



MEDIA FOR DEMOCRACY

DAR ES SALAAM SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

❖	MODULE NAME	NEWS WRITING
❖	MODULE CODE	JST05105
❖	DEPARTMENT	JOURNALISM
❖	MODULE LEVEL	ORDINAR DIPLOMA NTA LEVEL 5
❖	SEMESTER	ONE
❖	TUTOR'S NAME	REMMY VALERIAN AKARRO



OUR MOTTOR: MEDIA FOR DEMOCRACY





OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this course are:

- To introduce you to the nature and principles of journalism,
- To introduce you to the nature of news; news determinants and components; and the 5Ws and an H,
- To acquaint you with the knowledge on the news story structure; lead and its types,

To orient you on quotations, attribution and transitions

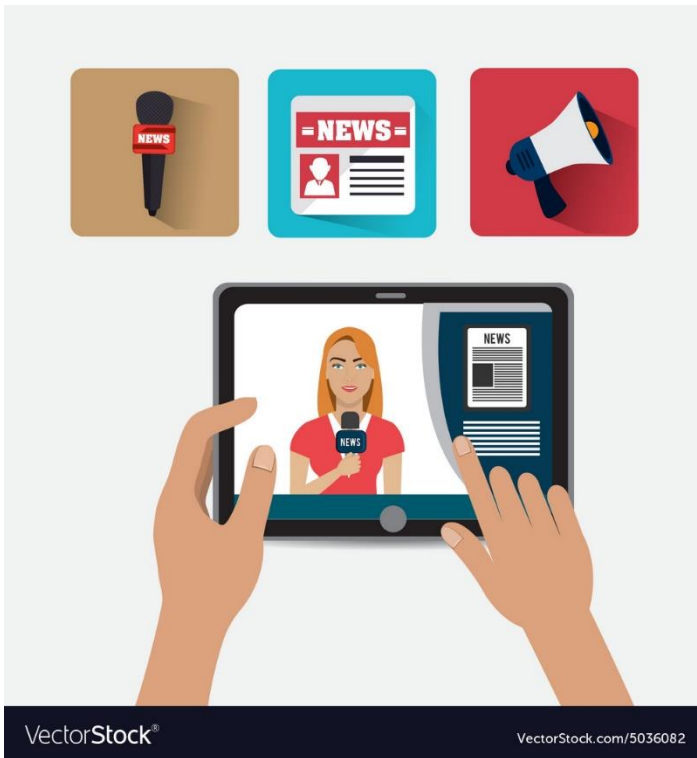
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course will introduce the students to news writing and reporting: How to write the lead/intro, techniques of news writing and reporting, news sources and techniques for newsgathering

This course is designed to train you to become skilled in writing publishable news stories. The course examines the basic definitions of news, types of news, news values, structures of news, and journalistic news presentation formats. The course also examines the various types of headline, leads, and the inverted pyramid, transitions and news structure.





- To furnish you with the knowledge of sources and resources for news,
- To enlighten you on how to handle press releases,
- To educate you on how to report speeches, press conferences, and meetings,
- To familiarize you with the nature, types of beats and beat reporting; and
- To introduce you to investigative reporting.



**THE SUBJECTS CONSISTS OF SEVEN TOPICS
WHICH ARE :-**

TOPIC 1 INTRODUCTION TO JOURNALISM

TOPIC 2 NEWS WRITING TECHNIQUES AND STORY ORGANIZATION

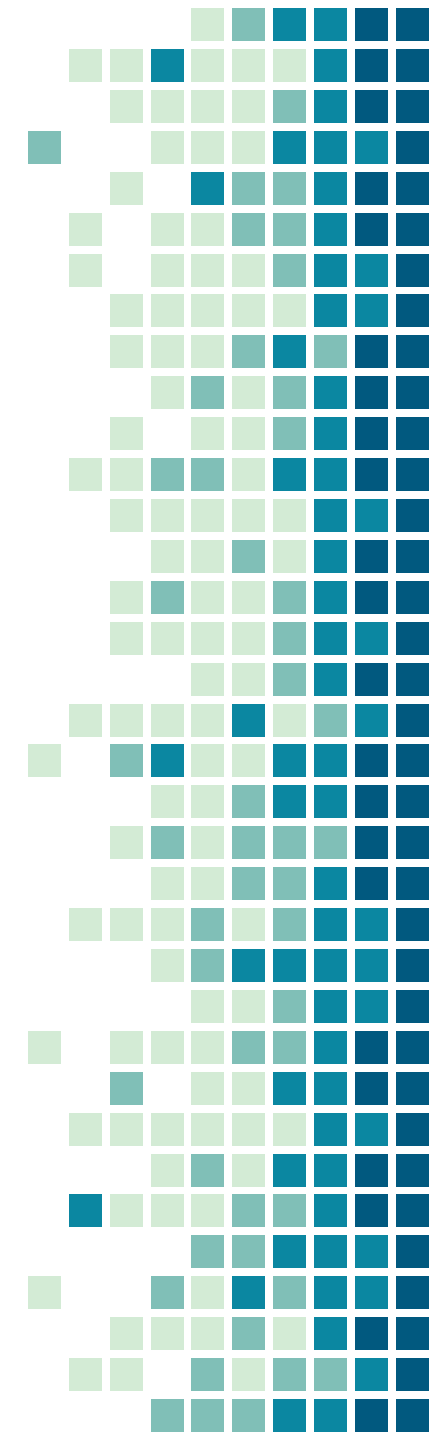
TOPIC 3 NEWSGATHERING TECHNIQUES

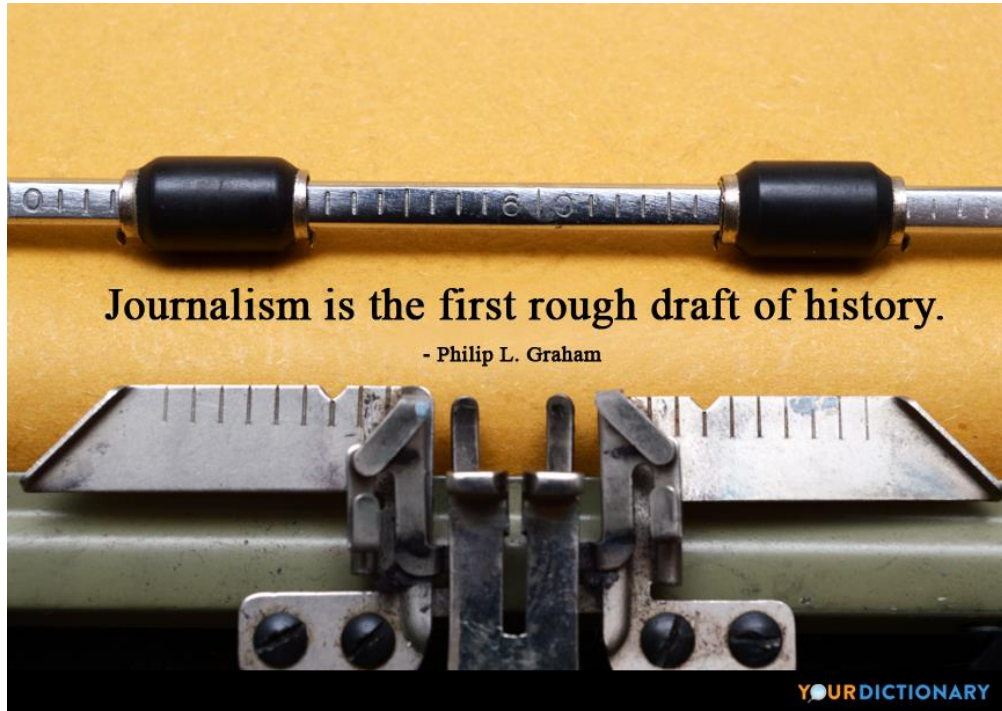
TOPIC 4 WRITING THE LEAD AND HEADLINES

TOPIC 5 SOURCES AND RESOURCES FOR NEWS

TOPIC 6 HANDLING PRESS RELEASE/NEWS RELEASE

**TOPIC 7 COVERING A BEAT - REPORTING SPEECHES, NEWS
CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS**





THE NATURE AND PRINCIPLES OF JOURNALISM

The nature of journalism is foreshadowed by such concepts as reporter, writer and terms like 'media'. Unlike journalism, the media refers to the institutions or broad social systems and infrastructure organizing, among other things, journalistic crafts. Perhaps it is better you acquaint yourself with the meaning of the term "nature" before embarking on exploration of the meaning of a broader concept of the "nature of journalism". The term nature simply means the essence of something or the most important quality (ies) of something that makes it what it is. Based on this meaning, the concept of the "nature of journalism" refers to the most notable features of journalism

[Watch video](#)



The most momentous features of journalism include:

- i. A distinctive form of expression (news reporting) just as poetry and prose fiction are forms of expression,
- i. A rich method of thinking and rendering news, facts and evidence,
- i. An art that follows systematic procedures in searching facts (intelligent account of the day), crafting (writing) news, editing news and reporting or publishing news,
- i. The reporting and commentary in the media on ideas and events as they occur,
- i. A system of check and balance or watchdog or fourth estate,
- i. An evidence-based research and verification with the creative act of storytelling. Its purpose is to inform communities about topics or issues that they value,
- i. A product of the imagination –in both an individual and a cultural sense –it plays a central role in the representation of indigenous people and their affairs, through the processes and formation of the public sphere.



These Principles Include:

1. To seek the truth
2. Accuracy and balance in reporting
3. Watchdog against corruption, abuse of power and evils in the society
4. Defender of human rights
5. Taking a neutral stance
6. Custodian of public interest

What is News?

Mitchel Chainley defined news as:

- The timely report of facts or opinions that hold interest of importance, or both for a considerable number of people.

Prof. Charles Coates defined it thus:

- News is what interests the reader, the viewer, the reporter, the editor, the producer, their spouses and their neighbors. News is what affects their diets and their lives.

Sam Zelman of CNN says:

- News is what is important because of its impact on society; it is what people need to know and what they want to know.

I will define news as an accurate, unbiased account of a current, timely event, which is reported in the mass media and is significant to a large number of people in a locality.



Elements of News Values

While definitions of news vary, the main determinant of what can be considered as news is “INTEREST.” To be news, an account of an event must be of interest to the readers, listeners or viewers. Interest in a story is determined by the news values. The elements that determine news values may be subdivided into two groups.

- a. Determinants
- b. Components
- c. News virtues
- d. 5Ws+H

Determinants

A determinant is a factor that sets the character of something, in this case, news. The determinants of news are as follow.

- a. Timeliness
- b. Proximity/geographic location
- c. Prominence/personality involved
- d. Consequence/impact/significance
- e. Human interest
- f. Novelty
- g. Conflict
- h. Necessity



The Components of News

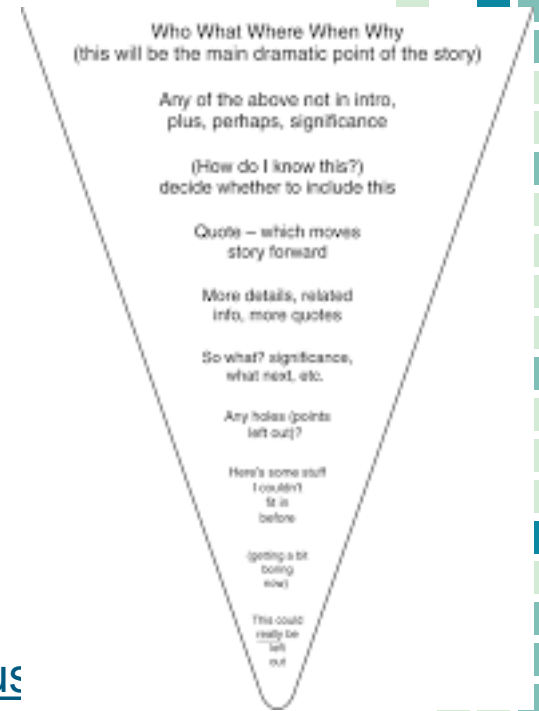
So far, we have been discussing the determinants of news. In this section, we shall be examining the components or the contents of news.

❖ A component is a constituent part of something

The eight components of news are:

1. Age
2. Animal
3. Sex
4. Conflict
5. Money
6. Children
7. Beauty
8. Human interest

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1d8VsZxjUbs&list=TLPQMDgwNDIwMjGd0NJfVusR_w&index=1



News Virtues

Now that what news is and what determines readers' interest in a story have been discussed, reporters should strive to make the news they publish or broadcast win the credibility and confidence of their readers and listeners by adhering firmly to the triple news virtues.

These triple news virtues are:

Truth

Fairness

Accuracy

Clarity

Balance

Loyalty

Unbiasness

5WS+H

Who

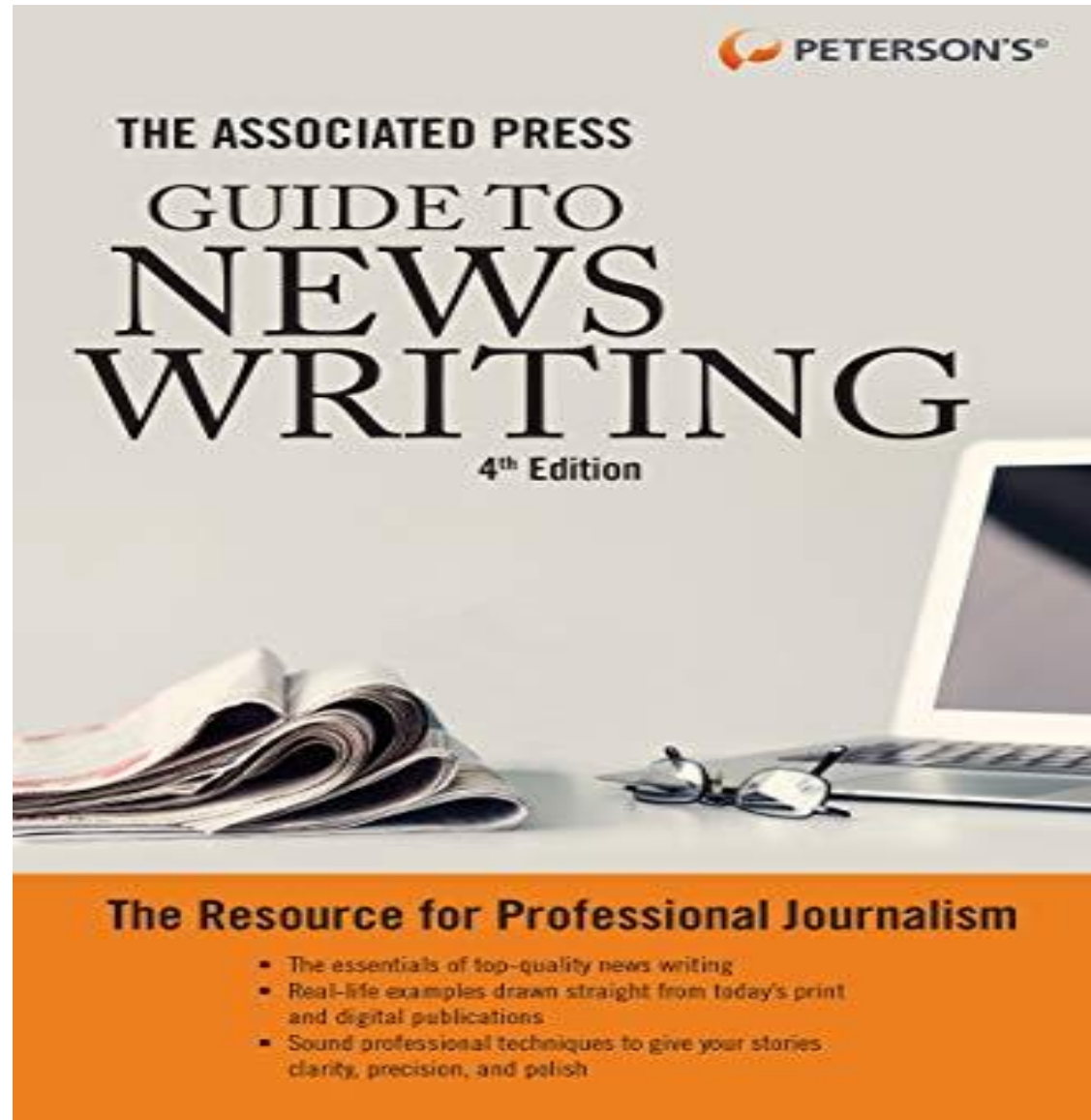
What

When

Where

Why

How



Timeliness

Today's news may be stale tomorrow. Therefore, to attain that reader – viewer or listener interest or appeal, facts must be fresh. However, some issues of great impact are timeliness. Therefore, the best time to tell an important story is as soon as it happens or as soon as possible.

Proximity/Geographic Location

Distance between the news item's place of origin and its place of publication determines its degree of reader – appeal, and the limits of reader – interest. Usually, the nearer an individual is to the location of a news event, the more relevant it becomes for him/her. This is referred to as geographic proximity.

There are two types of proximity:

- **Geographical Proximity** - This has been described above.
- **Proximity of Interest**

An account of students' unrest in Kano will definitely interest students in Owerri than a businessman in Kano. This is referred to as proximity of interest.

Prominence/Personality Involved

All men may be created equal, but some are more equal and more newsworthy than others. In fact, “names make news” goes a cliché. However, names do not always make news. Still, happenings that involve well-known people or institutions are likely to be interesting even if not very important.

Consequence/Impact/Significance/Magnitude

How many people an event or idea affects and how seriously it affects them determine its importance as news, as well as the extent to which the information may be useful. Again, an item or event may give rise to thought not because of itself but because of its probable consequences – its significance.

Human Interest

Interest in human beings and events because they concern men and women in situations that might confront anyone else, is called human interest. In a general way, human-interest stories might be defined as those stories that arouse an emotion in the reader/ listener/ viewer and evoke emotional response.

Novelty

This sounds like human interest but shows some differences. The unusual makes news. The bizarre makes news too. Remember *the-man-bite-dog principle*. The principle applies here. The first flight to the moon was big news, so was Sandra Day O' Connor's appointment as the first woman Justice of the United States Supreme Court. The day a female becomes the Vice President of the US it will be the biggest news around the globe. "**Firsts**," "**Lasts**," and "**Only**" have always been newsworthy. So also are stories of freak occurrences and scientific or pseudoscientific phenomena

Conflict

Nearly every story on each of our front pages is a report of conflict. Conflict is a central feature of most news. Sometimes it is physical, as in wars or sports. Sometimes it is more subtle and sophisticated like political conflicts.

Necessity

The seven earlier discussed news values involve people, events and situations that call out for coverage. The value of necessity is, however, the journalist's making (Mencher, 2010). According to the Mencher (2010), the journalist has discovered something he or she feels it is necessary to disclose. The essential element here is that the journalist considers a situation to be something everyone should know about and usually it is a situation that needs to be exposed and remedied.

The Components of News

So far, we have been discussing the determinants of news. In this section, we shall be examining the components or the contents of news. A component is a constituent part of something. They tend to have more news values or higher news values than stories that lack them. The more of news components you find in a story, the higher the news worthiness of such a story. Many items could easily fall into the components of news.

Truth

All news stories must represent factual events and personalities. The reporter should also ensure that the facts of the News are truthful to the best of his/her knowledge before publishing or broadcasting such story.

Objectivity

Objectivity presupposes that the reporter presents the reader with all sides of an issue, presents all the facts and allows the reader to decide what these facts mean. For a story to be objective, it must be devoid of a reporter's biases and prejudice. It must not also be slanted or editorialized.

Accuracy

This is the last news virtue. Accuracy is a pillar on which every story interests. A news story can be regarded as accurate if all names, ages, addresses and direct quotations in the story are accurate or correct. The only way to meet this requirement is for the reporter to check, double-check or even triple-check his facts before going to the press.

WHAT MOTIVATES A NEWS REPORTER?

Being first with new facts or fresh insights

Every reporter really desires to be the first to get the news out. The so-called old-fashioned scoops are still fashionable even in today's media industry. Being the first gives them a sense of fulfillment and originality.

Pursuing stories that can have impact

Successful reporters are usually motivated by the desire that their outputs changed the course of history. Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein of the famed Watergate Scandal are examples of reporters in this class.

Winning prizes

This is a little controversial because most journalists argue that their stories were not motivated by prize and awards. But a careful look at the work of journalists suggests this is one of the motivating factors.



Impressing sources

According to Byron Calame cited in Mencher (2010), most of the journalists remain highly motivated to impress their sources with the accuracy, fairness and depth of their work.

Finding out what's really happening

According to Byron Calame cited in Mencher (2010), “A fundamental motivation of reporters is the curiosity that drives them to get to the bottom of a confusing or complicated situation and to find patterns that help explain it to readers. Making sense out of chaos-especially when you can do it first-is something many reporters find rewarding.”

Telling stories in a compelling way

Most reporters who aim to the top are usually moved to tell their stories in a way that their listeners or audiences are compelled to see to the end of the story.



Getting on the front page

Any reporter who spends five months in a media organization, say newspaper, and does not get on the front page of the paper, may be regarded as not doing well. Front page stories are big stories in the judgment of editors. So, reporters strive to have a sense of fulfillment that their story was considered big and good to make a front page. The feeling is always rewarding and unexplainable

GENERAL RULES FOR NEWS WRITING

Do not pass a verdict or make a judgment: It is not your duty as a reporter or writer to pass a verdict or make judgment.

Just gather the facts of the story, present them to your audience and let them decide on whose side they will want to go.

- **Do not editorialise:** Leave editorialising to the editorial writers. News reports must be as straightforward and objective as possible.

- **Avoid the use of unfamiliar jargon:** Do not assume that your audience understands the meanings of the unfamiliar jargons you are using. Always use familiar words.

- **Keep yourself and other reporters out of the story:** Keep yourself and other colleagues out of the story unless you and them are an essential part of the news.
- **Avoid the use of “told me,” “told this writer” or “told our reporter:** The phrase “in an interview will serve your purpose.
- **There must be perfect accuracy in writing and reporting:**
When in doubt, leave it out.
- **There must be no willful distortion of facts in either news or headlines:** Never tamper with the facts of a story no matter the benefits that may accrue to you as a result. This is an unforgivable offence in journalism. Any reporter who tampers or fabricates the so-called facts of a story is “finished” in the industry. You become leprous, untouchable and unemployable.
- **Guard against publication of libelous statement:** The good reporter is the one who lives to write another report and see the fame of the previous reports come to him. Avoid writing your way into jail. Libelous statements should be avoided because of its capacity to keep you in jail and close down your media organisation because of insolvency resulting from the inability to pay court fines.

- **Always use simple words:** News writing and reporting are not the platforms to impress anybody with long sounding and big words. Always use the nearest simple word. A good news report is the one the average reader reads and understands.
- **All news copies must be typewritten and double-spaced:** The era of hand-written copies is gone. Therefore, a reporter must know how to type his story using the computer. It must also be typed in double space so that sub-editors and editors will be able to edit the copy.
- **The first page must carry the reporter's surname, a slug line and date in the top left hand corner:** Slug lines must be short preferably one word.
- **Start your story halfway down the first page:** You must give enough space for your superior editorial staff to work on your copy.



- **Leave at least one-inch margin at left, right, top and bottom**

of each page: Do not overcrowd the pages. Leave appropriate margins as required.

- **Each page must be numbered or lettered:** The correct letter or numeral is in the form of “B copy next” or “page 2 next.” This type of numbering must appear at the bottom right hand corner of each page except the last.

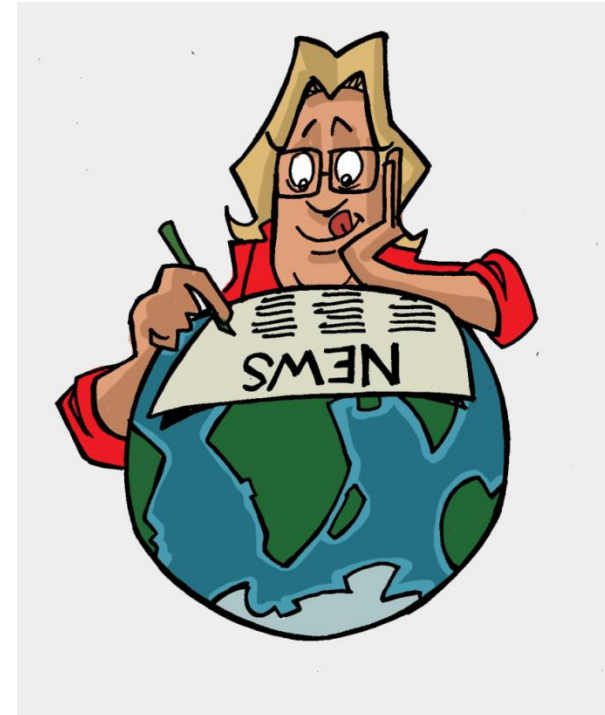
The end of a story must be marked by a centred “**30**” or “***” or “#.”

- **Always make your lead interesting:** Guard against misleading leads. Leads sell a story. Therefore, to get and keep the attention of your audience, the lead must be interesting.

- **Use the inverted pyramid format when writing your news story:** This is the generally accepted format for writing news reports because it presents the most important elements of a story in the first few paragraphs. The format also makes it easy to cut stories from the bottom without losing any substance of the story.



- **You must quote accurately:** Use quotes only where necessary to brighten up your story. Please, do not overdo this in your copy.
- **Use “said” if you want to write in the present tense and “said that” if it is reported speech:** This style helps the copy retain currency and life.
- **Always read your copy carefully and connect all typographical spelling and grammatical mistakes before turning it in:** This is a primary rule even in ordinary or everyday writing. No amount of haste could justify a badly written copy.
- **Your copy must be submitted in duplicate and both copies must be properly edited**
- **Never underline words or phrases or titles of books in your copy**
- **A seasoned reporter and publisher, do not exaggerate, do not over-dramatise, beware of adjectives, use the active voice and be natural and conversational when you write**



ELEMENTS OF GOOD WRITING/WHAT MAKES FOR POOR WRITING?

Precision

Clarity

Pace

Transitions

Sensory Appeal

Analogies

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhTYtTHGJLw>

Precision

A good writer must always obey the rule of precision. Words should be used and they should mean exactly what you intend them to mean. You should never use for example “uninterested” when you mean “disinterested”, nor should you use “farther” for “further”. For instance, if you report that fire has destroyed a house, you mean it must be rebuilt, not repaired. If you say fire fighters donned oxygen masks to enter a burning building, you are impugning either their intelligence or yours. Oxygen is dangerous around fire; fire fighters use their tanks.

Words are the tools of your trade and the writer can use only certain words in certain situations. In addition, the writer can choose from many words. That freedom can be both exhilarating and dangerous.

Clarity

All news reports and stories must be clearly written. Every reporter should be aware of the following when attempting to write clear stories.

- ❖ Use simple sentences and familiar words.
- ❖ Use correct grammar and punctuation.
- ❖ Structure the story to have a beginning (lead), middle (body) and end (conclusion).
- ❖ Make use of the active voice.
- ❖ Avoid adjectives and exaggeration



Pace

Good writing must have a pace appropriate to the content. Sentences and words give a story mood. Short sentences convey action, tension and movement. A series of long sentences conveys a more relaxed mood; long sentences slow down the reader. Between these two extremes are sentences of varying lengths, and good writers use them all. Not all sentences should be long or short. Nor should they all be of medium length. An abrupt change in sentence length draws attention to the sentence. Try it sometimes

Transitions

Good writing uses transitional devices that lead the reader from one thought to the next. A transition is a bridge, which assures the reader that the writer has a sense of direction. A transition can be a word, a phrase, a sentence or a paragraph. Common transitions are “and,” “but” and “however.”

Sensory Appeal

Good writing must appeal to the reader’s senses. Good writing appeals to one or more of our five senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch.

Analogies

Good writing uses analogies. Analogies permit writers to show similarities and contrasts. Similes and metaphors are often used to achieve this purpose. Where the simile compares one thing to another, a metaphor says one thing is another. With similes and metaphors, writers draw word pictures.



What Makes For Poor Writing?

If the story shows dull writing: Dull writing never makes good copy. To avoid this always use active voice and make your writing up conversational and lively.

If the story is not interesting: Interest is a constant variable in selecting a story as good. Any uninteresting story will sure pass off as a clear evidence of poor writing.

If the story is too vague, abstract or unclear: Vague and abstract stories will always be rejected on the platform of poor writing. To make your stories interesting, it must be clear and unambiguous.

If there are too many stories already on the subject: Your story could be rejected as poor if you are writing on what every other person has written on. This is even worsened by the fact that you did not bring in any new or fresh facts to your writing.

Therefore, avoid writing on what every other person has written on if you do not want your report to be considered poor.

If the story is a piece of propaganda or resembles one: Any attempt to pass off a piece of propaganda for a news report or story will definitely be rejected as poor writing

Tips for Better Writing

Enjoy these additional writing tips that can also apply to a wide range of writing genres:

- In news writing, always follow the inverted pyramid. That is, place the most pressing facts at the start of the article and close with the least compelling elements.
 - Avoid long or complicated words. A news story isn't the place to impress people with your intelligence or command of the English language.
 - Choose short sentences over lengthy sentences that require many forms of punctuation.
 - Follow a simple subject-verb-object form.
 - Don't use too many commas.
 - Each paragraph should introduce a new idea and, like sentences, be short and to the point. Consider dropping in a few transition words, where appropriate.
 - Never use more than two prepositional phrases. These are phrases like, "According to the national weather forecast"
- [Watch video](#)



Functions of the Press

The press has four traditional functions to perform and these include:

- Surveillance of the environment
- Correlation of parts of society in responding to the environment
- Transmission of the social heritage from one generation to the next
- Entertainment

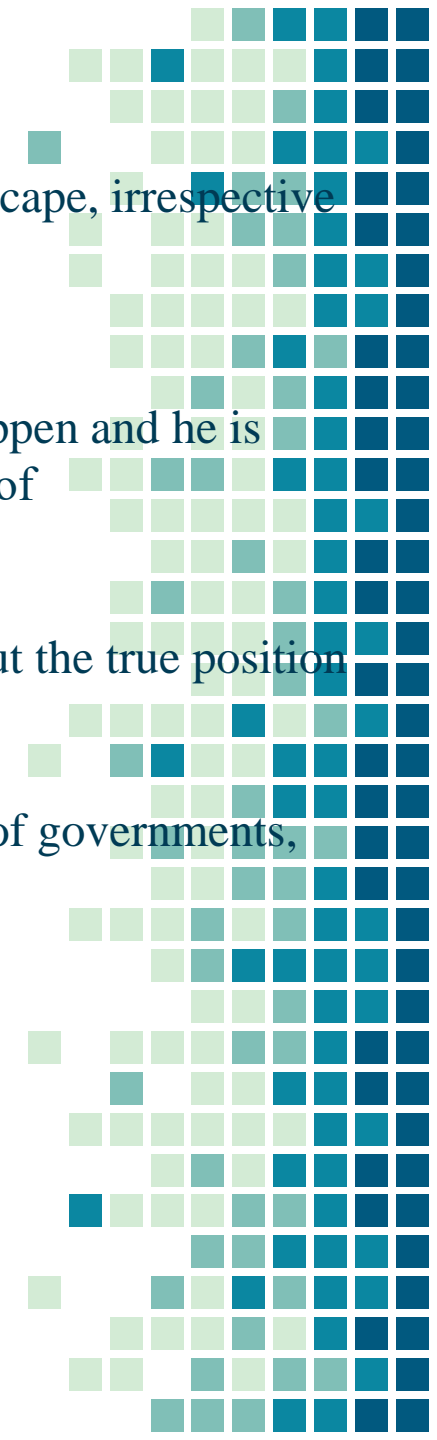
The surveillance (information/news) function: This function refers to the collection and distribution of information concerning events in the environment both outside and within a particular society. Simply put, this is the news function.

The correlation (analysis/interpretation) function: This function refers to the interpretation of information about the environment and prescription for conduct in reaction to these events. This is the editorial/opinion/interpretation function.

Transmission of social heritage (cultural transmission) function: This function focuses on the communicating of knowledge, values, and social norms from one generation to another or from one group to



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another, or from members of a group to newcomers. This is the cultural transmission/education/socialisation function.

Entertainment function: This function includes communicative acts primarily intended for amusement or escape, irrespective of the instrumental effect they might have.

The Reporter

In the performance of these functions, the key personality is the reporter. He/she chronicles events as they happen and he is rightly termed, the unknown historian. Randall (2000) lists some of the ‘thankless’ functions that is expected of the reporter in his profession. He/she:

- discovers and publish information that replaces rumour and speculation
- resists and evades government controls, especially those put in place to prevent the public from finding out the true position of things
- informs, and so empower, voters
- subverts those whose authority relies on a lack of public information scrutinises the actions and inactions of governments, elected representatives and public services
- scrutinises businesses, their treatment of workers and customers,
- the quality of their products and their level of social responsibility

Attributes of a Reporter

The following are some of the attributes of a reporter:

- **Nose for news** A reporter lives on news, he must have an instinct for news, and that is, he should be able to identify a newsworthy event. He should be able to generate news from anyone no, matter how important or insignificant that person is.
- **Good command of written and spoken language of his medium** To do your job well, you must have a good training in the profession.
- **Passion for precision** This means that to excel as a reporter in the business of furnishing the public with information, you must first, recording and writing accurately what information is gathered
- **Speed and accuracy** As a reporter, you have to bear in mind that your medium is competing with others in the market. To meet a deadline, you need to race against time in gathering and presenting news.
- **Objectivity** You need to develop the ability to be impartial, impersonal , objective and dispassionate.
- **Perseverance** As a reporter, you need to persevere and go an extra – mile while pursuing a story
- **Ability to establish and sustain contacts** As a reporter, it is not enough for you to know how to establish contacts; you should try to sustain contacts.
- **Trustworthiness:** As a reporter, you need to respect the confidence reposed in you by your source
- **Knowledge of working tools** To facilitate your job, you do not only need to possess some aids, you must know how to use the
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r7watch> video

TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Name ten beats that a reporter can be assigned to.
2. With specific examples from Radio/TV Stations of your choice, explain the functions of the press in your society.
3. A friend of yours who wants to be a reporter has approached you for advice. List ten qualities of a good reporter to him or her.
4. Explain the following terms:
 - a. Airtime
 - b. Background
 - c. Audio
 - d. Beat
 - e. Bulletin
 - f. Caption
 - g. Continuity
 - h. Dateline
 - i. Freelance
 - j. Lead
 - k. News
 - l. Sources
 - m. Reporter
 - n. Tools of news gathering



July 16, 2012

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TIPS FOR NEWS WRITERS

- Make sure your facts are accurate
- Keep your sentences short.
- Use the SVO formula
- Be specific.
- Avoid long and complex words.
- Write in the third person.
- Use adjectives sparingly.
- Do not editorialize.



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CONTACT TUTOR IN CHARGE

THANKS!

Any questions?

