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: What are the main parts of a news story?

Q.2: What is the significance of the

a. Headline

b. Credit line

c. Dateline

d. Lead

Q.3: Explain the following:

a. Inverted Pyramid Style

b. Pyramid Style

Q.4: Which style of writing is used for news writing?

Q.5: Which part of the news story contains the maximum and the most important information?



ACTIVITY 10.1

1. Cut out five leads from newspapers. Identify what questions of the 5Ws and H are answered. Also identify which question is not answered.

10.4 HOW TO WRITE THE COPY

Now that we have learnt about the structure of a news story, let us now deal with actual news writing, which is, in journalistic terms, called 'writing the copy' or 'copy writing'. If we understand the basic principles for writing each of the elements that make a news story, we will be able to write the entire news story easily and with confidence. So, let us deal with them one by one. But, before that, let us recall one of the basic concepts of news, the **5Ws and H**.

In Unit 1 of this course, you have been briefly told about the six important questions that every news report has to answer — the 5Ws and 1H. Let us recapitulate them one again in this unit.

- ✓ What
- ✓ Why
- ✓ Where
- ✓ When
- ✓ Who
- ✓ How

5Ws and H

As such a news item should answer these questions.

- ✓ What happened?
- ✓ Why did it happen?
- ✓ Where did it happen?
- ✓ When did it happen?
- ✓ Who was involved?
- ✓ How did it happen?

'What' is the first element that deciphers what is the news all about. What did happen? Is it an accident, a blast, a fair, a crime or what? Ideally the 'what' element should appear in the beginning.

The element **'why'** delves into the reasons behind the happening of any event. It tells us about why the incident occurred. If it was a case of accident, then what are the reasons behind it? Was it due to reckless driving or brake failure or poor condition of the road or foggy weather, if not, then what? Was the driver in a drunken state? All these questions should be answered by this element—why.

The element **'where'** talks about the place of occurrence of the event. If it was a case of accident, then in which place did the accident take place—in Assam? In Guwahati? At Chandmari? It tells about the specific location of the event.

The **'when'** element tells us about the time of occurrence of the event, like morning, evening, night, mid-night or exactly at what time of the day? It should also specify on which day-Monday, Tuesday, Thursday……today, tomorrow or any other day. Without specification of time and day news remains incomplete. The readers should be aware as to when did the incident occur and at what time the reportage has been carried. As such the 'when' element also establishes the immediacy of the event.

The **'Who'** element tells us about the people who are involved in an incident. It gives the actual profile of the people involved, their names, age, sex, place of habitat etc. Bigger the names, bigger would be the importance and size of the news.

Lastly, there should be a narration as to '**how'** the incident has occurred. The elements stated above only gives the readers a glimpse of the story, highlighting the major points. But the story needs further elaboration, taking the readers to the situations that led to the occurrence. So, here comes the element of 'How' which attempts to detail the event for the readers.

Principles of News Writing:

Headline:

The headline has to be written keeping in mind that it not only introduces and summarizes the news story, but also serves the purpose of

attracting the reader's attention. As such it has to be crisp and precise. It must clearly give an appropriate perception of the story, and should also convey the maximum meaning by using the least number of words. Here are a few basic rules for writing good headlines:

1. Build the headline around a strong verb
2. Avoid articles and helping verbs like a, an, the, is are, were etc.
3. Never give the feel of the past. Use present tense and future tense
4. Use active voice. It helps cut out extra words and also helps give the feel of the present.
5. Do not over abbreviate. Although headlines permit limited space, do not in any case use arbitrary or rare abbreviations.
6. Mention the subject in the headline wherever it is known. If the name is known, then use the name, otherwise another title that identifies the subject.
7. When certain parts of direct speech are significant enough to be used in the headline, then it is put in quotes. Unlike the use of double quotes in the main body of the news story, in the headline only single quotes are used.
8. The 'period' or 'full stop' is not used at the end of the headline.
9. The headline should always try to summarize the story and highlight the most important/striking element in it.
10. While attempting to write attractive/smart headlines, clarity of information should not be compromised.

(For more details and examples, please refer to Unit-3 of your Course-5)

Byline/ Credit Line:

Different newspapers follow different rules for writing the byline or credit line depending on their own **style book**. Credit lines within the same newspaper may also vary. Some of the common styles are – 'by a staff reporter', 'from a staff reporter', 'from a correspondent', 'by our special correspondent', 'by our reporter', 'from our correspondent', 'by Manosh Das', 'from Bikram Mitra' etc. Some newspapers omit the words 'by', 'from' etc. They simply write 'our correspondent', 'Manosh Das', 'Bikram Mitra' etc.



Style Book:
A booklet or list of rules stating a newspaper's preference, where there are choices, of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, abbreviations and use of numerals.

Usually, it is placed on the left hand side of the report, below the headline. In some cases it is kept left aligned, while sometimes it may be aligned center above the first paragraph.

Dateline:

In almost all cases, the dateline has two parts — the place and the date. The place comes first, and then comes the date. For instance, 'Guwahati, April 7'. However, some newspapers now-a-days have started omitting the dateline also, or only mentioning the place in the dateline. This is done mainly in case of feature news or other soft news stories where the time element may not be very significant. It is also done when there are multiple editions of the same paper where the news item may be carried on a different date.

Lead:

Usually the lead should possibly be containing all the elements-five Ws and an H. However, in some cases when it is impossible to club all the elements in the lead then the rest of the elements should be carried in the next paragraph. But the reporter must try to include as many elements as possible in the first paragraph itself. If the incident is big in terms of effect and importance then it becomes difficult to incorporate all the elements in the lead itself, as it may end up cluttering of the lead. In such a situation, the body should deal with the rest of the elements, mostly the 'why' and 'how' elements.

However, when it comes to detailing the event in the body of the news story then the inverted pyramid style is followed invariably, where the more important points are told in the beginning, followed by the lesser important details.

Therefore, in a way, the lead summarizes the story in three to four sentences. Ideally, the lead should not contain more than 30 to 40 words, within which the summary of the event should be given. And within those 30 to 40 words the lead should attempt to contain all the five Ws and an H as much as possible. Otherwise normally the 'how' element is carried forward to the following paragraphs in the body as it deals with detailing of the story.

Body:

As stated earlier, the body is the middle part of a story and it deals with the detailing of events. After having summarized the story in the lead, still many relevant points are left to be elaborated regarding the story which the readers might be interested to know about. And this is done in the body part.

Similar to the lead, the body is designed using the inverted pyramid style. That is, playing down the facts in chronological order of importance and relevance. The most necessary aspects are highlighted in the beginning of the body followed by the lesser essential facts, in a descending order.

However, since the body deals with the description of the event, most of the readers get wary of reading the whole detail and skip to other news item, having skimmed through the lead. But a clever writer would know how to retain the interest of the readers until the last line of the story. For that the writing should be interesting and beautifully treated so that the readers find it hard to leave it half way through. Also the reporter should always attempt to say more with fewer words due to space restriction in newspapers.

One has to remember that one basic feature that differentiates news from other write ups is its language. Here are a few very basic guidelines to be followed in case of the language of news.

1. Always use very simple language and short sentences.
2. Avoid the use of complicated words, metaphors, figures of speech, adjectives and clichés. Explain technical jargons.
3. Write in active voice wherever possible. It makes sentences shorter and direct.
4. Spell numerals up to 9 and beyond that write in numerals.
5. Identification that follows a name, viz., age, address, job description or other information are to be set off by paired commas. Honorific titles like Mr., Mrs., Dr. etc are not to be used.
6. While reproducing speech directly, place it within double quotes unlike in the headline where it is placed in single quotes. Sometimes you can write full sentences in direct speech or also write just significant words

or phrases in direct speech.

7. The time element in a news story is very important. News stories about events that have already taken place are written in the past tense. As such they use active verbs like *elected, injured, killed, damaged, awarded* etc. or passive verbs *like was elected, was injured, was killed, was damaged, was awarded* etc.
8. Present tense is often used in order to emphasize timeliness. E.g. *Refusing to lie down, Avian Flu, that bounced back in parts of West Bengal for the second time in a month, has broken out in Jalpaiguri district prompting the aurhorities today to order mass culling.*
9. In stories where the actual time of an event is not known or is not important, the present perfect form of the verb is used. Say, *has been named, has said, has announced* etc.
10. News stories that speak about events that will take place in the future are expressed by the use of the auxiliary verb 'will' – *will come, will speak, will arrive etc.*



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.6: What are the six basic questions every news story has to answer?

_____

_____

_____

Q.7: Which part of the news story answers most of the basic questions?

_____

_____

_____

Q.8: Mention five important points to be followed while writing headline.

_____

_____

_____

Q.4: Mention five important points to be followed while writing a news story.

_____

_____

_____



ACTIVITY

1. Develop a news story from the points given below. The news story should be complete with all the different elements and following all the principles of news writing.

- Road accident on highway
- 4.30 pm, Dec 6
- Head-on collision between truck and over speeding motor cyclist
- Motor cyclist dead on the spot
- Truck lost control and stopped after hitting a tree. Front part of truck damaged.
- Truck driver badly injured but alive, taken to hospital.



10.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you have learnt about the basics of news writing. Let's have a quick recap of the details.

1. A news story has six basic elements – headline, dateline, credit line/ byline, lead, body and conclusion.
2. Headline is that part of a news story which first catches the eye of the reader. It is the title of the news story and is the most visible element.
3. The byline or the credit line identifies the source of the story.
4. The dateline indicates the date on which the event took place and on which the reporter had filed the story and the place from which the reporter had filed the story.

5. The first paragraph of the news story is called the lead. The lead usually tells the story in a nutshell and gives the important information, particularly the most important of the 5W's and H.
6. The body is the part where the actual story is narrated. It gives the elaborate details of the event including all the 5W's and H and the related explanations of the event.
7. News stories are constructed in the **Inverted Pyramid style** in order of importance. This is a formula used by all media organization. Inverted Pyramid style is mostly applicable to hard news stories.



10.6 FURTHER READING

1. **Essentials of Practical Journalism** — *Vir Bala Agarwal, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi*
2. **News Writing –** *George A. Hough, Kanishka Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi*



10.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No. 1: The main parts of a news story are – headline, dateline, credit line/ byline, lead, body and conclusion.

Ans. to Q. No. 2: a. Headline: The significance of a headline is great. The headline identifies the reader's area of interest and introduces, precedes and summarizes a news story. Most people merely glance at the newspaper headlines and arrive at judgements based on this. The headline is that part of a news story which first catches the eye of the reader.

b. Byline/ Credit line: The byline or the credit line identifies the source of the story.

c. Dateline: The dateline indicates the date on which the event took place and on which the reporter had filed the story and the place from which the reporter had filed the story.

d. Lead: The lead serves as the intro to the news story.The lead usually tells the story in a nutshell and gives the important information, particularly the most important of the 5W's and H.

Ans. to Q. No. 3: a. Inverted Pyramid style: It is the style of writing used for writing news stories. In this style the most important points of a story is told in the beginning that is in the lead itself, followed by the body in which the rest of the relevant information are presented in descending order of interest or order of importance.

b. Pyramid Style: It is the classic style for academic writing. It starts by laying the foundations. It starts with less significant details and builds up the story towards a climax leaving the most important information for the end. It is exactly the opposite of Inverted Pyramid Style.

Ans. to Q. No. 4: Inverted Pyramid Style

Ans. to Q. No. 5: The Lead

Ans. to Q. No. 6: The six basic questions that every news story has to answer are – Who, What. When, Where, Why and How. They are together known as the 5Ws and H.

Ans. to Q. No. 7: The Lead

Ans. to Q. No. 8: 5 important points to be remembered while writing 'headline' are:

a. Build the headline around a strong verb.

b. Drop articles and helping verbs like a, an, the, is are, were etc. wherever possible.

c. Try to avoid the feel of the past. Use present tense and future tense.

d. Use active voice. It helps cut out extra words and also helps give the feel of the present.

e. Do not over abbreviate. Although headlines permit limited space, do not in any case use arbitrary or rare abbreviations.

Ans. to Q. No. 9: 5 important points to be remembered while writing a news story are:

a. Always use very simple language and short sentences.

b. Avoid the use of complicated words, metaphors, figures of speech. Explain technical jargons.

c. Write in active voice wherever possible. It makes sentences shorter and direct.

d. Spell numerals up to 9 and beyond that write in numerals.

e. The time element in a news story is very important. News stories about events that have already taken place are written in the past tense. As such they use active verbs like elected, injured, killed, damaged, awarded etc. or passive verbs like was elected, was injured, was killed, was damaged, was awarded etc.



10.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. : Short Questions (answer in around 150 words)

Q.1 : What is the difference of the Inverted piramyd style from the reader points of view ?

Q.2 : How can write a good 'lead' to a news story ?

B : Long Questions (answer in around 300-500 words)

Q.1: What are the different parts that make a news story? Explain the significance of each.

Q.2: Which part of a news story do you think is the most important? Give reasons for your answer.

Q.3: Do you think that the Inverted Pyramid style is the most appropriate style for news writing? Why?

Q.4: What is the importance of a headline in a news story?

Q.5: A news story will be crippled without a good lead. Comment.

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UNIT - 11 : PRINCIPLES OF GOOD WRITING

UNIT STRUCTURE

11.1 Learning Objectives

11.2 Introduction

11.3 Language and style of Indian Media

11.4 Language and style for print and cyber media

11.5 Let Us Sum Up

11.6 Further Reading

11.7 Answers to check your progress

11.8 Model Questions

11.1 LEARNING GOALS

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- describe the news writing language and style of the Indian English language media,
- identify the rules for writing news for print and cyber media,
- distinguish between news writing style for radio and TV.

11.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit you have already learnt about the use of the English language for the different matters of the editorial page. In this unit you will learn about the use of English language in the context of news.

Although both editorial and news form parts of the same newspaper, the kind of language used is different; because news is news and editorial is views. Again, writing news for print media is different from writing news for audio and audio visual media and so is there a difference between writing for audio media and writing for audio visual media. This is mainly because in each case, the demands of each medium are different and so is the target audience. In this unit we shall learn about the rules of language and style to be followed while writing news for print media, cyber media, audio media and audio-visual media while consciously trying to understand the demands of each medium.

But before that, let us get a brief overview of the basic language usage and style followed by the English language media in our country.

11.3 LANGUAGE AND STYLE OF INDIAN MEDIA

English in India is a legacy from the British who colonized the country for almost two centuries and during this period their language permeated through some of the most important parts of the Indian society - the government, the media, the education system, the legal system, and gradually the social sphere in such a way that it became part and parcel of the Indian way of life even after the British were gone. Today, along with Hindi, English is also the official language of our country. India ranks third in the world after USA and the UK in respect of the number of English speakers.

The English press in India began serious journalism in the country even before the regional language press was started. Although today the regional language press has far outnumbered the English language press, yet its importance is no less. English language newspapers are published practically in all states. It has impacted not only the print media, but the broadcasting media as well. There are several English news channels as well as several outstanding media courses offered at various institutions, which focus on journalism in English. The Indian news market is today flooded with an increasing number of English language newspapers and news magazines. However, it is seen that while there are a few newspapers which have given the English language its due credit, there is a marked deterioration in the proper use of the English language by most Indian journalists. This is basically due to the lack of understanding of the subtleties and nuances and appropriate style in the use of this language on the part of the journalists.

Officially the English language followed in India is the **Queen's English**. However, it is seen that the language of the English language in Indian newspapers is a mixture of the Queen's English, American English and Indian English. If you regularly go through the newspapers, you will probably notice that misuse of words without understanding their proper technical use and misspelling of common words is a familiar sight. In their

use of English, the journalists often tend to forget that some words mean one thing in Britain and another in America. This causes immense confusion for the readers at times. Another visible trend is the tendency of the media to use very difficult words and complicated sentences as if to prove their command over the language. However, one needs to remember that the purpose of news is not to show off literary genius, but to give information to the readers. And this is to be done in the simple but correct language so that the reader does not have to hunt for words in the dictionary or read a paragraph twice in order to understand what is being written. Most Indian newspapers are seen to be lacking in lucidity, brevity and precision.

Let me, at this point, emphasize the importance of a **style book**. For any media organization, a stylebook is an absolute necessity. Only a good style book can help improve the presentation of news. All newspapers follow a Stylebook. Many newspapers use the Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual. All major news media in our country have their style books agreeing in most cases with the AP Stylebook but often differing in one way or other. Similarly book publishers, magazines, radio and TV newsrooms, all have Stylebooks. This helps maintain a uniform standard of style and usage for the media organization.

With the growing popularity of the English language media in our country it has become all the more important that the media lives up to the expectations. The English Language media in India has a lot to learn. It is very important that that the journalists are very thorough with the basic rules of grammar and spelling. A newspaper or new channel cannot afford to be casual about the use of language and if they are to acquire and retain the respect of its readers and audience, a very high standard of the use of English language has to be maintained.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: The English followed by the English language media in India is a mixture of which three types of English?

_____

_____

Q.2: What is a style book?

_____

_____

Q.3: Which Stylebooks do most newspapers follow?

_____

_____



ACTIVITY 11.1

1) Take up 5 regional and national English language dailies and analyze the language used by each. Find out which English is used by these dailies. If required, consult journalists from these dailies to draw a conclusion.

2) Watch two major English news channels and try to identify which English they use.

3) Read any English language newspaper and note down ten instances each of the use of Indian English, American English and British English.

11.4 LANGUAGE AND STYLE FOR PRINT AND CYBER MEDIA

Now that you have been told about the basic features of the Indian English Language Media, let us now individually go into news writing style for print, cyber, audio and audio-visual media. In this section we shall deal with language and style for print and cyber media. Since in both print and cyber media the basic form is the written word, we shall deal with both

these media together in the same section. Also, here we shall only talk about Hard News. Writing for Soft News has been dealt with separately in other units in this course.

In your Course 2, i.e., on news, you have already learnt about the basic structure of a news story. It consists of three main elements

1. Headline
2. Lead
3. Body

Hard news does not have any conclusion.

Let us now begin with the language and style for writing headlines.

The Headline: Writing a good headline is not as easy as it seems. The headline identifies the reader's area of interest and introduces, precedes and summarizes a news story. The significance of a headline is great. Most people merely glance at the newspaper headlines and arrive at judgements based on this. As such, the headline has to be good and appropriate.

Good vocabulary is very important to writing headlines. Constructing sentences within the structure of the headline requires on the part of the sub-editor a precise knowledge of the meanings of many words and a keen sense of their connotations apart from a simple vocabulary of many words. Attention has to be paid to both denotations and connotations of words and words have to be examined using their exact meaning and special meanings in the light of their immediate context. We have listed below with examples a few guidelines which you can follow to very good effect while writing headlines:

1. Build the headline around a strong verb

Use active meaningful verbs to give colour and spice to the sentence. Avoid adjectives. E.g.:

- Hike in prices of essential items **flayed**
- Dravid **scales** 10K mark
- Beltola report may be **tabled** on Wednesday

2. Drop articles and helping verbs wherever possible

Consciously avoid the use of a, an, the, is, are, were in the headlines. They make a sentence longer without serving any purpose. Even without their use, the meaning is clear. E.g.:

- (A) Boy dies in (an) accident
- North Indians (are/ were) attacked in Mumbai.
- (The) Meghalaya Police launches crackdown on NSCN ultras.
- Chinese (have a) hand in Lhasa violence: Dalai Lama.
- Sonia to (will) address rally in Beneshwar.

3. Use present tense and future tense

The most important characteristic of news is timeliness. So, try to avoid the feel of the past. Use words that imply present tense and future tense as far as possible.

- Ceasefire offer confuses (not confused) contractors.
- Hailstorm lashes (not lashed) Guwahati, 2 die
- Gilani says (not said) 'sacrifice' of Kashmiri people won't go waste
- China to compensate Lhasa victims

4. Use active voice

Headlines demand the active voice rather than the passive. Active voice helps cut out extra words and extra weight which exhausts the headlines. It also helps give the feel of the present.

- Panel submits report on monument protection (better than 'Report on monument protection' submitted by panel)
- Mumbai police trains State cops (is better than 'State cops trained by Mumbai police')
- Speeding coach kills Airport worker (is better than 'Airport worker killed by speeding coach')

5. Do not over abbreviate

Although headlines permit limited space, do not in any case use arbitrary or rare abbreviations. Headlines need to be understandable, so only better known abbreviations should be used.

- UGC sanction helps Assam Varsity get a facelift *is acceptable.*
- CPM call to forge Third Front *is acceptable.*

- KDJA biennial meet held *is not acceptable. Spell it out as* Kamrup District Journalists Association.
- Golden Jubilee of PXX concludes *is not acceptable*. *Spell it out as* Puwati Xahitya Xabha.

6. Use subject

Mention the subject in the headline wherever it is known. If the name is known, then use the name, otherwise another title that identifies the subject. However, if the person is not very well known by name, then the title should be used for better identification. Use of Active voice automatically brings on the necessity of using the subject. Eg,

- Government sanctions Rs. 60 lakh for pisciculture in Asom (is better than Rs. 60 lakh sanctioned for pisciculture in Asom)
- Sonia Gandhi to address rally in Beneshwar (is better than Congress President to address rally in Beneshwar)
- Enquiry Commission blames Govt. for cataract tragedy (is better than Govt. blamed for cataract tragedy)

7. Use of quotation marks

When certain parts of direct speech are significant enough to be used in the headline, then it is put in quotes. Unlike the use of double quotes in the main body of the news story, in the headline only single quotes are used. At times when a certain word or phrase is used in some special way, then also quotations are used.

- 'Appoint local youths in gas cracker project'
- 'Development council not to be alternative to ST status'
- Protest rally against 'corrupt' officers
- English to make way for 'Panglish': Experts
- Rabha Hasong Cultural Festival to 'foster unity'.

8. Use of punctuations

One has to be very careful while using punctuations in the headline as they can have special use in the headline apart from their normal use. The 'period' or 'full stop' for instance is not used at the end of the headline. It may be only used in abbreviations to make them more understandable. For eg.

- Govt. losing crores of rupees every year

Comma is used as a substitute for 'and' in order to save space. It is also used to separate two clauses. For eg

- Salaries of CM, Speaker, MLAs hiked
- Accident on highway, two people die

The hyphen can be used to link two separate words in a headline

- Asom: We'll oppose IOC-AOD merger

The question can be used in special ways too.

- What's common between *Race* and Amul Butter?
- Asom going the Maharashtra way?

The colon also has special use, for instance in attribution. It can also be used as a space saving device.

- Guwahati master plan will be finalized within 45 days:GDD
- Sarala Das: A tribute
- Bush to the common man: Fools all.

The Lead: After the headline comes the lead. The lead serves as the intro to the news story. As such in most hard news stories, the lead contains the most important information and summarises the story. It usually contains the most important of the 5 Ws and H. Such a lead is called the summary lead. A good lead does not normally exceed 35 words. So a lead has to be very precise and pin pointed, and the language crisp and easily understandable. The lead should always contain the subject. Depending upon the amount and kind of information to be given, the lead can be written in one or two sentences. Here is an example.

Two rebels of the banned Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC) were killed in an encounter with police at Umkiang in the Jaintia Hills on Thursday.

This lead has enumerated the *'what', 'where', 'when'* and '*how'* elements very clearly in just 25 words.

Here is another example :

Forest Minister Rockybul Hussain today made an appeal to the members of the State Assembly to contribute Rs. 1 lakh from their funds for extensive aforestation programmes in their respective constituencies.

In this lead the elements of '*who*', '*what'* and '*where*' have been summarized.

While writing the lead it is always important to find the appropriate verb to use. **Always use action verbs** to give the reader the best picture of what happened. Consciously avoid weak verbs and vague words.

For instance never say 'A fire ***occurred*** in Fancy bazaar on Monday night'. ***Occurred*** is a very vague word. Instead use a verb that will describe what the consequence of the fire was. 'A devastating fire **damaged/ gutted/** about 200 shops in Fancy Bazaar on Monday night' is a much better sentence for a lead.

Again how the *'when'* element or the time element is expressed needs to be taken care of. If you are using the perfect form of the verb in the lead, like has/ *has been awarded, has/ has been damaged,* has/ *has been killed*, *has emerged* etc, then the when element need not be mentioned. Eg

*Assam **has emerged** as one of the major beneficiaries of the new Centrally-sponsored scheme 'Multi-sectoral Development Programme' for Minority Concentration Districts (MCDs). Assam **has been earmarked** a whopping Rs. 703.60 crore.* But if the past tense of the verb is used in the lead, like awarded, damaged, killed, emerged etc, then the time element is required. Eg

*Assam **on Tuesday emerged** as one of the major beneficiaries of the new Centrally-sponsored scheme 'Multi-sectoral Development Programme' for Minority Concentration Districts (MCDs). Assam **was earmarked** a whopping Rs. 703.60 crore.*

Apart from the summary lead there are various other types of lead which you have already been told about in your Course 2. They all follow different style and vary depending upon the kind of story and the individual style of the person who writes the story.

The Body: This is the main part of the news story where the details are provided. You must have already learnt in Course 2 of your programme that Hard news stories follow the **Inverted Pyramid structure**. So, accordingly the more important details are to be placed in the early part of the story and the less significant details are placed towards the end. Always

remember that hard news stories do not have a conclusion. They simply end. Here are a few rules of grammar and usage which are to be followed while writing the body of a news story.

*All Assam Students' Union(AASU) leaders today **met** Governor, Lt. General (Retd) Ajai Singh and **discussed** with him the issues connected with sealing of Indo-Bangla border, Majuli island……*

*The President of the Sports Club of Guwahati Pankaj Kalita **was killed** after he **was attacked** with sharp weapons……*

In stories where the actual time of an event is not known or is not important, the present perfect form of the verb is used. Say, *has been named, has said, has announced* etc. e.g.

*The Asian Development Bank **has projected** that India's GDP growth will moderate to 8% this fiscal from 8.7% in 2007-08.* (Today/ yesterday/ on Monday etc are not mentioned.)

Present tense is often used in order to emphasize timeliness. E.g.

Refusing to lie down, Avian Flu, that bounced back in parts of West Bengal for the second time in a month, broke out in Jalpaiguri district prompting the aurhorities today to order mass culling.

In a bid to boost the production of bamboo, considered to be an important cash crop, the National Bamboo Mission is training about 30 farmers of Golaghat, Sivsagar and Jorhat districts at a compositor training centre here.

For news stories that speak about events that will take place in the future are expressed by the use of the auxiliary verb will – *will come, will speak, will arrive etc. e.g.*

*The Young Men's Christian Association(YMCA) **will organize** contests for school students, women and its members at the St. Joseph's Parish Hall, Panbazar on March 30.*

*Prime Minister Manmohan Singh **will reach** Guwahati on a two day visit to the North East on April 20.*

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.4: Enlist five basic rules for writing a good headline?

_____

_____

Q.5: Enlist five basic rules for writing a good lead?

_____

_____

Q.6: Enlist five basic points to be kept in mind while writing the body of a news story?

_____

_____

Q.7: What is the maximum word limit for a good lead?

_____

_____



ACTIVITY 11.2

1) Compare three good newspapers and compare the headlines on the first page of each. Note whether the rules for writing headlines are being followed by these newspapers.

2) Cut out 20 reports from different newspapers without the headlines. Write your own headlines for these reports following all the rules. Now compare the headlines given by the newspaper and the ones you have given. Which are better and why?

3) Take one regional daily and take up all the news stories on the first page. Convert all headlines and leads written in passive voice to active voice.

4) Read five news reports and note down the main points like who what, when, where etc. Now rewrite the reports in your own way following all the rules.



11.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed about the language and style of the Indian English language media and the style of writing for print media and cyber media. Here is a quick wrap of what we have discussed.

1. The English language media in India use a blend of the Queen's English, American English and Indian English.
2. Although basic principles of news writing remain the same, the language and style varies from newspaper to newspaper. Each newspaper has a style book which it follows to the core.
3. The basic of writing good news is keeping the language simple and sentences short.
4. Use of active voice, present and future tense, the subject and strong, action verbs add to the flavour of news.
5. Use of quotations and punctuation marks should be done appropriately and judiciously.
6. Abbreviations should be used to the minimum, confusing words and technical jargons should be avoided or explained in easy words.



11.6 FURTHER READING

1. **Essentials of practical journalism** — *Vir Bala Agarwal, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi.*
2. **News Writing –** *George A. Hough, Kanishka Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi.*



11.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No. 1: Indian English, British English and American English.

Ans. to Q. No. 2: A stylebooks is a booklet or list of rules stating a newspaper's preference, where there are choices, of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, abbreviations and use of numerals.

Ans. to Q. No. 3: Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual

Ans. to Q. No. 4: 5 important points to be remembered while writing a good headline are:

a. Build the headline around a strong verb
b. Drop articles and helping verbs like a, an, the, is are, were etc. wherever possible
c. Try to avoid the feel of the past. Use present tense and future tense
d. Use active voice. It helps cut out extra words and also helps give the feel of the present.
e. Do not over abbreviate. Although headlines permit limited space, do not in any case use arbitrary or rare abbreviations.

Ans. to Q. No. 5: 5 important points to be remembered while writing a good lead are:

a. Contain the most important of the 5Ws and H in the lead.
b. Limit words within 30 to 35 words and use not more than 2 or three sentences.
c. Always use action verbs to give the reader the best picture of what happened.
d. A good lead will always contain a subject.
e. The language should be crisp and the sentences precise.

Ans. to Q. No. 6: 5 important points to be remembered while writing the body of a news story are:

a) Always use very simple language and short sentences.
b) Avoid the use of complicated words, metaphors, figures of speech. Explain technical jargons.
c) Write in active voice wherever possible. It makes sentences shorter and direct.
d) Spell numerals up to 9 and beyond that write in numerals.
e) News stories about events that have already taken place are written in the past tense. As such they use active verbs like elected, injured,

killed, damaged, awarded etc. or passive verbs like was elected, was injured, was killed, was damaged, was awarded etc.

Ans. to Q. No. 7: 30 – 35 words.



11.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Short Questions (answer in around 300-500 words)

Q.1: Compare news writing for print media with news writing for radio.

Q.2: Compare news writing for print media with news writing for TV.

Q.3: Compare news writing for radio with the news writing for TV.

Q.4: What are the basic ingredients of a good radio news script?

Q.5: What are the basic ingredients of a good TV news script?

B. Long Questions (answer in around 150 words)

Q.1: The language used by the Indian English language media is a curious mixture of British English, American English and Indian English. Comment.

Q.2: Do you feel that the Indian English language media makes up a total mess of the English language?

Q.3: Among the news writing for print media, audio media and audio-visual media, which one do you think is the most challenging and why?

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UNIT 12: WRITING FOR DIFFERENT AREAS

UNIT STRUCTURE

12.1 Learning Objectives
12.2 Introduction
12.3 A Meaningful Relationship between Mass Media and Readership
12.4 Culture and Avenues for Reporting Cultural Matters
12.5 Sports Reporting
12.6 Reporting on Political Issues
12.7 Conflict Reporting
12.8 Let Us Sum Up
12.9 Further Reading
12.10 Answers to Check Your Progress
12.11 Possible Questions

12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

A successful completion of studying this unit shall enable you to —

- Discuss how to write news reports on the topics of culture, sports, political issues and also conflict,
- Describe how to prepare for reporting on these issues,
- Analyse things which should be done and those to be avoided while reporting on these matters, and
- Explain the significance of reporting on these issues for journalism.

12.2 INTRODUCTION

There is hardly any need for saying again how important are these aspects for our life – culture, sports, political issues and conflict. There are several important points to be noted here. First of all – these four aspects are very much integral parts of our life and without them life would not be as colourful. Secondly, as news items, all the important and newsworthy events happening in these fields must be reported in the news media so that the readers are not deprived of their right to know what is going on around the country or the world. Thus, in addition to developing our expertise in all

other fields of journalism, it is also necessary that we develop expertise in reporting of these issues so that whenever required, we do not face any problem in doing so.

12.3 A MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MASS MEDIA AND READERSHIP

As mass media, specially news media has such a powerful influence on our life, it is important that a meaningful relationship should grow between the two entities. In this relationship, mass media should try its best to inculcate or develop a good taste among the masses for all the issues in life including arts, culture, sports etc. Media on its part should be able to guide the masses towards the growth of such a culture gradually over the years.

On the other hand, the masses should also keep an eye on the media and actively participate in reciprocating the same by guiding the media in case it goes off from its bounden duties to the society.

Such a constructive and meaningful relationship is vital for the healthy growth of a society anywhere across the globe.

So under these circumstances, reporting on the issues mentioned above is important for the cause of the society as well as that of journalism.

12.4 CULTURE AND AVENUES OF REPORTING CULTURAL MATTERS

Culture is a concept having far wider meanings and thus it is difficult to define it in a few lines. In simple words we can say that the concept embraces the entire system of lifestyle both at individual and social levels of any society or country as a whole.

However, for our convenience we would restrict our discussions only to a few narrowed down aspects of the big concept of culture.

Very often, you must have noticed that majority of the newspapers and TV / Radio channels have various columns and pages on different happening activities in the field of culture which includes – drama performances, cinema, art exhibitions, cultural programmes among others.

For reporting on these issues, it is always better if the journalist deputed for them has at least some basic understanding of the field.

For example – if a reporter is instructed by the editor of the newspaper of TV channel to go and watch a single drama or a drama festival and write a critical report / analysis for the media, then it would be definitely helpful if the person knows about this art form with some background knowledge.

In many of the news media outlets this job is assigned to senior and experienced persons.

Let me cite an example here. In the city of New York in the USA there is a long and big street called Broadway which is full of many theatre halls where dramas and musical drama performances are carried out everyday for interested audiences.

This author had read the autobiography of a very senior editor of *The New York Times* – a daily newspaper - in which this person was entrusted with the responsibility of reporting for drama criticism for several days of the week in addition to his usual regular duties. This senior journalist would visit a theatre hall on specific days and return home after the performance in the early hours of morning to write the criticism in the next day's issue of the daily.

Similarly, when a journalist has to review a film for the media, it is always better if he or she has some theoretical background understanding about film criticism.

In many newspapers and media organizations this job is 'outsourced' or in other words assigned to someone outside the organization who is renowned for the expertise in this craft.

12.5 SPORTS REPORTING

It is needless to say that sports is a huge passion for such a large number of people across the world that many newspapers, magazines, TV / Radio channels are specially dedicated to sports have been established over the years and all of them are thriving in their own field.

For reporting on sports affair also, it is better if the person assigned for this desk or beat is knowledgeable about the rules of various games

and sports – more particularly those popular in that specific area or region of the country or world. Again, if that journalist is interested in any kind of sports, that would be highly helpful in carrying out his or her assignments.

While it is a general requirement that a sports journalist should know at least the basic rules and regulations about most of the sports activities yet it would be more helpful if the person is an expert in a specific sport which is much more popular in that country or state or place.

Further, it is not only enough to know about the rules of different types of sports activities. It is also necessary that the journalist knows the background history of the most popular sporting stars of these games.

For example – in August, 2011, the famous Brazilian star football player Lionel Messi along with the former player and now famous coach Diego Maradona came to play a friendly promotional match in Kolkata which is a major event for Indian football world. Under such circumstances a journalist would do a good job if he or she can write stories about Messi or Maradona's background to the masses.

Of course, for audiences interested in football, there is no need for introducing both these great players. But, for the upcoming youngsters interested in the game, it may not be so. Stories of such players would create a big interest among the people for renewing their interests in the game.

Then again, it may also so happen that in addition to publishing or broadcasting the usual sports stories and happenings in the country or the world which are of everyday interest to majority of the readers, every media house or publishing group may have its own specific favourite sports event on which they would like to emphasize more by giving more coverage.

We can cite the example of *The Hindu* group of publications which accords special wide coverage of chess, horse-racing which is usually not seen in other media houses. This is a question of each individual publishing group's interests and there is nothing to generalize on this issue.

A sports journalist cannot and also should not remain satisfied and content just by reporting and presenting various news items about sports events assigned to him or her. It should also be a part of the duty and

responsibility of the journalist or the media house to keep a close watch on the various policy issues regarding this field. This is more specially necessary in a country like that of ours where there is a lot of political game-playing in most of the major and popular sports fields.

Particularly for the Indian sports scenario over the last more than a decade's time, we have seen that the various sports governance bodies including the Indian Olympic Association have become significant places of accommodation for influential political leaders and others who never seem to be interested in relinquishing their position of power at any cost. And the price we have been paying for this reason is out there in the open for everyone to see.

Further, it is important to note that for a sports journalist it is not enough to report only on sports events. But one must also keep a close tab on the various policy matters of the government regarding this field in general as policy matters are an important determinant which affect the sports governance in a country, specially more for a country like India.

Besides, the question of covering any particular sports event would also depend upon to a big extent on the interests of the owners or management of the media house or the editor.

Besides, it is unfortunate to mention that the issue of taking banned drugs for enhancing performance by sportspersons is becoming a serious issue over the years – both at international and national levels. Thus, a sports journalist would also be expected to have at least some basic knowledge about this aspect for convenience of reporting and presenting facts in the proper manner.

It can also be mentioned here for the benefit of our learners that the renowned Indore-based Rani Laxmibai National Institute of Physical Education which has been recently converted into a university conducts a specialized diploma level course in Sports Journalism. This course would give a good insight into the different aspects of the profession.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: What is Cultural Reporting and how would you prepare yourself for this job?

_____

_____

Q.2: What are the specific aspects required for a sports journalist?

_____

_____



ACTIVITY 12.1

1) Attend any cultural programme in your locality and prepare a report on the same.

2) Review a film which you have seen recently.

12.6 REPORTING ON POLITICAL ISSUES

For reporting in political issues - the journalist must be well-versed with the overall political scenario of the country or the state or the region in general. It is important as this shall help the journalists to keep track of all important political developments to be analyzed properly tracing them from the past and also predicting the future course of such developments.

Depending upon whether a political beat journalist is employed in a big metropolitan city or a state capital city one may be assigned a specific political party or group for reporting.

Reporting on political issues gains special importance sometime before and after general elections are held either for state assembly houses or the Parliament and also whenever there develops a crisis in the political situation of the country.

This is because a prominent philosopher of Political Science said that in politics, there is no permanent enemy of friend. What the philosopher meant was that in politics, alliances and groupings keep changing any time

depending upon the immediate and future goals of power to be achieved irrespective of any ideological principles. So, even the political parties or groups with the oddest of odd ideological principles may join hands for gaining political power anywhere in the world.

In the Indian scenario, an important trend that has become almost established is the politics of alliance government in centre as well as states. In this arrangement the leading political party in these governments is ever dependent upon other parties forming the alliance for the government's survival. And many a times, the leading party has to give in even to unjustified demands of its allies at the cost of peoples' welfare.

Further, many a times partners of alliances or sometimes even members of the ruling party themselves create troubles for the government for their own personal gains. There are many examples of such incidents.

This is why like any other field of journalism, journalists engaged in reporting for political issues must keep their eyes and ears open round-the-day throughout the year so that not a single of such events escape his or her eyes and the news is missed by that news media group.

In the field of political reporting there is another very important aspect which needs to be seriously pursued by the scribes' fraternity in this field.

That is – visits of politically important persons from foreign nations for various reasons – primarily led by developing bilateral relationship and at times to attend major conventions. Equally important is the visits by the senior political leaders of our country to foreign nations.

It is very important because in addition to our internal political situation, many a times we are dependent on our relationship with our neighbours nearby or at far off distances across the globe for various reasons. For example, we need to have a good relationship with our immediate neighbours in the South-Asian region for various issues including trade, movement of people etc. among others.

Similar kind of relationship is also necessitated with major countries around the world like USA, Russia, China and also global bodies like the UNO, UNESCO, ASEAN etc.

As we all know that this is the age of globalization a high level of inter-dependence among the various nations of the world is much more a necessity than formality. This is because nowadays any event or issue happening in any country may have wide-ranging and far-reaching impacts repercussions across the nations of the world. We know what happened when the recent economic recession swept around the world causing lot of problems to many people and nations.

So, whenever a journalist is assigned to cover such visits of senior political dignitaries into the country or while accompanying Indian Prime Minister, President or any other important dignitary on foreign tours, it is the responsibility of the journalist to very keenly study the background of the bilateral relationship between these two nations and do the homework before facing the person or delegation.

This shall allow the journalist an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of the relationship leading to the present situation. This will surely help the scribe to frame his or her questions accordingly, probing deep into the future scope and developments of the relationship.

Same is the case with journalists visiting foreign nations with Prime Minister, President or any other important leader for that matter.

We know that the masses or the audiences of media – whether entertainment or journalism – are usually passive in nature and we can not expect them to remember historical background of important events and happenings or any kind of development of the society. This is why it is highly important that, the historical background in a simple and brief language understandable to the common people should be invariably given whenever any such report is to be published. This will enhance the understanding to large extent.

Journalists in the field of political reporting should also be careful about the sentiments of people or various ethnic groups, major communities and castes because politics is a vocation that thrives mainly on such issues, specially in our country at least. So, while deciding about the various permutations and combinations of alliances at regional or central levels, these considerations based on caste, community etc. play a major role in

determining the same. That is why a scribe reporting on political issues must also be adequately familiar with the population structure of the nation at central and regional levels and the relationship among various regions and communities as well.

12.7 CONFLICT REPORTING

This is one highly important area becoming more and more prominent and essential in the world of journalism over the decades.

Conflict is such an aspect that has to necessarily happen anywhere wherever there are human beings and this may happen over any issue at all without any limit.

Conflict is a term that is difficult to define because of its many dimensions. However, for the benefit of our learners here we would restrict our understanding of the concept only towards these few aspects – ethnic or communal conflict, political conflict, conflict between secessionist groups demanding creation of a separate sovereign country and the state, conflict within the state not necessarily involving a demand for creation of a separate sovereign country.

While conflict itself is a difficult and complex activity, reporting conflict is also equally, if not more difficult and complex. The journalist in conflict reporting has to proceed very carefully so as not to antagonize any one particular side of the parties involved in the conflict. Further, the journalist or the newspaper or the TV / Radio channels can not take any side or be partial to any of the parties involved which is the cardinal principle of journalism.

Besides, in day-to-day parlance the term conflict brings up the image of secessionist groups fighting for attention of the state authorities, agitations for various causes etc. Under such circumstances the responsibility of a journalist is heightened to a big extent. This is because in addition to the mental and intellectual exercise of preparing a good and comprehensive report about the issue the journalist may also have to endure a lot of physical stress to reach out to places where active conflicts are going on so that an authentic on-the-spot report can be filed for his or her news media.

On top of it there are other difficulties also. For example – there may be more than one rival groups or factions of the secessionist outfits involved in the conflict who may try to scare the journalists away or try to force their own opinion on the media at the cost of a balanced news item.

On the other side there is a constant monitoring of movements of the journalists who are known to be specializing in conflict reporting from the police or security forces. And there have been a lot of instances when journalists on this beat were interrogated for finding out clues of parties active in different kinds of conflicts. That is why journalists working on this beat are always walking on the razor's edge with the danger of being targeted from both sides of the conflict.

This is one vulnerable point in the functioning of a news organization and journalists where one has to decide how to tackle such problems in the real life. In other words where to draw the lines on becoming very close to the sources in the parties involved in the conflict and how not to relent under pressure from both the conflicting parties as well as the security forces and police.

This is a sensitive beat because out of the normal responsibilities and duties of journalism a journalist must present both sides of the conflicting parties' views in the news report for which one has to know or contact sources in them. On the other hand a journalists must not also be seen to be getting too close with any such group or faction so that nobody can accuse him or her of being biased in the news reports.

So far from your studies in this course you must have come to know that cultivating personal-level sources in all the possible places or organizations including secessionists, rebels' outfits is a necessity for becoming successful in one's career. However, the state machinery at times are highly interested in trying to find out information from journalists about various aspects of the conflicting parties to strike at them at an opportune moment.

This is why there always remains a dilemma of whether to reveal your sources' identity or not. It may be of interest to you to know that several years ago the Government of India made serious efforts in trying to get a

Bill passed in the Parliament which would have made passing on information about secessionist or terrorist groups mandatory if a journalists knew anything about them by virtue of his or her professional job responsibilities. However, this Bill could not become a law because of opposition from many quarters.

An unfortunate incident happened in the USA where a journalist was imprisoned for several months for not revealing the identity of a few sources in a case involving criminal activities.

It needs to be reiterated here that it is quite a natural and normal activity to have sources in any organization, outfit or office etc. by a journalist because of his or her professional responsibilities. This organization may be a government office, a political party, social organization, even secessionist or so called terrorist organizations or outfits etc. anywhere.

This emanates from the fact that as a journalist it would be your bounden duty to present the facts and figures and the actual picture behind any happening. While trying to live up to this expectation in a serious manner the problems and challenges mentioned here may be faced at any time during your career. Hence, while reporting in this segment a journalist must be very careful to balance all these aspects and never allow anyone to cast a doubt on his or her performance that the person was becoming more and more closer to one specific party of conflicting sides.

We do not even need to go far. Even internally, it is somewhat difficult to work for a journalist in several states of the country because of presence of such situations involving security forces, secessionist and terrorist organizations posing a major challenge to get facts and figures out and presenting the same to the readers outside the conflict zone.

If you have kept track of media records of various times you may come across several news items about how journalists have been victimized, assaulted, threatened while trying to carry out their professional responsibilities at conflict zones across the world. However, this must not be taken too much by heart because as against this, there are thousands of reputed journalists working under such circumstances in all the countries

of the world never facing any problem. Even if they might have faced any difficulty, they have managed to come out of it by their hard-earned skills.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS - D

Q.3: What is the importance of political reporting?

_____

_____

Q.4: What do you understand by the term conflict?

_____

_____



12.8 LET US SUM UP

While the cardinal principle of journalism remains the same – presentation of facts and figures in the exact manner as it must have happened yet the approach and preparation for different segments of reporting is somewhat different from each other because of the nature of the field. For example – the approaches for reporting on conflict issues would be different from that of reporting for cultural affairs or sports or political issues. While the observations given here form just a tiny portion of the preparations and different aspects of each individual field, once you get into the field you would become more and more experienced in the field and be able to perform in the best of the practices. The theoretical preparation from completion of this course combined with an adequate background research and field experiences will prepare you properly for facing the real world of journalism in this beats. You must always maintain the basic principles of journalism, remain impartial, try your best to find out the exact facts and figures for presentation to your readers and be ready to work hard. This will bring in the required amount of recognition, laurels for you in future.



ACTIVITY 12.2

1) Study few reports in newspaper on conflicts in different places of the world and discuss them in the class.



12.9 FURTHER READING

- Shirley Biagi (1992), *Interviews that Work: A Practical Guide for Journalists*, 2nd edition, Wadsworth Publishing.
- Edward Jay Friedlander and John Lee (2000), *Feature Writing for Newspapers and Magazines*, 4th edition, Longman.
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12.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No. 1 : Reporting on different happening activities in the field of culture which includes – drama performances, cinema, art exhibitions, other cultural programmes, etc. is called cultural reporting.

For reporting on these issues, the journalist deputed for them should at least have some basic understanding of the field. For example – if a reporter is instructed by the editor of the newspaper of TV channel to go and watch a single drama or a drama festival and write a critical report / analysis for the media, then it would be definitely helpful if the person knows about this art form with some background knowledge.

Ans. to Q. No. 2 : For reporting on sports affair it is better if the person assigned for this desk or beat is knowledgeable about the rules of various games and sports – more particularly those popular in that specific area of region of the country or world. Again, if that journalist is interested in any kind of sports, that would be highly helpful in carrying out his or her assignments. It would be more helpful if the person is an expert in a specific sport which is much more popular in that country or state or place. It is also necessary that the journalist knows the background history of the most popular sporting stars of these games.

Ans. to Q. No. 3 : Reporting on political issues gains special importance sometime before and after general elections are held either for state assembly houses or the Parliament and also whenever there develops a crisis in the political situation of the country. In politics, alliances and groupings keep changing any time depending upon the immediate and future goals of power to be achieved irrespective of any ideological principles. So, even the political parties or groups with the oddest of odd ideological principles may join hands for gaining political power, anywhere in the world. It is very important because in addition to our internal political situation, many a times we are dependent on our relationship with our neighbours nearby or at far off distances across the globe for various reasons.

Ans. to Q. No. 4 : Conflict is a term that is difficult to define because of its many dimensions. However, we could restrict our understanding of the concept only towards few aspects – ethnic or communal conflict,

political conflict, conflict between secessionist groups demanding creation of a separate sovereign country and the state, conflict within the state not necessarily involving a demand for creation of a separate sovereign country.



12.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Short Questions (answer in around 150 words)

Q.1: What are the responsibilities.

B. Long Questions (answer in around 300-500 words)

Q.1: In addition to simply reporting on sports activities, a sports journalist needs to be familiar and concerned about two other aspects. What are they and why?

Q.2: How is political-reporting connected to other social issues in our country?

Q.3: What are the challenges of conflict reporting and how to overcome them?

Q.4: What is background research and why is it important in journalism?

Q.5: What are the common challenges to reporting in all these four fields in journalism?

Q.6: Is it a must that a sports journalist has to be a good sportsman himself or herself? Why?

Q.7: Define conflict reporting in your own language with examples.

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REFERENCES FOR ALL UNITS

- Shirley Biagi (1992), *Interviews that Work: A Practical Guide for Journalists*, 2nd edition, Wadsworth Publishing.
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