UNIT 10 : TV NEWS

UNIT STRUCTURE

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10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- describe the different operations and functions in a news room,
- explain the basic features and structure of TV news,
- discuss what constitutes a news package,
- analyse writing for visual and presentation skills.

10.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous units, we have discussed about the growth of Doordarshan and other private TV channels in north east India with special reference to Assam.

In this unit, we will explain the different operations in a news room. You will also be introduced to the basic features and structure of a news story. You will analyse the writing for visual and presentation skills along with what constitutes a news package.

10.3 NEWS ROOM AND ITS OPERATIONS

Inside the News Room : The TV news industry calls for speed and accuracy. It takes a lot of hard work and co-ordination to run a show every day with standardized precision.

Every night the bulletin is aired on its right time and everything goes on so well. It seems to most of us that there is no big deal in the production of such programme. But the inside story is totally different. A whole lot of people work hours at a stretch to bring out one such daily bulletin which should not only be accurate in terms of the news it contains but also in terms of the co-ordination of the visuals and other sound and graphic effects. All these are not as easy as it looks like from this side of the screen.

Those who go into broadcast news have to enjoy the challenge of working in tight deadlines in an environment of what is at times called 'controlled chaos'. Step into a TV newsroom right before a newscast, especially in a small-to-medium station where everyone seems to have the workload of more than one person. You might see something like this: Reporters are putting finishing touches on late-breaking copy, the producer is yelling at someone because several scripts are not in hand, a video editor is cursing one of the bulky machines and the sports editor is rehearsing copy in a corner and telephones continue to ring.

Inside the studio just before the newscast all the persons concerned with the production of the news cast remain busy to check the faultless telecast of the news. For this purpose the engineers remain busy checking cameras, the floor crew rearranges lights while the news producer and the editors remain busy doing their final tasks of compiling the copy and editing the related visuals and in the studio the anchor gets ready for the news cast.

Right at the time of the news cast the jingle of the news bulletin plays and the anchor starts casting the news. At the Production Control Room the Producer gives signals to the concerned technicians to run the related visuals. If all goes as planned, cameras and microphones work, videotapes run without any hitch, then the show runs smoothly. As soon as

it gets over, the crews start their job one more time for the next news cast. The same routine is followed by the TV channels day in and day out.

How it all happens : Newsgathering is a specialized area and it requires special skills to provide news up to the minute. It has become highly competitive because news channels apart, most entertainment channels, with the exception of music channels, have at least one news bulletin a day.

News departments have very little time to prepare. They are mostly required to 'rush' to the scene of action. Therefore, they are equipped with the separate sets of equipment and other paraphernalia. They also have their own personnel who are always on the move covering events all over.

Let us look at the roles and responsibilities of various news personnel.

News Editor : News Editor (NE) heads the news room. He/she is the *de-facto* captain of the concerned news channel and is responsible for all news telecast by the channel. News Editor looks after the operation of this department in terms of personnel, budget and policy. It is the News Editor, who actually hires and fires personnel; he/she also battles with other department heads for fiscal resources. He/she determines what the station will cover and how on a day to day basis. Of course he/she consults and takes advice from the channel head to determine the policy. He/she plans, instructs and ensures that stories are available for bulletins while providing direction to the channel.

Looking at the vast array of responsibilities of the news editor we cannot overlook the importance of the news director. The news director does not operate in a vacuum though he/she reports to a program director or station manager. The Program Director or the Station Manager in turn reports to a higher level manager. Management sets policy for sales, programming and news and the department heads in those areas are responsible to carry out those policies.

In case of smaller stations it is more likely that each person will have several jobs. For instance, the news editor often performs the job of

the lead anchor or the station's primary on-air news talent. On other situations he may perform the job of even the program director or station manager. On some occasions, the news director will double as the assignment editor and be responsible for sending reporters and videographers to cover stories. He may also coordinate the work of stringers, stationed in distant locations.

News Producer : The news producer (NP) is the person who collates and packages stories from various sources for a bulletin. The stories selected by the News Producer are put together by the News Producer, who ensures that all video/audio/graphics required for a story are in place. Many a time, the News Producer is required to co-ordinate live inputs for a news bulletin from various reporters/correspondents and incorporate them into the bulletin. He or she also ensures proper mix and balance of stories within a bulletin. A news channel could have as many as six to eight news producers.

Chief Reporter/Assignment Editor : The chief reporter or assignment editor instructs reporters and camerapersons to cover specific events and also assigns the reporters specific beats. The usual duty of an assignment editor is to start the day by scanning local and regional newspapers in order to ensure that the station has not been scooped by the competition. News tips come via wire-services or are even faxed to the newsroom by those seeking coverage. The assignment editor tracks scheduled and unscheduled stories and keeps in close contact with field reporters/ correspondents on a daily basis, providing them feedback on the quality of stories, the inputs required, and alerts on follow-ups.

Reporter/Correspondent : The correspondent develops sources and gathers news from the field, mostly on tape. The reporter also does interviews, vox populi (the voice of the people), piece to camera (stand-ups), and writes the story for the newscast. He or she ensures that the visuals required for a story reach the station well in advance for necessary editing. Some news channels prefer their reporters to edit the story complete

with commentary, visuals, interviews and piece to camera. When required, reporters also provide live inputs from the scene of action. Live inputs include telephonic reports from the reporting site or, as is common these days, the reporter's presence on the camera.

Of late, multi-tasking is becoming the norm in many news networks. The reporters are also expected to shoot and report the story for television with some help from other technicians. Further, they are also expected to edit their stories and transmit them to the channel's newsroom. This increases pressure on reporters. However, organizations that have already begun hiring multi-skilled personnel opine that such an arrangement minimizes the number of personnel in news operations.

Cameraperson : The camera person operates the camera to cover an event. The cameraperson either works on his or her own or with instructions from the reporter to cover different parts of an event. For smaller stations, the cameraperson doubles up as reporter too. It is his or her responsibility to provide good visuals and cutaways as also good audio for a story. A cameraperson working for a news channel is required to have good reflexes and takes risks to get the best visuals and sound bites.

Each story is discussed in a meeting with the reporter, the assignment editor and the producer. After the story is deemed worthy of coverage, it is the reporter, who will prepare the ground work, for example set up interviews, etc. It is the responsibility of the camera person to record the appropriate visuals. For instance, if the story is about a candlelight vigil, of course the candles and people will have to be captured on video by the cameraperson. All of this together can take several hours, or at times can be done in as little time as 30 minutes.

Stringers : Stringers are basically hired reporters who even supply the visuals of an event which has occurred at a place where the station's correspondent or reporter could not reach. Stringers are not permanent employees of a TV station but they are paid on the basis of the number of events being aired by the station reported by them. When an event to be

covered is outside the limit of the city in which the television station is situated and it cannot be economically covered by deputing the staff cameraman of the station, services of stringers are utilized. Stringers are basically reporters or camerapersons who are selected and empanelled according to the prescribed procedure and may be utilized for coverage of news events of importance. Stringers should also have adequate facilities and equipment to undertake the coverage and should be good camerapersons with good news sense.

Video Editor : Mere reporting of an event and capturing in video cameras do not result in a news production but many other factors are employed in making it presentable. A news report consists of interviews, visuals and the reporter's voice and this assembled product is known as a package. A package is the way most reporters tell their story. It is generally anywhere from a minute to three minutes depending on the time the producer gives the reporter. The time can vary depending on what the story is about, the amount of good video and interviews that the reporter has. The reporter has to write the story, pick what parts of interviews will be used, decide on the video and then have the whole script approved by the producer. This process takes a lot longer than it appears on the newscast. The person who actually gives shape to a news story in coordination with a fast hand at the editing machine is known as the video editor. The video editor edits the video inputs from the reporter in accordance with the latter's story/script.

The duration of the story may be of just two minutes which includes seeing the reporter out in the field or in the newsroom but the editing process (assembling the bites and the visuals together) may take much longer time, often stretching to hours.

Voice-over Artiste : In most cases, the reporter provides the commentary. Some TV channels prefer to use professional voice-over artistes for quality. The voice-over artiste provides background commentary for the news story, that is, records the voice-over for the editor to shape the story.

Anchor/Newscaster : The person who reads out the news stories in the newscast is known as the news anchor or newscaster.

Weathercasters/Sportscasters : These are talent who present weather and sports reports with inputs from the meteorological department or the field with adequate graphic support.

Technical Editors : The technical editor is responsible for putting together different shots and audio to create a news story and then combining various news stories to create a news bulletin. He/ she should have the knowledge of appropriate editing techniques as well as good news and aesthetic sense. News nowadays are often shot live. It calls for online editing in real time. The Technical Editor should be able to handle that.

Multi-Media Producer : The multi-media producer (MMP) in a TV news channel ensures that all stories are written for the channel's website and updates it on a regular basis. The MMP is also responsible for images, graphics, and illustrations and all other content on the website.

You must have realized by now that though the final product, that is the news bulletin, may look like something that is very easy to make, it is actually not so. If it does look easy to make, it means that everyone on the news team from the on-air to off-air or to people working in the studio has done their parts correctly. When something goes wrong, there could be one or many problems. It's hard to tell. But all in all, you can see and listen to a newscast sitting comfortably and imagine that news-casting is a simple affair. But it is not something that comes easy.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



Q.1 : Who heads the news department in a Television Channel?

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Q.2 : What is the role of a technical editor in a TV station?

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Q.3 : Do you think multitasking is an important quality of a reporter? Explain.

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Q.4 : Who is a weathercaster?

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Q.5 : What is the job of a multimedia producer?

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10.4 BASIC FEATURES OF TV NEWS

This section considers patterns in structure, duration, and sequencing of items of television news bulletin, as well as uncovering the principles of the selection of events creating the content of the news bulletin.

There are channels which air variety of programmes along with news, like say Doordarshan national channel. Then there are exclusive 24-hour news channels, which only air news and current affair programme,

like NDTV 24x7. Duration of a news bulletin is also different across channels. While channels with variety programmes have three or four news bulletins in a day, some news channels have hourly news bulletins.

Except for those in small markets, most news departments are large in relation to a station's total employment. Employee strength of the editorial departments range from about a dozen to nearly one hundred depending on the importance the concerned channel give to the news. Television news programmes are put together by reporters, anchors, copy writers, video tape crews, mobile outdoor broadcast (OB) van operators, operators of special-effects generators and computer graphics systems, tape editors, and a production crew working in a studio, the control room, and the video tape room.

There is a discernable pattern to a daily television news operation. Putting together a television news broadcast involves research, writing, interviewing, recording the visuals and editing, before the actual show. In the news room, hours of anticipation are followed by a sudden quiet as the action moves to the news set and the control room. The show goes on the air in an atmosphere of concentrated effort and often of some anxiety. As closing credits roll, there is satisfaction, relaxation and even excitement. If significant problems arise during the news cast (a rare occurrence), the news producer, assignment editor, anchors, and other key personnel meet with the program producer for a brief post mortem (a discussion of what had worked, what did not work and why).

A TV newscast cannot match the wide and instant coverage of radio or the in-depth report of print news. The time taken up by visual material does not allow for a probe, or even adequate background information. Indeed, a TV newscast cannot present the most interesting and significant news since the cameras just cannot be always present where such events take place (e.g. a coup, an invasion, a war, or a cabinet meeting).

A TV newscast is, however, the ideal medium for presenting ceremonial events like coronations, swearing-in-ceremonies, arrivals and departures of VIPs, parades, inaugurations, and sports. Unfortunately, the hard core news does not lie in these events-even if they are telecast **'live'**-

and constitute only a small percentage of the daily fare of news. However, things are changing. With the audience becoming more demanding and competition heating up, television news is covering hard news.

The standard newscast in India used to employ the radio technique of reading out the news in a formal manner from a script (or cards or on an electronic "**teleprompter**"), interrupted with an occasional still, a map, or a moving picture. Frequently, the news was tailored to the visuals available. However, with the acquisition of **ENG** (Electronic News Gathering) and the latest computerized equipment, the number of visuals has increased. Indeed, the news bulletins of Doordarshan's channels, as also those of the many satellite channels, have in recent years taken on the format of 'magazine' programmes, with the newscaster playing a proactive role in 'presenting' the news.

Some of the popular programmes of Doordarshan are News bulletins, general news magazines, and panel discussions of public affairs. The visuals which are included in these programmes are basically slides, film clips, maps, diagrams, charts, animations and graphics.

Some **characteristics** of TV news reports :

- A TV news story is short; normally with a duration ranging between 90 seconds to 120 seconds. However, in some rare cases, the duration might extend further depending on the importance of the event or incident covered.
- Since TV news is visual, a lot of meaning is made by the images themselves. Therefore, it is imperative to capture action shots to make it more gripping.
- News bulletins usually have a dramatic opening with music and montage (compilation of assorted shots). Every channel has its unique signature music and style which helps the viewers identify the news bulletin.
- Most news bulletins have attractive headlines to capture the attention of the viewers. The most important happenings find place in the main headlines.
- Editing is of prime importance in television news since the way a

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Sound bite : Sou brief vide tape recorded comment or short interview.



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story is edited can change the angle and context of the news. There is a lot of scope for manipulation in editing. The editor should, therefore, maintain professional integrity and must not engage in unethical practices. The editing of television news should be ethical in the sense that the shots should be edited and assembled in a manner that they do not appear out of context and do not portray something that never actually happened.

- Television news editing is normally kept simple - only cut to cut editing is used - and use of visual tricks, usually used in films like slow motion, blurring, repetition, etc is avoided.
- There is always some kind of slant rather than straight factual reporting in television news. Every television story in its narrative comes with a point of view. Though objectivity is an important yardstick of good reporting, television news very often has the tendency to over simplify by creating heroes and/or villains.
- Television being an audio-visual medium puts importance on look. A visually appealing look and pleasing personality is required to be a good anchor/newscaster. Good grooming and positive body language could be an asset for an anchor.
- Another characteristic feature of television news is the inclusion of **sound bites.** Interesting and engaging sound bites add life and credibility to the news and the background sound of the sound bite helps portray situations. Sound bites in TV news are normally around 10-15 seconds each.
- The language used in television news is conversational. The viewer must be able to understand it immediately.

Television news often has the reporter appearing and talking to the camera on the location in order to explain, simplify or narrate something that cannot be visually shown. It is called 'Piece-to-Camera' (PTC). It also lends credibility to the news item.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.6 : What should be the ideal length of a TV news story?

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Q.7 : What is signature tune and how does it help the viewer?

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Q.8 : Why should the editor maintain professional integrity?

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Q.9 : What is a PTC?

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Q.10 : What do you mean by ENG?

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10.5 STRUCTURE OF TV NEWS

A television news programme is both horizontally structured (a bulletin is organised into several sequences), and at the same time, it is vertically enriched by, for instance, narrower interactions (for example dialogue between a newsreader and correspondent, a third party interviewed by a correspondent), different narrative structures, and various modes of expression and representation and numerous other elements.

All television news bulletins are made up of stories based on real

happenings in the world, real events, meetings, arguments, conflicts, compromises, agreements, etc. These stories need to be packaged and shown to the audience in a way that they can easily understand. Packaging involves putting the relevant visuals in logical order and creation of interesting and logical narratives by the programme makers. Most stories on a news bulletin should have a simple structure.

- These reports should have an **Introduction**. The introduction will usually answer some of the five Ws: Who, What, Where, When and Why? It might even raise the question of how it happened. But one important element should be kept in mind — it is not to give away all the important detail as answers to these questions. If this factor is not taken into account then there would be little point continuing with the story. So the introduction may leave some of these questions unanswered and also may well pose several **Questions** or describe significant **Problems** that need exploring. At times an introduction needs to be a bit more sophisticated, it should provide the answers to WHAT, WHO and WHERE, but tactfully leave the WHY and HOW- to be answered in the main report. However, it is not a fixed formula. Introduction will depend on the nature of the story.
- The introduction of the report is followed by the **main body** of the report in which the answers to some or all of these questions are elaborated. Part of this elaboration will be contained in the visual images that provide the evidence that the story is genuine.
- The final part of the report is the **conclusion**. Here the loose ends of the story are tied up bringing the story to a close. But it should be kept in mind that all conclusions may not be neat and sometimes they may end with more questions.

One can observe a certain **consistency, predictability** and **universality** in the structure of a television news bulletin across the channels in different states or even countries. Its structural and temporal frames are predetermined not only by the regularity of its appearance (daily programmes, fixed timing, relatively stable time duration), but also by its

focus on certain **categories of events** - human interest, politics, economy, social issues, sports, etc.

The process of communication begins with **opening** and **headline sequences**; then it is further developed in a news items complex, that is, it is either divided into sections or it forms one whole, and the communication finishes with the summary of the main issues and a **closing sequence**.

There are several news items in a bulletin. Prioritisation of news item in terms of placement and time duration follow the **principle of relevance.** It means that more important news items are placed first and are longer. Many of them also appear in headlines or in news reader's abstracts. In addition, the **ordering of items** may be affected by the working of other rules, for instance, criteria of foreign and home, content preference and others. In particular, attention is paid to the first and last items of a bulletin. The importance of the first item may be highlighted by including it in all headline sequences and at the same time its content/character/angle can also reveal the values of the producer/news channel. As uncovered by a number of British researchers and analysts, the final item is seldom negative or disturbing. Although diversity in content and form is typical for the central part of a **news items block**, some pieces of information are held back to the final part that covers sports, light/off beat events and rather positive human interest stories.

Lead story : The important story of bulletin.

You may have noticed that headlines of a news bulletin are often repeated at the end. It is intended to help the viewer who may tune in while the broadcast is already on the air and may thus miss the headlines at the start. It also helps the newscaster to recapitulate (recap) and sum up important stories and indicate to the listener that the newscast is now nearing the end.

The arrangement of items in a bulletin requires considerable skills and editorial ability. We have to keep in mind that a bulletin is more than the compilation of the news items. A news bulletin has a character of its own.

In practical terms, different stories on a broad subject domain have to be integrated as much as possible. For example, all stories about a

major national development or an important international event have to be taken together, as far as possible. They have to be brought together and made into a compact form. This is to be done in such a way that after the main news in the story, the reactions, repercussions, comments, along with any offshoots or sequels, are arranged in a logical and interesting manner.

Let us suppose that there is a story about India winning the last of the three test matches against Australia and thereby winning the home series 2-1. This series win has come after 24 years. Obviously there is a lot of excitement among the Indian fans about this win. Now, the news of this win will naturally be the **lead story** of the bulletin wherein the statistics will be provided and the scores would be mentioned. Information like who was adjudged the man of the match and man of the series will be given. The story will also say that this series win has come after 24 long years. After this story, several related stories will also follow wherein comments of the cricket experts, reactions of the fans, family members of the cricketers reacting to the win in their respective hometowns etc. will be accommodated. Immediately after this, an analysis of the match might also follow wherein the anchor will discuss the significance of the win with a cricket expert and dissect the match to discuss the turning points of the game. Finally, the anchor will sum up the situation both on and off the field as a result of this historic series win by India.

In newspapers, all these stories would be different items, with separate headings and placed alongside the main story or even separately on different pages. But it is not so in television (or even in radio). In television, one has to bring all the related stories together in the form of a roundup, avoiding unnecessary repetitions and reducing the less important stories to the barest minimum so that the overall story is not too long. Yet it should be as comprehensive as possible.

This arrangement is called for when there is a major story to be handled. Even otherwise, related items should be grouped together. But one has to be careful while doing so and understand the individual significance of each story and examine if stories that are loosely connected can be grouped together or not. For example, suppose there is a major

story about India approaching the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna, Austria to convince the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) of countries about its civil nuclear programme and you have another story of an Austrian cultural delegation arriving in New Delhi to perform at the India Habitat Centre as part of a cultural exchange programme. In such cases, it is not necessary to place the second story alongside the major item. If there is time you can put it separately later in the bulletin.

In newspapers reporters have assigned beats (subjects/areas they cover). In most of the large news channels reporters have been assigned beats. Like some newspapers have editors looking after particular subject (Business Editor, Current Affairs Editor, Features Editor, Sports Editor, etc.), news channels have different producers looking after different content area.

Some may deal with **accidents and conflicts** involving stories of accidents, disasters, strikes, demonstrations, terrorism, and various problems. The second group may deal with **politics** (issues of politics and diplomacy). Some producers may deal with **economic matters**, some with **social matters, culture, sports, etc.** Channel management decides on the specific content area and the number of producers handling an area, depending on the editorial policy of the channel.

Television news is very often labelled as very personalized and individual centered. It means larger problems and issues are depicted through the portrayal of an individual's personal story. At times, it fails to portray the larger dimension and complexities of the problem/issue. Then there is the growing tendency to **sensationalise** and **dramatise** events to attract the attention of the audience. Often it crosses the border of reality and enters into the arena of fiction. The growing tendency to put more importance on entertainment is another area of concern in television news. Not only more items on entertainment-world are finding space in mainstream news, the form of news is also changing to put in more entertainment quotient. These, of course are not exclusively Indian phenomenon. It is happening all over the world. Market is taking its toll on the way news has been perceived and presented.

The content of television news displays a certain pattern in news

selection. The process of picking a particular event as a newsworthy element is directed by a set of criteria defined by **Galtung & Ruge** as **news values**, and described by **Fowler.** The news values reflect organisational, genre-related and socio-cultural factors participating in news selection. Also, he offers twelve titles and more specific names for them:

- frequency
- threshold
- absolute intensity
- intensity increase
- unambiguity
- meaningfulness
- cultural proximity
- relevance
- consonance
- predictability
- demand
- unexpectedness
- unpredictability
- scarcity
- continuity
- composition
- reference to elite nations
- reference to elite people
- reference to persons
- reference to something negative (Fowler 1991 : 15-16).

The **frequency** factor suggests that events happening within 24-hours production time are likely to be reported. The **threshold** takes the size of the event (large-scale, major events) into consideration, and the **unambiguity** of an event guarantees its selection. **Meaningfulness** is influenced by geographical, historical, cultural closeness, whereas **consonance** reflects what people expect to happen, or want to happen. If the **unexpectedness** of the event gets it selected as newsworthy one, then **continuity** is a factor backed by the event already found in a previous

bulletin. The **composition** of the whole bulletin decides on the newsworthiness of one item, being part of the whole. **Reference** to elite nations and to **elite people** depicts media interest in powerful and popular elements. **Reference to persons** provides a space for identification with the individual person's experience and fate. **Negative** events generally attract more attention than positive ones.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.11 : What are the three main parts of a television news story?

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Q.12 : What are the five Ws that the introduction usually answers?

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Q.13 : What part do visual image play in the news story?

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ACTIVITY 10.1

a) Watch the television news bulletin at nine on NDTV 24X7. What are the different parts of the bulletin?

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b) Find out which issues are being covered in that bulletin and in what chronology.

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10.6 NEWS PACKAGE

A news package is a type of storytelling that is found on television newscasts. A complete news package consists of a pre-produced story that includes reporters, videos , sound bites and standup (piece to camera). A package is a self-contained taped news report. At the time of news broadcast, usually the news anchor reads an introduction live after which the pre-recorded story is shown.

Mere reporting of an event and capturing in video cameras do not result in a news production but many other factors are employed in making it presentable. A news report consists of interviews, visuals and the reporter's voice and this assembled product is known as a package. A package is the way most reporters tell their story. It is generally anywhere from a minute to three minutes depending on the time the producer gives the reporter. The time can vary depending on what the story is about, the amount of good video and interviews that the reporter has. The reporter has to write the story, pick what parts of interviews will be used, decide on the video and then have the whole script approved by the producer. This process takes a lot longer than it appears on the newscast. The person who actually gives shape to a news story in coordination with a fast hand at the editing machine is known as the video editor.

A common part of a news package is the appearance of a reporter talking into the camera. This is called a "standup" or piece to camera because the reporter is often seen standing in front of the camera at the

scene of the story.

In the case of magazine-style news programming, packages can be 20 minutes or longer. This type of news presentation is best for complicated stories or ones that have multiple interviews.

A good package– essentially pre-recorded reports featuring interviews and sound effects– will grab the listener's attention and tell the story in an entertaining and creative way.

10.7 WRITING FOR VISUAL AND PRESENTATION SKILLS

PREPARING NEWS COPY :

Television news presentation is an audio-visual presentation where the language and style of the news should be such that it conveys the thrill and excitement, the urgency and pathos of a given event.

Preparing a news copy is something reporters are engaged in, day in and day out. Though it may appear to be a normal, everyday thing to do, it is actually a very challenging job. The process begins the moment a reporter is assigned to cover an event. He visualizes the news story before he starts shooting the event. It is not only enough for him to record the incident and report it on screen. He has to coordinate with the cameraperson and allied staff (light men etc) to get the necessary visuals. Again he has to think about 'angle' for the news story. Finalizing the 'angle' means deciding from which perspective to look at the incident because a single event can have various dimensions.

Once these preliminary decisions are made, he records the event. Covering an event implies its coverage both in audio and video forms. Different shots of the same action are taken, from different angles so as to convey the desired meaning. It is also important to include extra shots which can be used as **cutaways** in editing. Cutaways are extremely important and an absolute necessity. Remember, your story will be broadcast over the TV Channel. In case the channel decides to take a stance and set an agenda that involves your story, the anchor will have to speak at length using your footage. If you don't have enough footage, the channel will

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have to show the same footage over and over again, as we see in today's news bulletins. That is why, along with the basic footage, cutaways are equally important. For example, if you are interviewing a street vendor or a shopkeeper where something has happened, or a shopkeeper who has been looted by the local goonda, don't stop with interviewing the shopkeeper and the employees or shooting the broken showcases, furniture, etc. Take footage of the street, the other shops, establishing the locality. If time permits, go ahead and shoot the approach road to the shop and interview some neighbours. This allows the channel editors to build up the story for broadcast, making it more interesting for the viewers. Audio is recorded in the form of ambience (natural) sound, sound bites of relevant people of the event and piece-to-cameras (PTCs) of the reporter.

Finally when the shooting is over, the reporter comes back to the office and may either do the editing of the news story himself or take the help of technical editors who are specially engaged for the purpose of editing.

But before the actual editing can begin, the reporter has to prepare a news copy. While writing copy based on the report gathered, the script writer/reporter should examine the following points:

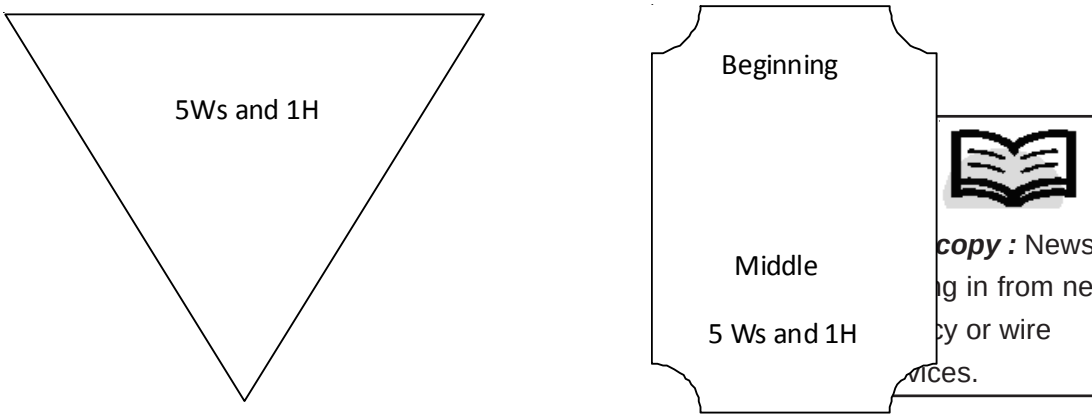
- Story points : What are the things that need to be highlighted
- Pictures : See if relevant visuals are present and if not, how to make do with the existing footage.
- Narration, referred to as Voice-overs (VO), and bites also known as Sound–on-Tape (SOT) : This is the audio that describes the related pictures.
- Hand out materials such as press release : These are materials that are provided by the PR personnel engaged in the event. These help decide on the 'angle' of the story besides providing valuable background information.
- Time allotted : A news story can run for 30 seconds or continue for several minutes. The time available for the news story is a key factor in deciding the content of the news story.

As far as the general structure of a television news story is concerned, most news channels follow a definite pattern. However unlike



way : A shot
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the inverted pyramid style of a print news story the TV news story follows a straight line or chronological order. The five Ws and one H are answered in each sentence. The sentences of broadcast media are much smaller than the print media news stories. The script writer follows the rule of giving one idea per sentence.



PRINT **BROADCAST**

Writing Styles for Print and Broadcast Media

You can condense the formula for TV news story into the acronym WHAT.

W What happened

H How did it happen

A Amplify the introduction

T Tie up loose ends

When preparing a news copy, the first important thing you need to remember is that all television news stories have three different parts - the beginning, middle and end. If you carefully watch how news is presented in all television news channels, you will notice these three different parts. Let us discuss briefly about these three different parts.

The Beginning : You don't need a pen or keyboard to begin writing a television news story. You do need an organized mind and knowledge of your viewers' interests and concerns. Before you put the first word on paper or enter the first sentence in your computer, you will think about the story and its effect on viewers' lives.

- **What's In it For Me? :** When writing the beginning of a news story, find a WIFM for your story or What's In it For Me? It is the question you should imagine every viewer asking. When you are faced with a news story, ask what's in it for your viewers. Viewers will not listen to or watch for long a story that does not affect them. Finding a WIFM helps news writers know which information should be included in and omitted from stories and hence stay focused.
- **Focus :** The focus of your television news story is the point or points you want viewers to understand. If you are using **wire copy** as a source of information for a story, your job is to choose from the wire copy information that will interest your viewers. You put that information into context by defining a focus.
- **The Lead :** By asking a WIFM you define a focus. You separate information that should be included in a story from that which shouldn't. You have a general plan for the direction your story will take based on your viewers' interests and concerns. Now you are ready to pick up a pen or sit at a keyboard.

The first sentence of a television news story is called its lead. Television news stories need to hook or grab viewers' at the very beginning and pull them into the story. They need to start strong. They need a good lead. The lead is the most important sentence you will write.

In searching for a strong lead, don't exaggerate the story. Don't distort or misinterpret it. Do look for the most compelling way to draw viewers into the story. Your first sentence may determine whether viewers stay tuned.

The Middle : A television news writer starts strong with a lead that grabs or hooks viewers. It is the "sell", which means you sell the story through the lead. Then the writer delivers the goods, following the lead with the "tell". You know about the 5Ws and H. These are the six questions journalists traditionally strive to answer in their stories. Your job as a television news writer is to answer questions. This can be done in the form of a voice over that narrates the story over relevant visuals interspersed with related sound bites. In this part of the news story, the reporter can

make an appearance in the form of a **Bridge PTC**.

All journalists strive to answer the basic questions. But print and wire copy writer have a luxury television news writers do not – the luxury of time. Print and wire copy stories can fill paragraphs and pages with detailed answers to readers' questions. Television news stories must be short to keep viewers' attention. How long does it stay interesting to you? Time constraints on television news stories virtually guarantee writers will be forced to cut some information.

What is acceptable information to leave out of your television news stories? How much is too much to leave out? As you become more comfortable writing news stories, you become more confident of the decisions you make about including and omitting information. As you come to know your viewers better, you come to recognize the information that will interest them. As you better educate yourself about the top issues affecting your viewers, you become better able to recognize the information that impacts and relates or adds context to those issues.

The End : In this part of the news story, the news writer puts an ending to the story. He may do this in different forms. The reporter may summarize the entire story by a personal appearance before the camera in the form of a PTC or may even end it in a Voice Over. The news story may even conclude with a promise to the viewers to bring more information in subsequent stories. For example: "We'll continue to follow this story and will bring you all the details"; or "We'll update you on this story as details become available." However, it should be remembered that false promises are dangerous and should be avoided.

Basics of Film Making : Along with the above skills it is important that a TV News reporter learn the basics of film making. Even though in many cases, a cameraman accompanies a TV Reporter, it is the duty of the TV reporter to direct the cameraman as to how a shot is to be taken, the angel of the camera, the types of shots that have to be taken. Sometimes, an OS (Over the shoulder shot) is better while conducting an interview. At the same time a low angel shot may look odd if a reporter is interviewing a criminal. A shot against the light may give a bad picture,



...heras in certain cases, a silhouette may add effect to the story.

...bove all, one must remember that along with social responsibility, media is a business and a reporter can earn name for herself if she is able to give visually good footage along with a good story. Whatever the logic behind it, good TRP rating always boosts the earnings of a TV Channel and it would be the duty of a reporter to think of contributing towards it.

ge PTC : This kind ...C is used when it ...t possible to show ...ething visually, or ... the reporter ...s to show ...cene of ...n. Bridge ...can also ...sed when ... is a diversion in ...tory.



LET US KNOW

Six steps to news copy preparation :

1) Understand the news-worthiness of an incident.
2) Grab the story line and then proceed for collecting facts through research / interview / dialogue / documentary / archive etc.
3) News judgement intuitions and writing skills should then be applied.
4) Determine the essential elements of information of the press release or report. Always use the Ws and H formula and organize the elements in order of importance.
5) The lead should be written with only one important feature.
6) The rest of the details should be placed in the order of diminishing importance.

RULES FOR WRITING FOR TELVISION :

Here are a few rules to follow while writing news for television.

1) Write in conversational, informal style.
2) Be specific, simple and direct. Vague, generalized action or information tends to be confusing. The first requirement for writing news for broadcast is clarity. Understanding must be immediate.
3) Avoid flowery language.
4) Be brief. Each sentence, ideally, should contain only one idea or image. Give them a unit of information at a time. If you give them too much information all at once, they can't take it in.
5) Use appropriate words. Keep a dictionary and a thesaurus handy. Make use of it at the slightest instance of doubt.
6) Be sure you know the meaning of the words you use. Be aware of

fine distinctions in words. (example: difference between “says” and “claims”).

7) Choose words that are familiar to everyone in the audience. Do not use technical jargons unless absolutely necessary.
8) Write in present tense and active voice.
9) Do not bombard the viewer with huge numbers and figures. The fewer the figures, the better. Round off wherever possible, except in cases where the exact number is significant.
10) Spell out figures from one to eleven. Use numerals for 12 -999. Use hyphenated combinations of numerals and words for figures above 999. (Example: 33 - thousand.)
11) Avoid errors in writing the script. A news script with grammatical errors is difficult to read and could land the news anchor in very awkward situations.
12) Underline words that require special emphasis or words that may be difficult to pronounce. In case of difficult pronunciations, particularly in case of names of people and places write down the pronunciation also beside the word.
13) Never split words or hyphenated phrases from one line to the next.
14) Avoid abbreviations, except in cases where the abbreviation is more popular or better known than the
15) Cross-check facts for accuracy before you write.
16) Identify all people clearly. Be careful while using attribution. Don’t end a sentence with attribution. It should always come at the beginning of the sentence. (Example: Don’t write **“……”, the Prime Minister said**. Instead write **The Prime Minister said, “……”**)
17) Don’t begin a story with a person’s name unless the person is famous. Use a “qualifier” to introduce the person. Include the name later. (Example: Chairperson of the company, Prakash Das)
18) Use complete name in the first reference, thereafter use just the last name or first name.
19) Omit doubtful names and places if they are not meaningful to the story.

20) If age must be mentioned, the age has to come before name. (Example: The victim, 21-year-old Rob Roy.)

21) Use direct quotes carefully and sparingly. It is better to use sound bites. If sound bites are not available on tape, and it is unavoidable to use a direct quote, then set it off with such phrases as: “In the words of..” “As he put it...” or try to paraphrase as much as possible.

22) Avoid use of the word ‘meanwhile’. Most news channels make indiscriminate and liberal use of this word, which is incorrect. Use it only when a close relationship exists between subject matter and intervening time.

23) Grab the audience’s attention by writing a strong lead.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.14 : Write the basic rules of writing numbers in a television news story.

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Q.15 : Write the basic rules of writing titles and names in a television news story.

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Q.16 : Unlike the inverted pyramid style of a print news story the TV news story follows a ..... or chronological order.

Q.17 : What is a bridge PTC?

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Q.18 : What are the 5Ws and 1H?

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ACTIVITY 10.2

a) Prepare a television news copy on an important happening in your locality. Use the basic principles of writing a television news story keeping in mind its three different parts.

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b) Rewrite the following passage into a television news story using the basic guidelines of broadcast writing that you have learnt :

New Delhi, Jan 18 (PTI) : The Government's decision to reduce troops in Jammu and Kashmir was open to review "as and when the situation demands", Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee said today.

"The decision was taken in the context of a particular situation. It is always subject to review. If the number of infiltrators increase or the situation deteriorates, of course there will be a review of

this decision," he told reporters after an Investiture Ceremony of the National Cadet Corps (NCC) at their Republic Day camp here.

To a question on recent terrorist attacks in Jammu and Kashmir, he said the decision would be reviewed "as and when the situation demands" but these attacks "are not enough reason''.

Observing that the prevailing levels of infiltration has gone down, Mukherjee said the terrorists always chose major national events like Republic Day or Independence Day or the visits by certain foreign dignitaries to grab world attention.

The Defence Minister said India has been consistently emphasizing that Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf "should stick to his own commitment" that Pakistani soil would not be allowed to be used for terrorism and anti-India activities.

Maintaining that militancy depended on the logistical support provided to it, he said the current reduction in cross-border infiltration of terrorists was "mostly due to fencing and stepping up of vigilance by security forces".

To a question on the confidence-building measures (CBMs) with Pakistan, Mukherjee said it was unfortunate that "continuous and unabated support" was still being given to militants by that country.

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10.8 LET US SUM UP

- Newsgathering is a specialized area and it requires special skills to provide news up to the minute.
- News Editor is the *de-facto* captain of the concerned news channel and is responsible for all news telecast by the channel.

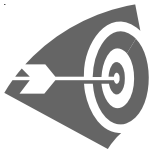
- The news producer (NP) is the person who collates and packages stories from various sources for a bulletin.
- The chief reporter or assignment editor instructs reporters and camerapersons to cover specific events and also assigns the reporters specific beats.
- The cameraperson operates the camera to cover an event. The cameraperson either works on his or her own or with instructions from the reporter to cover different parts of an event.
- Stringers are basically hired reporters who even supply the visuals of an event which has occurred at a place where the station's correspondent or reporter could not reach.
- The person who actually gives shape to a news story in coordination with a fast hand at the editing machine is known as the video editor. The video editor edits the video inputs from the reporter in accordance with the latter's story/script.
- The voice-over artiste provides background commentary for the news story, that is, records the voice-over for the editor to shape the story.
- The person who reads out the news stories in the newscast is known as the news anchor or newscaster.
- The technical editor is responsible for putting together different shots and audio to create a news story and then combining various news stories to create a news bulletin.
- The multi-media producer (MMP) in a TV news channel ensures that all stories are written for the channel's website and updates it on a regular basis.
- Putting together a television news broadcast involves research, writing, interviewing, recording the visuals and editing, before the actual show.
- Sound bite is a brief video tape with a recorded comment or short interview.
- The most important story of a news bulletin is known as the lead story.

- A complete news package consists of a pre-produced story that includes reporters, videos, sound bytes and standup (piece to camera).
- Television news presentation is an audio-visual presentation where the language and style of the news should be such that it conveys the thrill and excitement, the urgency and pathos of a given event.
- A TV news story has three parts – introduction, main body and conclusion.
- A television news bulletin or newscast is a regularly scheduled television program that reports current events and affairs.



10.9 FURTHER READINGS

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7) Shrivastava, K. M. (2005), *Broadcast Journalism in 21st Century,* New Dawn Press, New Delhi.



10.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No. 1 : News Editor.

Ans. to Q. No. 2 : The technical editor is responsible for putting together different shots and audio to create a news story and then combining various news stories to create a news bulletin. He/ she should have the knowledge of appropriate editing techniques as well as good news and aesthetic sense.

Ans. to Q. No. 3 : Multi-tasking is definitely an important quality of a news reporter. It means juggling different works and having the capacity to work under adverse situations. These days reporters are expected to shoot and report the story for television with some help from other technicians. Further, they are also expected to edit their stories and transmit them to the channel's newsroom.

Ans. to Q. No. 4 : Weathercasters are talents who present weather and sports reports with inputs from the meteorological department.

Ans. to Q. No. 5 : The multi-media producer (MMP) in a TV news channel ensures that all stories are written for the channel's website and updates it on a regular basis. The MMP is also responsible for images, graphics and illustrations and all other content on the website.

Ans. to Q. No. 6 : 90 sec to 120 secs.

Ans. to Q. No. 7 : News bulletins usually have a dramatic opening with music and assorted shots, called montage. Every channel has its unique opening music and montage. This is called signature tune or signature music. It helps the viewers identify the news bulletin.

Ans. to Q. No. 8 : Editing is of prime importance in television news since the way a story is edited can change the context of the news. There is a lot of scope for manipulation in editing. The editor should, therefore, maintain professional integrity and must not engage in unethical practices.

Ans. to Q. No. 9 : PTC or Piece-to-camera is a unique element of TV news where the reporter talks to the camera on location in order to explain, simplify or narrate something that cannot be visually shown.

Ans. to Q. No. 10 : ENG or Electronic News Gathering is news gathering which relies on videotape or digital equipment, as against the earlier method of newsgathering where reporters collected TV news with traditional film cameras.

Ans. to Q. No. 11 : Most stories on a news bulletin have a simple structure :

- They have an Introduction. This will usually answer some of the five Ws: Who, what, where, when and why. It might even raise the question of how it happened. Of course, if the introduction answers these questions in too much detail, there would be little point continuing with the story, so the introduction may leave some of these questions unanswered and also may pose several Questions or describe significant Problems that need exploring. Sometimes an introduction will be a bit more sophisticated, telling us the answers to the WHO and WHERE questions, but leaving it up to the main report to answer the rest –WHY? HOW? WHAT?
- Then there is the main body of the report in which the answers to some or all of these questions are provided and elaborated. Part of this elaboration will be contained in the visual images that provide the evidence that the story is genuine.
- Then there is the conclusion. Here the story is brought to a close and loose ends are tied up. Of course, not all conclusions can be conclusive. It may raise more questions or open avenues for further probing into a problem.

Ans. to Q. No. 12 : The five Ws are: Who, what, when, where, why.

Ans. to Q. No. 13 : Visual images are the main components of a TV news story. It adds meaning and authenticates whatever is being said, apart from keeping the viewers hooked.

Ans. to Q. No. 14 : When writing numbers for television news, the

following rules should be kept in mind:

- Spell out figures through ELEVEN. Use numerals for 12-999. Use hyphenated combinations for numerals and words above 999. (Example: 33 -thousand.)
- Round off numbers unless the exact number is significant.
- Use “st,” “nd,” “th,” and “rd” after dates, addresses and numbers to be read as ordinary numbers. (Example: “2nd Street,” “May 14th”)

Ans. to Q. No. 15 : When writing *titles and names* for television news, the following rules should be kept in mind:

- Titles precede names.
- Use complete name in the first reference, then last name OR first name thereafter.
- Omit obscure names and places if they are not meaningful to the story.
- Use phonetic spellings for difficult pronunciations.
- In age reference, precede the name with the age. (Example: The victim, 21-year-old Rob Roy.)

Ans. to Q. No. 16 : Straight line.

Ans. to Q. No. 17 : Bridge PTC is a kind of PTC which is used when it is not possible to show something visually, or when the reporter wants to show the scene of action. Bridge PTC can also be used when there is a diversion in the story.

Ans. to Q. No. 18 : **5 Ws** — Who, What, When, Where, Why and How.



10.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q.1 : Who is said to be the *de-facto* captain of a news channel?

Q.2 : Are stringers permanent employees of TV station?

Q.3 : Is there any basic difference between a news report and a news package?

Q.4 : Who is a newscaster?

Q.5 : What is a wire copy?

B) Short Questions (Answer each question within 150 words)

Q.1 : What is the role of a News Editor in a news channel?

Q.2 : What is the importance of editing in TV news?

Q.3 : A TV journalist has to speak in the language of television. Why?

Q.4 : Why is it necessary for a TV news reporter to learn the basics of film making?

C) Long Questions (Answer each question within 300-500 words)

Q.1 : 'Newsgathering is a specialized area and it requires special skills to provide news up to the minute'- Explain.

Q.2 : What are the characteristics of TV news reports?

Q.3 : What factors came together to promote the development of news channels in India?

Q.4 : What is the scope of television news in India?

Q.5 : How has the advent of ENG changed the entire face of TV reporting?

Q.6 : What are the salient principles of writing news for television?

Q.7 : How and why do you think there has been a steady decline in the quality of television news content?

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