

**HANDBOOK  
FOR TELEVISION  
NEWS BROADCASTERS**

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KNIGHT INTERNATIONAL PRESS FELLOWSHIP



# HANDBOOK FOR TELEVISION NEWS BROADCASTERS

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## INTRODUCTION

Everyone - whether they live in Mongolia or elsewhere, wants to know what's happening in the world around them. They want to know about their sports heroes as well as why city officials cannot solve the problem of street children.

And where does the public get this news? From us, the journalists who may be paid by a TV or radio station but are responsible to the public as we are the messenger. The news we present must be objective and honest. Our most important goal is to report truthfully.

To do that we must hide our own opinions. They do not matter when we are reporting. In addition, to be a journalist you must be a curious, skeptical, resourceful, hard working and a good listener.

We must be objective with the facts. If a story is controversial, we must interview both sides. This is imperative. For example, a story about dirty streets: Who would make good interviews? First, anyone who uses the streets for work or play. They will explain how the condition of the streets affects them. But they only represent one-half of the story. Journalists must also interview the other side: city officials and sanitation department employees. We must ask them why they cannot or will not fix the problem. If they won't talk, we must say, in our story, they declined to speak. Now you have a story that is balanced. You have covered both sides and the public can now decide for themselves the extent of the problem and what are the challenges in fixing it.

When we tell a story this way - completely, fairly and truthfully - it allows our listeners and viewers to understand what is going on.

There is one other point: News is about life. So it involves not only controversy but also stories about good news such as a particularly courageous person, or sad news about victims of a fire. In other words, there are as many different types of stories as we find in our daily lives.

This Handbook may look like another textbook but it is not. It contains the ideas, values and tips of successful television and radio journalists. What is mentioned in these pages works in the newsroom and on the air.

## NEWS GATHERING

### What is News?

News is many different things to different people; however, there are some traditional news criteria that should be kept in mind when deciding what to cover and how. The news criteria include:

- Stories that are interesting (know your viewers)
- Stories that have an impact
- Stories that inform
- Stories that are unusual
- Stories about something new
- Stories about conflict
- Stories with strong characters

When researching your story always remember the 5 Ws. Each one is essential to the whole. Together they tell the story.

Who?

What?

When?

Where?

Why?

And:

How? What really happened?

Additional questions for news value consideration are:

Why is it important?

What's going to happen next?

What is the point?

Always ask the money question (Where did the money come from? What is the money being spent on?) and always look for irony.

When covering a story there are several steps you'll have to go through before the story finally makes it to air:

- Researching means all the preparation work that precedes going into the field to record or shoot material for broadcast.
- Fact checking is making sure everything to be reported on the air is correct.
- Accuracy is getting it right.
- Balance is making sure that the other side/s of a story gets its/their say.

## **Storytelling**

One of our primary jobs as journalists is to be engaging storytellers because if not viewers will lose interest and not pay attention. Television stories, told properly, can change the way people think and live their lives. How do we do that? Let's start with the elements that every story should, ideally, have:

Strong Character (a person or personalization)  
Plotline (builds viewer interest and then hit them with the story)  
Surprise (hold back, hold back and then reveal)  
Conflict and Resolution (emotion and drama)

Then you put all of these elements together with a beginning, middle and end.

Clearly, not all stories can be (nor should they be) told in the same way. It is up to you as the journalist to decide how each particular story should be reported. Should the story be told in a simple 30 second story, or is the story so compelling it should be produced in a full package? Below are some possible formats in which we can tell stories. For more tips on writing for broadcast see page 25

## **Focus**

Focus is, in essence, the angle of a story. Most journalists when pitching stories suggest something which when really thought about is unwieldy. For example, a reporter pitches a story on street kids. But what precisely is the story? What is the angle? What is the focus? Let's take a look at the process of coming up with a focus.

Clearly, any production, like any news report, begins with an IDEA. In the example above, the idea is "street kids".

The idea: For an idea to become a news report or feature it should satisfy certain criteria:

The first and most important question: Will anyone care? How do they feel about it? If they don't care or have no feelings we either move on to another person or re-think the story. We can find out by asking ourselves:

Is it relevant to people's health/income, their family or friends, their quality of life, their neighborhood, their country? That's a descending order on purpose.

The second question: Will it hurt or help them? Make them happy or mad? Touch them or leave them cold. The selfish side wins most of the time.

But when the story is not so obvious, what do you do? You must have a reason to do the story and it must mean something to somebody. Let's come up with a process:

Research: Fast proving research helps you establish the credentials of a story. If after this initial research you can't find a good reason to do the story – again, it should mean something to a good number of people – then you must decide whether to go ahead with

it at all. If that proving research tells you the IDEA has a chance, then you can move to the next stage: FOCUS.

Focus: So what is focus and why should you care? It is your most valuable journalistic tool – in print, radio, or TV, a short news item or a documentary. A focus statement is a simple sentence that contains three elements: who, what and why. Or simply: someone is doing something because.

Focus is crucial for journalists as it helps you to clearly define what your story is and what elements you'll need in order to do the story. A focus also helps keep you on track, as you do your story, it reminds you what the story is about and where you're going.

Without a clear focus, your story will be all over the place, will have too many elements and will likely be confusing for the audience

Focus statements have the following common elements:

- each is a simple declarative statement
- each contains cause and effect
- each is based on research
- each contains a reference to people
- each has an emotional as well as factual side to it
- each defines what should be put IN and what left OUT
- each has a subject, verb and object

Let's go back to the street kids' story. Your RESEARCH will quickly tell you this is an interesting topic about which many might care – but it's an enormous topic, which must be narrowed down or focused. Without a FOCUS you could be researching for months. How do you narrow it down? Your research will offer several choices. For instance:

- Authorities are concerned because the number of street children is rising.
- Street children are living on the streets because of abuse at home.
- Tourists feel unsafe because the street kids harass them.

Now along with FOCUS there are two other elements: POINT-OF-VIEW (POV) and TONE. This does not mean advocacy but simply the point of view, in other words, through which main character/s will you tell the story? In focus #1 we are telling the story from the POV of the authorities as they are likely to dominate the story. However, this does not mean that we will not hear from other characters. Indeed, we must also speak to street children as they are crucial to the story.

As for tone, this particular story will likely be official and serious in tone with comments from the authorities, but it will also include comments from street children.

FOCUS: Tourists feel unsafe because the street children harass them.

The focus is now from the POV of tourists – that means you'll be researching mostly for tourists. Again, this does not mean you'll lose objectivity! Obviously the claims of



tourists will be balanced with those of the street children and perhaps also local officials. The tone will be different, more emotional than story #1 as ordinary people will play a larger part.

You can come up with a number of different focus statements for this story with each one suggesting what makes it in to the story and what is left out. You will also consider how the research can be narrowed, how the characters and their POV might vary and how the tone will change depending on the focus.

After you've done your research, established your focus, tone and point of view, then you need to do your full research for facts. It is important to bear in mind, however, that if your full research shows that your focus is wrong or not precise, you'll have to change it according to the facts of the story.

So, to tell an effective story you can follow this process:

- Gather all the essential and interesting facts – then pare them down to what is needed to tell the story well and honestly...the story of your FOCUS; stay on your chosen route, don't wander all over the map.
- Seek out, build in, and never waste your natural sound.
- Add context – Use it to show your understanding of the story's essence and also how it fits into the larger picture.
- The human drama to make the story live and breathe and kick up its heels – without dramatic tension your story will be lifeless. (Not hype or faked drama.)
- The people with whose story the listener/viewer can identify. Most good reporting has people in it – real people like those around you – not the homogenous institutional officials and experts with which most stories unfortunately abound, but real people who speak with a passion that affects the viewers.
- Finally, build the story to a climax, or some kind of resolution.

## **Enterprising Stories**

In many cases there are obvious stories that we need to cover: breaking news, news conferences, policy-oriented stories and the like. However, we often get into the habit of relying on the news releases that arrive by fax or phone calls from government ministries announcing an event. Every press release should be considered a starting point not an ending point. Ask yourself, why is it being released? Why now? Who does it effect and how? Who can I call to shed light on it other than the author? What's the message behind the message?

What we often forget, however, is that there are endless stories in our community that go unnoticed, but which are indeed newsworthy. Too we spend our time in the newsroom complaining that there's no news or that it's a slow news day, when in fact we couldn't be further from the truth. There is always news happening, it's just not happening in our newsrooms! We should be outside, in our communities, walking or driving through different neighborhoods, talking to different people and looking around us – that's where the best stories are!

Here are some tips in developing story ideas to help you move away from covering government or business “handouts” and moving towards reporting real stories involving your community.

- ✓ listen – what are people talking about on the streets, in the buses, in the shops?
- ✓ always be on the hunt for a story
- ✓ be curious and ask questions
- ✓ look around you
- ✓ talk to your photographers, peers and friends
- ✓ if you cover a beat find appropriate discussion groups on-line
- ✓ change the focus of a story – often that will give you a new angle
- ✓ start with your own experiences
- ✓ read everything you can get your hands on
- ✓ go wandering (do a “walkabout”)
- ✓ listen for a different point of view
- ✓ measure change – look at who’s affected by the statistics; look inside the numbers
- ✓ don’t just cover an event – look at the issue that’s behind that event
- ✓ compare and contrast – provide context
- ✓ localize – look for the local connection of a national or international story
- ✓ look towards the future
- ✓ follow up; assume every story has a follow up
- ✓ always ask (and answer) the question why
- ✓ brainstorm
- ✓ create new contacts
- ✓ go to where the pack isn’t
- ✓ when out in the field, look in the opposite direction
- ✓ arrive early for meetings
- ✓ when covering meetings make sure to look at the entire agenda – you may spot something you weren’t aware of
- ✓ pay attention to advertisements
- ✓ drive (or walk) around your beat or community as often as possible. Visit your beat at night.
- ✓ vary your commute every now and then
- ✓ switch your focus
- ✓ turn a story on its head. If the macro view has been done, do the micro view and vice versa
- ✓ check in with sources periodically
- ✓ always end interviews by asking if there is “anything else going on?”

### **Interviewing for Television and Radio Broadcast**

Interviewing is perhaps the most important skill in the pursuit of journalism, but the one we take the most for-granted and prepare for the least. Below are some tips to keep in mind as you set out to interview. These tips are useful regardless of whether you are doing a live television interview or a taped interview in the field. Prepare the questions. Keep them as short as possible. Above all –LISTEN. Do not rush blindly on from one written question to the next.

You must make sure your questions are on target so you get precisely what you need and/or want. You need to be conscious of getting a suitable sound bite – this is much more crucial in TV than in radio where one can simply edit two segments of a clip together. In TV we need to make sure we get the bite we need, but in all cases it is imperative that we shoot cutaways so that if we do have to edit two clips together we can do it seamlessly to cover the so-called lip flap.

Regardless of whether you work in radio or television, your goal is the same: to get a good clip. In order to do this you need to know what makes a good clip and then you have to ask the questions that will lead to your source giving you the good clip. Incidentally, there is a very practical reason for being organized with your questions. If you are not, your questions will likely wander and you will burn up lots of videotape. That will cost you time in the editing room.

As I said before, the most important thing to do during an interview is to listen! Listen to the answer instead of thinking of the next question. Listening produces follow up questions, which can create insightful exchanges. If you follow this simple rule your interviews will improve greatly.

### *Interviewing Tips*

- ✓ Dress appropriately.
- ✓ Arrive a little early. Set up always takes some time. And if you're late, you may have missed your opportunity to interview this person.
- ✓ Break the ice and make a good first impression. Make your interviewee feel relaxed.
- ✓ Be prepared. Make sure you've researched the topic, prepared your questions and know as much as possible about the person you're interviewing.
- ✓ Know what you want to get from the interview. What's your plan? What's your focus?
- ✓ Your interviewee should know the topic of the interview but you should never reveal your questions in advance unless there is some extraordinary circumstance that I can't think of. You can disclose the general subject matter but never the specific questions.
- ✓ You are the one in control – never give up your microphone or control of the interview.
- ✓ Listen, listen, and listen. Don't be a slave to your questions. Listening will lead to follow up questions. The best reporters are great listeners.
- ✓ Mic the questions if possible.
- ✓ Always have extra batteries, tapes, mini-disks etc.
- ✓ Know how your equipment works. It is embarrassing (and unprofessional) if you don't know how it works.
- ✓ Get the spelling and pronunciation of your interviewee's name. This is a good way to begin an interview and to make sure your gear is working. You can also check audio levels this way.
- ✓ Be persistent but courteous. Ask, ask and ask again (rule of 3's).
- ✓ Ask for clarification. Ask for examples.
- ✓ Don't be intimidated.
- ✓ Watch your interviewee's body language.

- ✓ Take notes during the interview. Note details of the location, what the person is wearing, anything that will add color to your story. Remember, one of your roles is that of observer.
- ✓ At the end of the interview, ask if the interviewee if he/she has anything to add, if s/he recommends other people you should speak to and whether you may call back later with questions.
- ✓ If your source makes requests to speak confidentially or “off-the-record”, be prepared to respond in an appropriate way. Off-the-record means you can’t use the information unless you get it confirmed by someone else.
- ✓ Practice, practice, practice. Interviewing is the toughest skill in journalism, but perhaps the most important. Keep practicing. You might also get someone to interview you so you know what it’s like to be in the interviewee’s shoes.

### What questions to ask?

- Always ask the questions that your audience wants answered.
- Avoid closed-ended questions.
- Avoid double-barreled questions. Ask one question at a time.
- Keep questions short and to the point.
- Do not make assumptions.
- Do not argue.
- Never try to cover too much. Remember, focus.
- Have a final question that wraps up your interview.
- When you finish your questions, ask your interviewee if he/she has anything to add.

### The 10 Deadly Sins (or how NOT to conduct an interview)

1. The non-question (make sure you actually ask a question)
2. Double-barreled question (ask one question at a time)
3. Overloaded questions (avoid questions with too many parts or too many elements)
4. Leading questions
5. Comments (don’t insert comments into your question)
6. Big presuppositions (don’t make assumptions)
7. Trigger words (people will react to the word rather than the question)
8. Hyperbole (less is more so don’t exaggerate)
9. Complexity (keep it simple)
10. Closed-ended questions  
(Source: VJ Handbook)

### Three Key Points

1. Keep questions open-ended
  2. Keep questions neutral
  3. Keep questions simple
- (Source: VJ Handbook)

### Off-the-shelf questions

- What happened?
- What do you mean?
- Why is that?
- All the “feel questions.”
- What are/were the options?
- How would you characterize that?
- What was the turning point?
- What did he/she/they say?
- What is/was it like?
- What went through your mind at the time?

(Source: VJ Handbook)

## **Working with Sources**

There are many things that never change when we practice journalism and one of these is that we deal with sources on a daily basis. Because of this it is important that we learn how to cultivate sources and how to work with them. Perhaps the first question we should ask is: who is or who can be a source? The answer is anyone and everyone as long as they are providing us with information that is reliable and accurate. Develop contacts with a wide variety of people who may have useful information. In other words, don't simply rely on government ministers or experts and other officials as your sources – speak to the people living the story or who are affected by the story – they are sources too. In fact, they are the sources that your audience will most be able to identify with and remember.

It is important to cultivate sources from a variety of places but too often when we work under deadline pressure we resort to the same sources time and time again. Try to create a mindset where you are constantly looking for new sources who may have a different point of view, who lend diversity to your story, or who may even give you new story ideas. Develop a list of sources, contact information and notes about the source (availability, expertise, etc.). Lock it in the drawer of your desk.

Also remember that no matter where or whom your information comes from you must find another source to confirm it. The rule is: two sources unless there is an extraordinary reason. Never believe anything until you check it out.

Finally, you'll often encounter sources who are reluctant to speak to you or are especially reluctant to speak on camera. Don't allow your source to speak “off the record” or anonymously unless that is clearly the only way to get the information. But keep in mind that if you agree to this, not only are you ethically bound to respect the agreement you've made but then you also are in the position of finding another source to confirm this information and to do so on tape or on camera.

Remember, it is part of your job to get these people to speak, to coax them and to encourage them to share their story. Explain to them how important their story is and how many other people will benefit from hearing their story. If they still refuse then ask them if they know someone else that will speak to you. Unfortunately, the reality is that in

many countries there is still a culture of fear when it comes to dealing with the media. It is up to us to try to break through this culture of fear and convince people to speak to us.

See also: Attribution and Use of Sound bites on page ?????

## **Investigative Reporting**

Story must be interesting, important and compelling.

Investigative reporting can be very expensive, depending on the nature of the story.

- No story means no piece so it takes time to develop
- TV needs specifics, not generalities. Not good at abstract ideas.
- TV wants original stories.
- Print reporter unlikely to share his sources.
- You must work the phones. (show empathy, concern-apologize)

Key is great sources. (Bureaucrats, private cops) who you have already cultivated and will call you on their own initiative. You must trust them. That takes time.

- Do not work a source during a crisis unless already contacted.
- 2 source rule

## **Working with Translations, News Releases and Wire Copy**

Much of the information you will use is often not in your working language or is in the form of a press release or wire copy. Each of these situations presents certain challenges, but many of these challenges are similar. First, in each of these cases you have to take ownership of the story. To do this you must first decide whether the information is in fact newsworthy. Second, you should try to develop the story, looking for a second source.

Finally, you'll have to write the story or "rewrite" it for broadcast. To do this you need to read the story, understand the story and then put it away and begin writing your version. If you become tied to the original copy you won't be able to write it in broadcast form or in your own words. You need to speak as you write, and write as you speak. Remember that broadcast writing is a different language than writing for print but it's a language you already know – the one you speak every day.

Perhaps one of the simplest methods to do "rewrites" is the following. First, read the story or news release. Second, answer your 5 Ws and H questions and then come up with your focus statement. Then put the original source away and simply begin writing based on your focus and your 5 Ws, referring to the original copy only when you need to check facts for accuracy.

Press releases present their own challenges. Remember that there is usually an agenda behind the release: an organization, institution or government official is likely looking for

some publicity for the latest project. It is your role as reporter or editor to assess whether the story is in fact newsworthy. To make this assessment consider the following:

- Check the release for accuracy and for “the other side of the story.” The facts may be accurate but not complete.
- Often what is at the beginning of the release is not the news; read the entire release and then edit.
- Look for ways to be interesting. A story with a human angle will get a lot more attention than one that sounds like an interoffice memo
- Look for the story behind the event.
- Look for additional sources rather than simply speaking to the author of the release.

Finally, when relying on wire copy for information remember that the people writing the copy are reporters just like you and they too make mistakes. Always confirm any information you use from the wires.

## **Covering Events**

One of the most common things we cover are events, whether they are meetings, press conferences or political hearings. One of the most common things we do every time we cover a meeting is to cover it exactly as we did the last time. Unfortunately, most reporters, after covering countless meetings, get into a rut and simply go to the meeting to cover the meeting, instead of looking for the story behind the meeting. – by speaking to the people who will, or are, ultimately affected by what’s discussed at the meeting.

In other words, use the press release or news conference as a launching point for your story. Make phone calls. See who’s effected, who isn’t. Does it cost money? Who pays? Who does it help? Will anyone suffer?

For example, if you are told to cover a conference on HIV/AIDS, don’t simply go to the conference. Instead, go to locations, such as a clinic, where you might find people affected by the story or disagreeing with it i.e. such as health care professionals, people with HIV and AID activists.

Here are some tips to help you break out of the meeting “rut”:

- get the agenda early, don’t just cover the meeting, look for a particular aspect of the meeting that your audience would be interested in
- arrive for the meeting early and interview sources before the meeting gets started
- when shooting the meeting, shoot from different angles and points of view. Too often we shoot every meeting in exactly the same way and after a while they all look the same.
- don’t simply cover the meeting -- look for the story behind the meeting
- find the people that are affected by the meeting and speak to them
- even if you’re in a situation where you are expected to cover a meeting merely because a government official is in attendance, you can still bring back a clip from the official but you can also bring back a real story with real people by looking beyond the event and asking yourself (and then sources) what the story behind the event is.

Clearly, the overriding message we get from these tips is that there is usually an official reason for such meetings. It is your job to find the real story and the real people behind the meeting. Indeed, often these people will actually be in attendance but they won’t be the ones on the stage or in your face. You’ll have to seek them out

## **Natural Sound**

Natural or ambient sound is sound that occurs in the environment. Some call it background sound. It is the sound that, when we stop and listen, we hear all around us. It is the birds singing, the traffic roaring, horns blaring, people talking, fluorescent lights humming, kids playing. Natural sound is a crucial aspect of broadcast news stories and helps to not only tell the story, but also to illustrate it, to create a visual image in our audience’s mind. This is particularly important in radio when we don’t have visuals.



Examples of natural sound (or nats, for short):

- a story on traffic congestion would include nats of traffic and perhaps of traffic police blowing their whistles and people honking their horns
- a story on the working conditions of port employees would include nats of the workers at work, general sound at the port, ships' whistles blasting

There are also two types of natural sound: foreground sound and background sound. You can think of the foreground sound as the close-up shot we use in television and the background shot as the wide-shot or long shot. Foreground sound gets close to the source of the sound, while the background sound is broader, encompassing different sounds from a greater area.

In our first example, the background sound would be the sound of the traffic in general. Our foreground sound could be captured by getting close to the traffic police and recording the sound of them yelling or blowing their whistles. In many cases sound in broadcast is used similarly to the way we use punctuation in writing perhaps as an exclamation mark, or is used to set the scene, to bring the audience closer to the story.

Remember, telling a broadcast story involves the weaving together of several elements: visuals (if television), natural sound, narration track and clips. Effectively weaving these elements together will not only tell a story people aren't likely to forget but will also tell the whole story.

Collecting natural sound does take practice and some sounds (water, for example) are much more difficult to record than others. Keep practicing and experimenting and use different microphones if you have them available. Ultimately, your stories will be that much richer for the use of natural sound.

## **Visual Storytelling**

*"If your lens doesn't need cleaning at the end of a shoot, you didn't get close enough."*

- Rich Murphy, photojournalist

Television is not simply radio with pictures. Indeed, pictures are the most important part of our television news stories simply because people will remember what they see before they remember what they hear, so "show, don't tell". Aim to have pictures that are memorable for the pictures are your visual proof.

Visual storytelling is really an art, but it is an art that we can learn and practice. But before you begin to shoot you need to know what your objective is, what is the focus of your story? What is the editorial focus and what is the visual focus. By determining this you can then decide what pictures you'll need to capture even before going out into the field. Also, while it may seem obvious, you need to know what equipment is available, how to use it, and feel comfortable with it or you won't be able to use it effectively or with confidence. This is not something you can learn in the field!

Remember that television is a collaborative effort and in order for that team to work effectively you need to communicate with your team, be it your photographer, reporter, producer or editor so that everybody knows what the story is. You need to discuss what shots are needed and decide the best way to do the story in the available time.

When you do go into the field to begin shooting, you should strive to do several things. First, remember your goal is to prove the focus of your story with sound and pictures. The pictures are the visual proof of the story you are telling. Ask yourself “what pictures will tell this story with a minimum of words?” and strive to capture mood and emotion.

Second, remember that we are storytellers and that stories have 3 basic elements: beginning, middle and end and your visuals also need to illustrate those elements. The opening shot, or beginning, of a story is usually illustrated with a wide shot. The middle of the story is made up of medium and tight shots and the story will usually end with another wide shot.

Third, some shots are better for telling stories than others. The shots that best tell stories include close-ups, faces, action and reaction and detail. Television is a close-up medium so shoot lots of close-ups. When you do shoot close-ups don't shoot from across the room – you need to get close to whatever you're shooting!

It may seem strange, but perhaps the most difficult aspect of shooting is to gather good, usable audio. What usually happens is that we become so consumed with getting all the right shots and sequences that we forget all about sound. Remember, television storytelling is composed of pictures, clips, narration or voiceover and natural sound so always monitor your audio. You need to listen for, and then capture, good, vivid natural sound.

In the field make sure that you discipline your shooting -- know what you're shooting and why. Once you have the technique down then you can enhance your visual storytelling by finding unique compositions and experimenting. If you have a tripod, use it.

While shooting is part of the production process, what you shoot will ultimately need to be edited and thus you need to shoot accordingly. There are a couple of things you should always make an effort at shooting. First, don't forget to shoot cutaways or you'll have a difficult time when it comes to editing. A cutaway is a brief shot used to establish visual continuity between two shots. They are most commonly used when editing together two clips from the same interview.

Second, make an effort at shooting sequences everywhere you go. A sequence is a series of shots that, when edited, gives the impression of continuous action. In essence, a sequence tells a mini-story in compressed time and helps explain a key story idea in a more effective fashion than could be done using random shots.

Sequences are easy, they just take practice. The basic three shot sequence is composed of an opening wide shot followed by a medium shot and then finishing with a close up.

Finally, understand that there is a corresponding reaction to every shot you make and always ask yourself what is the corresponding reaction to the shot you're making now?

You need to think ahead and anticipate where the action is going next and position yourself to make the shot.

A few more photography tips:

shoot what is going away first (because it's not coming back!)

shoot and move

remember, the eye does not zoom so be judicious in your use of zooms

interviews can be visual too; try to shoot your sources in their natural environment

shoot at the subject's level, so if you're shooting a child get down to your knees and shoot on their level

To sum up:

To illustrate a story visually you have to know what the story is

Come up with a focus statement

Execute your focus statement

Communicate with your photographer, reporter, and producer so that everybody knows what the story is

There are 3 basic elements to every story: beginning, middle and end

You can visualize a story very easily by remembering and applying some simple visual clues

The beginning of the story is usually a wide shot

The middle of the story is made up of medium and tight shots

The story usually ends with another wide shot

Practice by shooting a story, without sound, and honestly evaluate your efforts

Discipline your shooting. No wild rolls.

Once you have the technique down, enhance your visual storytelling by finding unique compositions

Tripods

Sequence, Sequence, Sequence

Good sequences elevate your photography to the level of broadcast professional

Sequences are easy, they just take practice

Get into the habit of trying to figure out how to place yourself (and hence the viewer) closer to the action.

And understand that there is a corresponding reaction to every shot you make. If you shoot a shot of a waitress pouring a cup of coffee for a customer, there are obvious sequences that await your creative eye.

The waitress pours the coffee

The customer looks at the waitress with fond thanks

The waitress smiles back in anticipation of a huge tip

The cup steams as coffee fills

Customer mouths thanks

Waitress nods and walks off

Just always ask yourself, What's the corresponding reaction to the shot you're making now?

Think ahead. In real life you have to anticipate where the action is going next and position yourself to make the shot

Once you learn how to sequence, you can then manipulate and break the rules

Miscellaneous

- + You have to love people, include people in your stories, people make the story live
- + Don't forget audio – get that natural sound
- + Try walking shots and Experiment

### **Computer-Assisted Reporting**

One of the most useful tools in journalism today is the Internet. But, just because it's online doesn't mean it's true. Indeed, there's a lot of bad, biased and simply incorrect information on the net. In order to use the Internet effectively you need to know where to look and to be familiar with what's available and where to find it.

According to the Radio and Television News Directors Foundation "Wired Journalist" guide, there are several things you should consider when evaluating information found online. First, look for the source and make sure it's legitimate and there is a clearly identifiable person or organization behind the site. Second, look carefully at the website address; if there's a tilde (~) the site is likely to be a personal web page. Third, as with any source used in journalism, make sure whatever you use is attributable. Finally, beware of pages that have incorrect spelling or grammar.

Once you've found a site that you consider reliable and will likely use frequently, you should "bookmark" it or add it to your "favorites". This will make it easy to access these sites in the future.

To access the web, we use a program called a browser, the two most common are Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator. Both can be downloaded for free. Every web page can then be accessed by typing in its URL (uniform resource locator) which begins with <http://>. Because this is common to all web addresses, it is usually omitted.

Interactivity on the web is achieved through "hyperlinks" or "links" as they are more commonly known. Links are usually identifiable on a webpage by the use of blue type and underlining.

Searching the web is one of the most common uses of the Internet, but also one of the most difficult tasks to do efficiently. In order to do an effective search, you must be precise in the use of keywords you use, but not so precise that you get no results at all. Some of the most common search engines are: [www.google.com](http://www.google.com), [www.altavista.com](http://www.altavista.com), [www.lycos.com](http://www.lycos.com), [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com), [www.beaucoup.com](http://www.beaucoup.com).

For more information on computer-assisted reporting check out the National Institute of Computer-Assisted Reporting at: [www.nicar.org](http://www.nicar.org). There is also the Online News Association, which you might find useful. Their website is: [www.onlinenewsassociation.org](http://www.onlinenewsassociation.org).

Also, keep in mind that more and more journalists are using email to gather information from sources who may be on the other side of the world. Of course, this presents challenges for the broadcast journalist who usually requires a sound bite for their story, but as a means for gathering background information it can be very useful.

See Page 45 for a list of websites that you might find useful.

## **Political Reporting**

Political reporting is covering government at both the local and national levels, but it is also covering political candidates and politicians. In any case, remember that the first premise in reporting is: fairness, accuracy, balance. This is especially important to keep in mind when doing political coverage. Covering politics, however, does not mean simply using politicians as sources. Often political coverage that is more effective is coverage that includes real people, people that are affected by political decisions. The president or government ministers are not our only sources for political stories.

Government engages in many essential activities:

authorization of public improvements, such as streets, new buildings, bridges  
adoption of various codes, such as building, sanitation, zoning  
issuance of regulations affecting public health, welfare and safety  
consideration of appeals from planning and zoning  
appointment and removal of city officials  
authorization of land buys and sales  
awarding of franchises  
adoption of expense and capital budgets.

Group participants in local government process as follows:

- political party leaders - they have a strong hand in nominating process. These people have a political agenda
- elected and appointed officials - have key roles in implementing policy. Elected usually member of political parties with political agenda
- Interest or pressure groups. Every aspect of government is affected by these groups. Business interested in government spending, rules and regulations. In Mauritius, concerned about tourism taxes and levies. Banks scrutinize debt policies. Contractors urge public improvements. Even private citizens have a stake in government though often not as organized. Religious groups and educational organizations keep track of school policies. Medical and health professionals examine the activities of the health dept.

In all this mix is the media, often referred to as the government watchdog and like it or not, the media often play a direct part in the political process. The media highlight personalities, are fond of exposes, and will do stories about public works projects that appear too ambitious or expensive. The media often do stories about government as simply a succession of events. Instead, journalists should tell people about how

government works, how it affects them, and how they can influence it. This goes back to the “informing” role the media play.

There are a variety of different stories that measure the well being of a community, just don't forget to come up with a focus and to find people that are “living” the story, that are affected by the story. Some of these stories might include:

- employment and unemployment rates
- health data
- social conditions - diversity and harmony
- literacy rates
- education statistics
- housing starts, telephone and utility connections, automobile sales
- hotel and motel occupancy rates
- sales tax revenues

When covering political campaigns there should be at least four elements to your coverage:

Candidate: do a profile, interview friends and associates of the candidate

Money: always ask the money questions. Examine political fundraisers, campaign funding disclosure reports, advertising programs. Who is giving money to the candidate? How much are they spending? What are the candidates spending their money on?

Issues: more important than the politics. candidates platforms, public's input. Remember, candidates go where the votes are. Watch where your candidates are going, how often, who they are appealing to. Just by looking at a candidate's weekly schedule you can detect much of his strategy. For example, reporters are concerned with accountability. If they see that a candidate or a campaign is skirting relevant issues or only addressing them with generalities, it's the reporter's job to press the questions that will force a campaign to be forthright.. The public is entitled to know the candidate's stance on taxes, welfare, education and health. This is more substantive reporting than so called "horse race reporting" which merely tells us who is ahead. Most political reporters know what the public considers important and so press the candidates on these issues. Don't just accept slogans and generalities: what do they mean? For example a campaign uses as a slogan: Your congressman is there when you need him. What does that mean? Political reporters should see through these substitutes for the specific, calculated devices by which the candidate or official avoids taking a position.

Organization: key figures, campaign plans. Remember: Every campaign is carefully planned or it won't last long.. Assume that every decision is made for a reason. A reporter's job is to cull from the campaign rhetoric those few words, incidents and impressions that convey the flavor, the mood and the significance of what occurred.

## **Election Reporting Tips**

(From an article by Thomas Winship, chairman of the International Center for Journalists and former editor of The Boston Globe. Written for Editor & Publisher, Oct. 3, 1992)

Stick to the issues. Watch out for candidates who employ clever public relations tactics that have nothing to do with real election issues. Some candidates find they can call more attention to themselves by launching a hate campaign against their opponents (personal family values is a favorite topic) rather than addressing important issues like the economy and jobs.

Beware of exaggerating controversy. Too often on a day when a story doesn't hit us in the face, some reporters and editors create and then exaggerate a potential conflict. Better to let that day pass without a 20-second sound bite or a byline.

Equal time for all. Keep a meticulous running score on space and play (front page, inside) given to each candidate. Uneven reporting is the most certain way to lose credibility and readers.

Don't forget the voter. Reporters should keep up with what the voters are thinking, not only through polls and man-in-the-street quick quotes, but by meaningful probing of how families are surviving. Remember to cover the regions and not just key areas of the country.

Beware of "poll-itis." Polls can be useful, but they can be overused and manipulated. A reader will be better served by more old-time regional reports with interviews and predictions from voters and field experts.

Don't over analyze. Much of the energy and time devoted to analyzing the candidates' every move would be better utilized telling readers what voters think rather than what a desk-bound dreamer, with a license to sway, wishes would happen.

Beware of "creeping legitimacy." Creeping legitimacy occurs when one news organization (usually a not-so-reliable one) publishes a story based on a rumor or one source and other media houses follow suit out of fear of missing the story. News organizations should apply the same reporting standards of their own investigative efforts (double-check every fact) to any political campaign rumors and scandals. The reporter must never serve as a mere conduit for unchecked personal information on a candidate, especially from a questionable source. Stick by your own standard of fact-checking before pulling the trigger.

## **Covering Budgets**

This requires knowledge of how money is raised and how it is spent. Money fuels the system and the relationship between money and the workings of the government can be seen in the budget process.

The budget is a forecast or estimate of expenditures that a government will make during the year. Revenues are needed to meet those expenses and the budget is the final resolution of the conflicting claims of individuals and groups to public money.

All sorts of pressures come to bear on the budget makers. Good reporters check to see if politicians seek to reward constituencies and fulfill campaign promises.

Here is a checklist of budget stories:

- ✓ amount to be spent for new or increased taxes, higher license and permit fees and other income that will be necessary to meet expenditures cuts, if any, to be made in such taxes, fees or fines. (Comparison with preceding years) Justification for increases sought, cuts made
- ✓ Rate of current spending, under or over budget of previous year
- ✓ Patterns behind submission and subsequent adjustments, such as political motives, pressure groups, history
- ✓ Consequences of budget for agencies, departments, businesses, public
- ✓ Per person comparison of costs for specific services with other areas or schools
- ✓ Check of one or more departments to see how funds are used, whether all funds were necessary.

There are five major interest groups that seek to influence budget making and constitute a reporter's sources:

1. Government executives who submit the budgets, officials, party leaders outside government often helpful
2. Money providing constituencies local real estate associations, property owners associations, chambers of commerce, taxpayer organizations, merchants and business groups, banks
3. Service demanding groups education, health, welfare and other services
4. Organized bureaucracies – public employees, municipal unions
5. Independent groups



## NEWS PROCESSING

### Broadcast Writing

Writing for broadcast differs from print because our brains process the information differently when it comes from radio or television. Most importantly, we must remember that our audience has only one chance to understand the story, whereas in print the reader can linger over a story or go back and re-read if something is not clear. We do not have that luxury in broadcasting. Our audience has one brief chance to hear the story and digest it.

But, while this does pose some challenges, we have to remember that when writing for broadcast we're using a language we already know – the spoken language. This is true no matter what language you work in. We often get so tied to our scripts, i.e. the written portion of our stories that we forget that these scripts are going to be read aloud. Herein lies the difficulty, but also the simplicity, of broadcast writing. Indeed, we are writing, but we are writing for the ear, writing simply, the way we speak. Thus, perhaps the most important thing to remember is to write conversationally, to write the way we speak and to speak while we write! But beware of using slang or colloquialisms.

Once we've ascertained the focus of our story (see on page 7), we need to decide on the story's structure. A simple 4-step process, called a grid, can be useful: hook, context, development and wrap.

The hook is the beginning of the story where we use good pictures and natural sound to grab our audience and compel them to stay tuned; it's where we establish the story's theme and tone. The context is the information-heavy part of a story and in television it is often not very visually exciting. The context calls for great writing and for you to get into the next section, the development, as quickly as possible. It is now that we develop our characters, write less, build tension, explain motivation and provide analysis. While we develop the story we rely heavily on the story's characters. Finally, we need to wrap the story. Here we look to the future, tie up any loose ends and return to our original mood. It's important not to linger too long here and not to moralize, simply wrap the story.

If we were to use the street kids' story our grid would look something like the following:

	<b>VISUALS</b>	<b>SCRIPT</b>
<b>HOOK</b>	v/o of street kid sifting through a pile of garbage or begging from someone	Story Intro
<b>CONTEXT</b>	Shots of street kids; maybe file footage of genocide; shots of local authorities dealing with the street kids	Explain why so many street kids; clips from local authorities
<b>DEVELOPMENT</b>	More shots of kids	Clips from street kids telling their stories- why living on street, etc.
<b>WRAP</b>	More shots of the child in his/her environment	Back to our first main character and try to bring the story to the future

Following this simple process helps us decide what elements we need to gather in the field. Remember, you're the one that knows everything about the story while the audience knows nothing. It is your job to keep the story as simple and logical as possible while providing whatever information your audience needs to understand the story in its entirety.

General rules:

- don't try to tell the whole story
- be specific and use concrete terms
- focus on one thing at a time
- write conversationally
- write factually and accurately
- write in the active voice
- write a beginning, a middle and an end
- start strong
- simplify
- attribution comes first

Do's

- ✓ Tell stories in a LOGICAL order
- ✓ Write as you talk and talk as you write. (Keep sentences short. If you have a long sentence, follow it up with a short one)
- ✓ One thought per sentence. Just one!
- ✓ Use the PRESENT tense

- ✓ Use the ACTIVE voice
- ✓ Paint pictures with your words. (Let the viewer make the conclusion – you tell/describe what’s going on.)
- ✓ Describe people, don’t label them. (Tell exactly what they do as opposed to using their official title)
- ✓ Use verbs as adjectives. (e.g. If you say “he struts or saunters” you’re giving a picture without using an adjective)
- ✓ Treasure small words
- ✓ Use numbers carefully and as little as possible. Make numbers mean something
- ✓ Put attribution at the beginning of the sentence

#### Don’ts

- ↓ No freight trains. (Don’t pile up adjectives)
- ↓ No acronyms.
- ↓ Stop at danger words like “who” and “which”.
- ↓ Don’t say what you don’t need. Be direct.
- ↓ Avoid the cliché
- ↓ No jargon.
- ↓ Avoid vague language. Be specific.
- ↓ Avoid synonyms or elegant variations.
- ↓ Avoid numbers in your script if possible. If you have to use them, make them mean something. Be sure to write them out in your script and round them off.

#### **Attribution and Use of Sound bites**

There are several different ways we can use information in our stories: attribution, clips or sound bites, and our own observation. The information has to come from somewhere, and when it is not directly observed or heard by a journalist, it must be “sourced” or attributed. In other words we need to tell our audience where the information came from. This is necessary for a couple of different reasons. First, attributing the information enables the audience to assess its authority or accuracy. Second, it makes it clear that the particular news organization is not responsible for the information. Third, it assigns responsibility for the information to the source.

Beware, however, that attribution does not relieve the journalist of responsibility. Simply because you correctly attribute information or quote someone does not mean that what they say is true or responsible.

Here are some examples of attribution:

- According to police, ten people were injured in the explosion.
- The President says elections will take place soon.

Keep in mind that in broadcast writing the attribution goes at the beginning of the sentence.

If we use sound bites or clips (or sots: sound-on-tape) we need to bear a few things in mind. First, for regular news stories sound bites should not be longer than 15 seconds maximum. Second, you need to write into your bites – you need a “clip intro” that introduces the person we are about to hear from without stealing that person’s thunder or repeating what they are about to say. Your clip intro needs to be a full sentence, which can as simple as “John Abdullah is the minister of transport.” The clip intro is then followed by the sound bite. Finally, when translating a clip, let the clip run at full sound for the first couple of seconds before bringing the sound down and bringing up the voiceover translation.

Reporters often find it difficult to find the ten best seconds of an interview but you need to ask yourself which is the absolute best part of the interview and best illustrates the story.

Sound bites can be most often placed into one of two categories: informational and emotional. Informational sound bites are usually those we get from officials or experts while emotional sots come from people who are living the story or are affected by the story. It is up to you to decide what kind of bites will best tell your story and then how you need to go about gathering those bites.

Finally, bear in mind that often we will want to use two segments of the same interview. In radio these are easy to edit together, but in television if we edit them straight together we’ll get a jump cut. As a result, we need to always shoot cutaways anytime we shoot in the field. A cutaway is a brief shot that will create visual continuity between the two clip segments. Cutaways of interviews could include the following shots: the interviewee’s hands or an over the shoulder shot of the reporter listening, anything that will establish a sense of continuity. Also make sure you shoot cutaways that are at least 15 seconds in length or the editor will have a tough time when it comes to editing.

## **Video Editing**

Whenever compelling images, natural sounds and narration are edited into a single story, relationships are established, realities created, questions answered and emotions stimulated. That is the power of editing. When done well, news video editing is invisible to the viewer.

More precisely, editing means to select certain parts of an event or events and put them into a proper sequence. In essence, we’re condensing time and space. Of course the specific nature of editing will depend on what exactly you’re trying to edit. Are you editing a 20-minute television documentary or a one-minute news package? While this section deals with editing for television, many of the concepts discussed here can be applied equally well to editing for radio (without the visual element, of course).

The basic editing functions are to combine various shots, to condense the footage, to correct production mistakes and to build a show or story from various shots.

### *Editing Tips*

✓ Think about the story in advance and how and what you’ll need to edit

- ✓ Communicate with your crew
- ✓ Think about what the story is and shoot accordingly. Don't overshoot or it will be a nightmare to edit (and will take up valuable time that you don't usually have)
- ✓ You need sequences and these cannot be built in the edit room, so make sure they're shot in the field
- ✓ Images must be edited so that the main subject is always moving in the same direction throughout a sequence. The only things that might change are camera angle, composition and distance to the subject
- ✓ Movement that changes abruptly confuses viewers. Make sure you've got the cutaways you need.
- ✓ When using camera movement such as a zoom or a pan, make sure you complete the movement in editing – don't cut a zoom or pan in mid-motion; let it finish.
- ✓ Like everything else in broadcast journalism, editing should be motivated by action, dialogue, sound or narration. Each shot should run only as long as it takes the viewer to absorb the information presented. Pacing is crucial.
- ✓ Have a shot list to work from and know where you're going.
- ✓ Be organized: have your tapes, shot list, notes and script.
- ✓ If you're working with the editor (rather than editing yourself) share the focus of the story so you're both working from the same page.
- ✓ Be prepared to change the words: words are more flexible than the pictures.
- ✓ Let it breathe. Pauses can be very powerful.
- ✓ Natural sound – use it!!

## **Performance**

As broadcasters most of us rely on our voices for our livelihood. What many of us don't realize is that we can change our voice – but it takes time and practice. This section will give you practical advice on what you need to work on in order to change your voice. It will also give you tips on how to improve stand-ups and going live.

## **Delivery**

The first step in working on your delivery is to make sure you're relaxed. This may seem like a contradiction for many of us automatically tense up before we perform and to some extent need that rush of adrenaline in order to perform effectively. However, we need to release the tension in our face and neck and shoulders where most of us carry this tension in order to unlock our voices. That means roll your shoulders and your neck, stretch, move, whatever it takes to relax. You must do this before attempting any type of performance whatsoever.

We also need to learn to breathe properly which will also help us to relax. Most of us are shallow breathers, using only the top third of our lungs, leaving the bottom two-thirds to stagnate. We need to learn to fill not only our lungs with oxygen, but also our diaphragm for ultimately it is from the diaphragm that we will speak – our vocal chords only help to produce the sound...using our diaphragm will lend a richness and resonance to our voice and will also help protect our vocal chords.

How can we find our diaphragm? Well, for many of us that could prove to be a challenge because most of us don't use our diaphragm on a daily basis. Try this: stand tall, feet shoulder-width apart and breathe in deeply through your nose. Feel the oxygen fill your belly and allow your belly to distend. What is actually distending is your diaphragm! Do some of this belly breathing daily and you'll begin to get a feel for where your diaphragm is and ultimately how to use it.

You should also be standing anytime you perform. Clearly, this isn't possible if you're a television presenter, but you should stand whenever possible. You should also hold your copy up or have it in front of you so that you're not looking down. Our goal here is to have the entire pathway, from the diaphragm up through your lungs and windpipe until it's expelled, as clear and straight as possible. If you're looking down, your windpipe will be crunched up, hindering the clear escape of the sound.

You should also stay as hydrated as possible, that means lots of water and cut back on the coffee or sodas as caffeine is a diuretic meaning it simply dehydrates you – the opposite of what we're trying to achieve. The simple act of clearing your throat should also be avoided as it simply will irritate your vocal chords.

You also need to learn to use a microphone effectively. Most of us hold the mic too close to our mouths thus picking up unwanted hissing (sibilance) and popping and often leading to distorted sound pick up.

Finally, always appear confident even if you're not and practice, practice, practice for that is the only way your performance will improve.

### **Remember RICE:**

- **Relaxed**
- **Interested in what you're saying**
- **Connected beyond the mic/lens to your audience**
- **Energized because what you give you get back**

### **Reads:**

- know what you're reading, understand it and visualize it
- make it make sense
- visualize – you may be in a small booth or studio, but you need to put yourself into the place where your story is happening
- keep it conversational; don't sound like you're reading, but rather like you're telling a story
- talk to the audience
- use expression in your performance – yes, that means facial expression. I especially like to see presenters use their eyebrows!
- pauses can help tell the story and can give you a much needed moment to collect yourself
- maintain momentum through every sentence, through every paragraph until the very last word

- watch your audio levels to make sure you're getting what you want
- when giving an audio level test or check, make sure you are reading what and how you will be reading on air. Do not simply blow into the microphone or count to ten backwards as that will not give an accurate check.
- make sure you articulate and enunciate clearly; many of us have problems with certain words and sounds and it's up to you to ascertain what your problem areas might be and then to work on them
- focus on what you're saying; there are always distractions in any environment and it's your job to ignore them and focus on the job at hand

#### Script:

- mark your script – that means any pauses, unfamiliar pronunciations, intonation, expression – anything that will help you do a better read. Do NOT assume you'll remember when you go to mic it, you won't!
- know pronunciations
- always rehearse your script and read aloud using your face and eyes for expression BUT don't over rehearse
- remember, a lot of bad performance stems from a bad script so make sure you can read your script, that it's written for broadcast and that you can read it!

#### Tone:

- look out for unintentional traps that may make you appear insensitive. i.e. a sunny live weather report after a murder story. You need to mentally shift from story to story
- speak with both authority and accessibility
- beware of becoming overly emotional when reading, your tone and emotional expression should match the tone of the story you are reading

#### Fear of performance or “mic fright” is usually due to:

- lack of experience or preparation
- fear of failure
- lack of self-esteem
- lack of mental preparation
- dislike of one's own voice
- It has happened to a lot of well known journalists.

Once you know where your fear stems from you can work to overcome it!

#### Exercises for diaphragm, breathing, open throat:

- preparing the speech muscles: move the lips in all sorts of ways – push them forward, stretch them back, pucker them, blow through them
- stretch the tongue in and out of your mouth, down over your chin
- work the soft palette (the soft fleshy area above the back of your throat) by saying the phonetic sounds k, g, ng
- repeat these sounds: bah, bah, bah; duh, duh, duh; lah, lah, lah; gah, gah, gah; the, the, the; ra, ra, ra; mah, mah, mah; yah, yah, yah

- exaggerate vowel sounds before coming back to speaking them normally: OH, OU, OI
- deep diaphragmatic breathing

## **Going Live**

Regardless of whether you're a television or radio reporter, no doubt you'll be going live at some point during your career and likely quite often.

Preparation:

- Organize key themes and ideas first, and then insert key supporting ideas.
- Outline the beginning, middle and end.
- Remember: live should NOT replicate a pre-produced package
- Avoid relaying too much information and too many details.
- Include information not used in later packages or to explore other angles.
- Write ONLY key words/facts on your notepad
- Check appearance/equipment/the scene one last time.
- BREATHE fully from the diaphragm.

Performance:

- vary body language/facial expression
- vary eye contact; look down at notes and survey the scene
- physically interpret the information
- work the scene, if possible
- don't read word for word from notes
- keep copy and delivery conversational
- keep sentences short
- avoid a run-on delivery
- pause when you stumble or to highlight key information
- utilize vocal variety

## **Stand-ups**

A standup is a short (no more than 15 seconds) taped appearance of the reporter on camera. When edited it becomes a part of the reporter package.

A standup can accomplish certain things in a news story:

- Can bridge from place to place or from thought to thought when it occurs in the middle of a story
- Can summarize and tag a story when it's placed at the end.
- Can be invaluable in making a story less complicated and confusing.
- Enables you to include information you don't have pictures for such as statistics
- A standup proves, beyond any doubt, that you were truly on the scene, as an eyewitness, giving you and your newscast vital credibility.

Here are some considerations for a standup:

- Will a standup enhance the telling of the story?



- Will my pictures completely carry the story?
- Will we talk about facts that cannot be visualized?
- Is my video so uninteresting that I'm just using it so I won't put up color bars?

Reasons not to use a standup:

- Because we want to see the reporter
- Because a consultant says research indicates we should
- Because you don't have another way to begin or end your story

Performance tips for stand-ups:

- ✓ Explain, as opposed to "report" or "read"
- ✓ Make clear how the story touches and affects people.
- ✓ Relax
- ✓ Speak in phrases, in thoughts. Tell your story in natural conversational language.
- ✓ Remember that the audience is rarely hanging on your every word. So you must make your story and especially your standup sufficiently clear so as not to confuse people.
- ✓ Try to involve the setting of your story in your stand-ups. If you do a "friendly" story about firemen, use a firehouse as background in your s/u. .
- ✓ Try to keep your stand-ups interactive.
- ✓ Remember stand-ups are not long. Usually a few thoughts or sentences will do the job more effectively than a paragraph. A standup can range from 7 to 15 seconds.

## **Appearance**

Because television is a visual medium appearance does matter. Here are some tips to help your on-camera appearance.

- ✓ Avoid white and black clothing
- ✓ Clothing should have a slim silhouette and not be too bulky
- ✓ Avoid clothing with thin stripes or plaid or that is too busy or colors that are too contrasting
- ✓ Colors should coordinate with, not blend into, the set you are working on
- ✓ Women should avoid wearing big jewelry such as earrings or necklaces. Keep it simple and uncluttered.
- ✓ Makeup should be smooth and subtle and not theatrical. When applying makeup be sure to apply it in similar lighting conditions as those to which you'll be performing.
- ✓ Hair should be neat and not hanging in your face
- ✓ Use appropriate facial expression

## **GLOSSARY OF BROADCAST NEWS TERMS**

Reader/story: story read by the anchor with no sound or pictures

OTS: “over the shoulder” graphic, often a box over the anchor’s shoulder, used to emphasize subject of the story

Voice-over (or VO): copy that the anchor reads live while video or some other visual element is shown

Natural Sound (or NATS): ambient sound collected on the scene that enhances the viewer’s “feel” for the story or helps them better understand what happened ..for example, a well known building caving-in.

Sound Bite, Clip, Sound-on-tape or SOT: the edited part of the raw or uncut interview that you select for the viewer or listener. The average sound bite runs between 4 and 10 seconds –in other words keep it short, crisp and to the point. It may be the most important or interesting part of the interview or it may simply add color to the story.

Vox Pops (or MOS –man on the street): short for the Latin term vox populi, meaning the “voice of the people.” In broadcast journalism it’s the term we use for a collection of very short interviews (:04 -:08 -alternatively shot camera left and camera right.) with a number of people, usually a cross-section and randomly selected members of the public. (For example, what do you think about the condition of the streets?) They are an easy way to put the views of ordinary people into a news story.

Nat-VO (or NVO): the anchor reads a sentence or two on camera, and then pauses. The tape is rolled and we hear natural sound before the anchor continues to voice-over the visual element.

Package or PKG: visuals, natural sound and sound bites connected together in a report that has a beginning, middle and end. The reporter’s voice-over narration track is pre-recorded to connect and organize the visuals and sound.

Anchor Intro or Lead-in: an anchor’s on-camera introduction to a reporter package

Live Intro: a reporter’s live-in-the-field or in the newsroom introduction to the package

Anchor Tag: an anchor’s on-camera remarks immediately following a reporter package

Live Tag: a reporter’s live in the field remarks immediately following the package

Live Wrap Around: anchor intro, live intro, package, live tag, anchor tag

Headlines and Teases: short voiceovers designed to “hook” the viewer, thus bringing them to a newscast or preventing them from changing the channel

Close-up (CU): shot of an object at close range and tightly framed

Medium shot (MS): shot of an object at medium range; covers any framing between a close-up and a long shot

Long shot (LS): shot of an object from far away and very loosely frame

Pan: horizontal turning of the camera

Jump cut: an image that jumps slightly from one screen position to another during a cut, which jars the viewer.

Radio stories

Reader/script: story read by the presenter

Script and clip: presenter reads copy but there is also a clip usually in the middle of the story.

Reporter package or PKG: narration (voiceover), natural sound and sound bites connected together in a report that has a beginning, middle and end.

Wrap: presenter reads an intro, followed by the reporter package which is then concluded with the presenter again.

# ETHICS



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## ETHICS

### CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT RADIO-TELEVISION NEWS DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

The Radio-Television News Directors Association, wishing to foster the highest professional standards of electronic journalism, promote public understanding of and confidence in electronic journalism, and strengthen principles of journalistic freedom to gather and disseminate information, establishes this Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.

#### **PREAMBLE**

Professional electronic journalists should operate as trustees of the public, seek the truth, report it fairly and with integrity and independence, and stand accountable for their actions.

**PUBLIC TRUST:** Professional electronic journalists should recognize that their first obligation is to the public.

Professional electronic journalists should:

- Understand that any commitment other than service to the public undermines trust and credibility.
- Recognize that service in the public interest creates an obligation to reflect the diversity of the community and guard against oversimplification of issues or events.
- Provide a full range of information to enable the public to make enlightened decisions.
- Fight to ensure that the public's business is conducted in public.

**TRUTH:** Professional electronic journalists should pursue truth aggressively and present the news accurately, in context, and as completely as possible.

Professional electronic journalists should:

- Continuously seek the truth.
- Resist distortions that obscure the importance of events.
- Clearly disclose the origin of information and label all material provided by outsiders.

Professional electronic journalists should not:

- Report anything known to be false.
- Manipulate images or sounds in any way that is misleading.

- Plagiarize.
- Present images or sounds that are reenacted without informing the public.

**FAIRNESS:** Professional electronic journalists should present the news fairly and impartially, placing primary value on significance and relevance.

Professional electronic journalists should:

- Treat all subjects of news coverage with respect and dignity, showing particular compassion to victims of crime or tragedy.
- Exercise special care when children are involved in a story and give children greater privacy protection than adults.
- Seek to understand the diversity of their community and inform the public without bias or stereotype.
- Present a diversity of expressions, opinions, and ideas in context.
- Present analytical reporting based on professional perspective, not personal bias.
- Respect the right to a fair trial.

**INTEGRITY:** Professional electronic journalists should present the news with integrity and decency, avoiding real or perceived conflicts of interest, and respect the dignity and intelligence of the audience as well as the subjects of news.

Professional electronic journalists should:

- Identify sources whenever possible. Confidential sources should be used only when it is clearly in the public interest to gather or convey important information or when a person providing information might be harmed. Journalists should keep all commitments to protect a confidential source.
- Clearly label opinion and commentary.
- Guard against extended coverage of events or individuals that fails to significantly advance a story, place the event in context, or add to the public knowledge.
- Refrain from contacting participants in violent situations while the situation is in progress.
- Use technological tools with skill and thoughtfulness, avoiding techniques that skew facts, distort reality, or sensationalize events.
- Use surreptitious newsgathering techniques, including hidden cameras or microphones, only if there is no other way to obtain stories of significant public importance and only if the technique is explained to the audience.
- Disseminate the private transmissions of other news organizations only with permission.

Professional electronic journalists should not:

- Pay news sources who have a vested interest in a story.
- Accept gifts, favors, or compensation from those who might seek to influence coverage.
- Engage in activities that may compromise their integrity or independence.

**INDEPENDENCE:** Professional electronic journalists should defend the independence of all journalists from those seeking influence or control over news content.

Professional electronic journalists should:

- Gather and report news without fear or favor, and vigorously resist undue influence from any outside forces, including advertisers, sources, story subjects, powerful individuals, and special interest groups.
- Resist those who would seek to buy or politically influence news content or who would seek to intimidate those who gather and disseminate the news.
- Determine news content solely through editorial judgment and not as the result of outside influence.
- Resist any self-interest or peer pressure that might erode journalistic duty and service to the public.
- Recognize that sponsorship of the news will not be used in any way to determine, restrict, or manipulate content.
- Refuse to allow the interests of ownership or management to influence news judgment and content inappropriately.
- Defend the rights of the free press for all journalists, recognizing that any professional or government licensing of journalists is a violation of that freedom.

**ACCOUNTABILITY:** Professional electronic journalists should recognize that they are accountable for their actions to the public, the profession, and themselves.

Professional electronic journalists should:

- Actively encourage adherence to these standards by all journalists and their employers.
- Respond to public concerns. Investigate complaints and correct errors promptly and with as much prominence as the original report.
- Explain journalistic processes to the public, especially when practices spark questions or controversy.
- Recognize that professional electronic journalists are duty-bound to conduct themselves ethically.
- Refrain from ordering or encouraging courses of action that would force employees to commit an unethical act.
- Carefully listen to employees who raise ethical objections and create environments in which such objections and discussions are encouraged.
- Seek support for and provide opportunities to train employees in ethical decision-making.

## **LAW, ETHICS AND RESPONSIBILITY**

### **Journalistic Values and Standards**

In our efforts to be responsible journalists, there are a number of journalistic values that help us make sound decisions and therefore produce solid news coverage.

**Accuracy** – get the facts right and get the right facts. The information you gather is not misleading or false. Completeness of information is also crucial – don't be inaccurate by omitting information. Do not assume that information you were given is true. You must verify.

**Integrity** – The information is truthful and not distorted to justify a conclusion or to present a personal bias.

**Balance/Fairness** – Reflect the wholeness of communities and report equitably the relevant facts and significant points of view. Deal fairly and ethically with persons, institutions, issues and events.

**Impartiality** – There are often more than two sides to any issue and impartiality may not be achieved simply by mathematical balance in which each view is complemented by an opposing one. It is also important to keep your opinions separate from those of your sources. In news, your opinions are not part of the story.

**Accessibility** – Be the eyes and ears of the community – go where the public cannot go. Help citizens connect with each other.

**Credibility** – depends not only on accuracy and fairness in reporting and presentation, but also on avoidance by both the organization and its journalists of contacts which could give rise to perceptions of partiality. Be accountable. You may at times be required to explain why you do what you do. For example, why a suspect was named in a news story.

**Privacy** – Journalists should respect the privacy of individuals, recognizing that intrusions have to be justified by serving a greater good. Journalists should not report the private legal behavior of public figures unless broader public issues are raised either by the behavior itself or by the consequences of its becoming widely known.

### **Making Ethical Decisions**

Ethical decisions are not made in a vacuum. Indeed, making ethical decisions involves both the individual and the organization; there is both personal responsibility on the part of the journalist, and organizational responsibility on the part of the news organization. Bearing this in mind, here are some guidelines we can use to help us make sound ethical decisions.

- Consult your editors and colleagues
- Define the ethical problem
- Check codes of ethics and other guides

- Decide what your journalistic objective is
- Identify the people involved in the story (the stakeholders) and how they might be affected by your decision
- Ask yourself what your alternatives might be
- Having a discussion is not enough: you have to make a decision
- Make sure that you can explain your decision and explain the decision if necessary

Finally, when making decisions, you may consider the following checklist from the book *Doing Ethics in Journalism: A Handbook with Case Studies* by Jay Black, Bob Steele and Ralph Barney.

1. What do I know? What do I need to know?
2. What is my journalistic purpose?
3. What are my ethical concerns?
4. What organizational policies and professional guidelines should I consider?
5. How can I include other people, with different perspectives and diverse ideas, in the decision-making process?
6. Who are the stakeholders – those affected by my decision? What are their motivations? which are legitimate?
7. What if the roles were reversed? How would I feel if I were in the shoes of one of the stakeholders?
8. What are the possible consequences of my actions? Short term? Long term?
9. What are my alternatives to maximize my truth telling responsibility and minimize harm?
10. Can I clearly and fully justify my thinking and my decision? To my colleagues? To the stakeholders? To the public?

See: [http://www.poynter.org/content/content\\_view.asp?id=36518](http://www.poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=36518)



## **Operating Standards for News and Public Affairs**

Our field is journalism not show business so it is absolutely essential that reporters not stage or contribute to the staging-however slight-or re-create or in any way give the viewer an impression of any fact other than the actual fact, no matter how minor or seemingly inconsequential. Specifically, nothing should be done that creates an erroneous impression of time, place, event, person or fact.

There are some events, such as, for example, speeches, press conferences and demonstrations of various types which occur only because coverage of the press is anticipated. The sole factor which determines whether any such event shall be covered is, of course, the basic newsworthiness of the event. But reporters and cameramen should be alert at all times to the possibility that attempts may be made to “use” cameras and microphones.

Coverage should be as inconspicuous as possible. If, in the course of covering demonstrations, riots, rallies or similar events, it becomes obvious that, but for the presence of cameras, disorders would not be taking place, or would diminish sizably, or terminate, the cameras should be capped or removed. It is the responsibility of reporters and camera personnel to discuss each and every situation.

### **Interviews and Discussions**

Interviews must always be spontaneous and unrehearsed.

They are not considered spontaneous and unrehearsed if more than a general outline of the subject is either communicated or transmitted to the interviewee.

Interviews must never be rehearsed; questions must never be submitted in advance. The interviewer can share the general topic but nothing more... Otherwise it is the same as making a movie.

To put it another way, interviews must be spontaneous and unrehearsed. In addition there must never be an agreement to avoid a particular subject. An interview is not considered spontaneous and unrehearsed if:

- a) questions are submitted in advance to the interviewee; or
- b) there is an agreement not to use a particular general area as the basis for specific questions; or
- c) there is an agreement not to ask specific questions; or
- d) the videotape or transcript of the interview is submitted to the interviewee after completion so that he may participate in the condensation and editing.

To the extent that any interview is not spontaneous and unrehearsed, that fact must be adequately disclosed in the broadcast. The interviewee should be advised prior to his on-camera appearance, that this will be done.

## **EDITING**

Editing is an area, obviously, that does not lend itself to broad and universally applicable rules. There are many varying circumstances. But there is one basic requirement.

We must all be meticulously careful, in all circumstances, that the editing results in a clear and succinct statement, which reflects, fairly, honestly, and without distortion, what was said.

You can never, for example, edit together a question and answer taken from two different parts of the interview.

## **CAMERA CHECK LIST**

When you check out a camera, you should always confirm three things:

- Do I have everything I am supposed to have?
- Is everything working? Is the lens clean? Is the camera set properly to start shooting right away?
- Do I have everything I want or need for my assignment?

Here's a quick checklist:

When you the basic kit you should get:

The camera with lens cover and bag, two batteries, the standard microphone, a white balance card, one medium length mic cable, a set of headphones, a one-in-two XLR-cable splitter (Y-cable) and a tripod with bag.

Check whether all items are there. Check whether everything is working, including the tripod (sometimes plates or locks are broken). Insert a tape into the camera and run it for a few seconds. Check all items immediately after you got them. Return them immediately if there is a problem and tell the technical staff or the professor.

Bring a videotape. At least one.

Check if the lens and viewfinder are clean. If not, ask for help. Focus the viewfinder (with the lens cap on).

**Respect the gear. It's your most important tool. If you gear breaks, or if it's fouled up, you won't have a story.**

Questions to ask yourself:

Where are you going? Press conference? Office setting? Cultural event? Sports event? Indoors/outdoors? What's your audio? Do you need a shotgun mic? Most of the time you will. Microphone stand? Maybe. *Lavalier*? Never hurts. Is it raining? Bring the rain cover for the camera. If the camera gets wet, dry it right away and pray that it will still work. Take tissue to keep the camera dry. **ALWAYS KEEP THE CAMERA DRY!** Is it cold outside? Really cold? Keep your batteries warm.

Will you need a light to shoot the story? Is the camera light enough? Will extra light be available...from where? Ask! Remember, if it's a nice day outside and there is a relatively quiet place to shoot. Try to do the interview outside and not indoors.

How long will you be outdoors? Will your battery last? Do you need a second battery?

Plan ahead. How many minutes will the shoot take including interviews? Do I know the order of the questions I want to ask?

When finished, return the gear clean and neat just the way you would want to receive it.

### Framing Interviews

1. Place subject on one side of frame or the other (not in the center).
2. Frame subjects from mid-chest up for formal interviews (remember you may have to leave room for lower thirds at the bottom of the screen).
3. Frame MOS interviews tighter (i.e. close up full face).
4. Position camera so that subject's eyes are level with lens.
5. Position camera so that you are shooting over the reporter's shoulder and lens is as close to reporter's head as possible.
6. Do not have interviewee look into the camera lens. Interviewee should look slightly to one side of lens or the other, depending for example, if you plan to marry to sot from two different people.

## Lighting

Lighting allows the viewer to see the scene and directs his attention, since the eye is naturally drawn to the bright areas of the frame. The direction from which the light strikes an object or a face also influences how the object is seen. Side lighting casts

shadows that emphasize depth dimension and surface texture, while frontal lighting tends to flatten, compress and smooth over features.

Hard Light, also known as specular light, like direct sunlight on a clear day, is made up of parallel rays that produce clean, hard shadows that neatly outline the shapes of objects.

Soft or diffuse light, as in an overcast day, is less directional. If it casts shadows at all, they are dull and indistinct.

Hard light can be produced by a single spotlight and can function as a primary source. When used in this manner it is called the key light.

Bouncing a lamp light on a white or silvery surface usually makes soft light. This lighting is known as fill light since it fills in shadows cast by hard light without adding more shadows of its own. Soft light is relatively gentle and tends to smooth out features and textures.

## **BASIC LIGHTING SETUP**

An effective lighting setup for a simple subject can be done with three lights; the key, fill and backlight.

**Key light** The key is the brightest light and casts primary shadows, giving a sense of directionality to the lighting. Usually hard lighting like a spot is used as a key light.

**Fill Light** The main function of the fill light is to “fill” in the shadows produced by the key light. Filled lighting can be achieved by bouncing a spotlight or the use of soft light. If a fill light is placed near or at the same level as the camera, its shadows will not be visible on tape. The fill is not normally placed on the same side as the key. A spot bounced off the wall or ceiling will provide flat, even fill over a broad area.

**Backlight** Backlights are placed on the opposite side of the subject from the camera, high enough to be out of view. Backlight should be hard. If backlight is at about the same level as the subject and somewhat off to the side, it is called a kicker.

**Lighting Faces Position** the key light frontally, and low enough so that the shadow does not extend all the way down to the mouth. ...that is near the camera and on the side to which the subject is looking. Pay close attention to the shadows of the nose and eye sockets on the face. After the key light has been placed, add the fill. The fill should be close enough to the camera so that it does not create a second set of shadows.

Moving a light closer to a person will diffuse the shadows he cast.

Williston 2000

## WEBSITES FOR JOURNALISTS

### *Computer Search Engines:*

- 1) Google search engine - <http://www.google.com>; [www.toolbar.google.com](http://www.toolbar.google.com) - great toolbar
- 2) [www.teoma.com](http://www.teoma.com)
- 3) MAC users: [www.ranchero.com/huevos](http://www.ranchero.com/huevos)
- 4) [www.altavista.com](http://www.altavista.com) - Deeper data base than Google but fewer sources
- 5) [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com) – video shared can become news

### *Bookmark lets:*

- 1) [www.bookmarklets.com](http://www.bookmarklets.com) - Highlight word on page, click More Info About
- 2) @All the Web - [www.squarefree.com/bookmarklets/seo.html](http://www.squarefree.com/bookmarklets/seo.html)

### *Conflict Reporting*

- 1) Center for War, Peace and the News - <http://www.nyu.edu/cwpnm>
- 2) IMPACS (Institute of Media Policy and Civil Society) - <http://www.impacs.org/media/>
- 3) Mission is to strengthen media's role in peace building and guaranteeing human rights.  
Institute for War and Peace Reporting (media/politics) – [http://www.iwpr.net/index.pl?top\\_publications.html](http://www.iwpr.net/index.pl?top_publications.html)  
Weekly News excellent archive
- 4) Journalism, Media and the Challenge of Human Rights Reporting - <http://www.ichrp.org>  
International Council on Human Rights publishes a downloadable guide.

### *Competitions*

- 1) Global Health Council Awards - <http://www.globalhealth.org/awards>
- 2) Reporters Sans Frontiers - <http://www.rsf.org>

### *ICFJ Sites*

- 1) International Center for Journalists - <http://www.icfj.org>  
ICFJ has information for journalists around the world including information on programs for Journalists.
- 2) International Journalists Network - <http://www.ijnnet.org>  
A clearinghouse for information on media and journalism training throughout the developing world.
- 3) Knight International Press Fellowships - <http://www.knight-international.org>

### *General Sites*

- 1) BBC - <http://bbc.co.uk>
- 2) I Want Media - <http://www.iwantmedia.com> (Tons of links to everything)
- 3) International Federation of Journalists - <http://www.ifj.org>  
The world's largest organization of journalists)
- 4) Journalism.net - <http://www.journalismnet.com>  
A full service site with dozens of useful links, developed by a Canadian reporter.
- 5) National Public Radio (U.S.) - <http://www.npr.org>

- 6) Next Generation Radio (NPR Training Project) - <http://www.npr.org/about/nextgen/>
- 7) Radio College - <http://www.radiocollege.org>  
A useful site for radio resources
- 8) Reporter.org - <http://www.reporter.org>  
Resources for journalists, including specific beat-related links
- 9) Radio and Television News Directors Association - <http://www.rtnda.org/>  
Reporter's toolbox from the Radio and Television News Directors Association.
- 10) The Rundown - <http://www.tvrundown.com>  
Resources for television newsrooms, including story ideas and links.
- 11) Society of Professional Journalists - <http://www.spj.org>  
Their code of ethics is available in seven languages.
- 12) World Association of Community Broadcasters - <http://www.amarc.org>
- 13) The Working Reporter - <http://workingreporter.com/>  
A resource for journalists, with news, media criticism, and quick links to information sources
- 14) JournalismTraining-BBCWorldService Education - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/home/>
- 15) InfoDev - <http://www.worldbank.org/infodev/>  
A grant program for the innovative use of information and communication technology.
- 16) JournalismTraining.net - <http://www.journalismtraining.net>  
Site to help journalists cover business and economics in developing countries.
- 17) The Reuters Foundation - <http://www.foundation.reuters.com/education/index.htm>  
Information about their training programs.
- 18) News Photography - National Press Photographers Association (NPPA)- <http://www.nppa.org>  
The National Press Photographers website.
- 19) TV Cameramen- <http://www.tvcameramen.com/>  
Site for news photogs with lots of tips on shooting  
<http://www.videomvp.com/editing-shoot-tips.htm>  
<http://www.petesvideo.com/vidtips.htm>
- 20) Press Freedom - Article XIX- <http://www.article19.org>  
An international human rights organization which promotes freedom of expression.
- 21) Committee to Protect Journalists - <http://www.cpj.org>  
Updates and information about press freedom around the world.
- 22) Index on Censorship - <http://www.oneworld.org>  
A bi-monthly magazine for free speech with the goal to protect free expression.  
International Freedom of Expression Exchange - <http://www.ifex.org>  
Searchable database of “action alerts” from around the world
- 23) The Mongolian Law on Freedom of the Media 1998 - [http://www.policy.hu/myagmar/press\\_law.PDF](http://www.policy.hu/myagmar/press_law.PDF)

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## APPENDIX

### **Memo from Executive Producer of 30 minute evening new broadcast to reporters, producers and editors.**

#1 In writing, pay attention to clarity and simplicity. Use basic vocabulary and simple sentences (one thought). Always remember that our viewers can not concentrate on pieces the way we do; they often are distracted by their surroundings. And they usually start off with less background information than we do.

#2 Pay more attention to sound. Use more natural sound. Avoid ridiculously short sound bites. Make sure the sound bites are understandable. If you're not sure they are understandable but they are crucial to use, add a carryon verbatim. If a sound bite is in a foreign language, usually the reporter should do the voice over. Make sure the mix is done so the reporter can be heard clearly. Try not to voice over a tight shot of someone talking; if you must make the background sound all but disappear.

#3 Shoot cutaways. , medium shots and wide shots so that the reporter does not have to voice-over a person talking just before that person is brought sound up full.

#4 We end too many pieces with stand-ups. Try to do bridges. Try to begin and end pieces with good pictures.

#5 It hardly ever works to end a piece with a sound bite, followed by a sign-off.

#6 Unless the mood of a piece or the writing dictates long scenes, try to use more shots (make more edits) in each piece. We're not looking for choppiness but we are looking for visual interest. In shooting a piece make sure there are enough angles of even the most commonplace subject. Make sure there are wide shots you can use to establish the scene. Don't forget to shoot exteriors.

#7 If you are forced to use "wallpaper" footage, try to write to it. A recent example: We used tight shots of Bush to cover a line about the Bush government. We could have taken the curse off that very easily by writing "the Bush government" or "the government of George Bush."

#8 We use too many supers and thus we give viewers too many things to take in at one time. Try to introduce sound bites so that supers are not necessary. If you can't get everything into a setup line, at least give some context, so that a one-line super is sufficient. (Example: "High School principals disagree. ' Then the super can be Gaana, instead of Gaana, High School Principal.

#9. Too many narrations are read too fast. Sometimes this is done to cram in more words. It would be better to cut some words. Ask for editing help or ask for more time.



#10. Music. With few exceptions (to be approved by the Executive Producer), use it only when it is an integral part of the setting or the story. When you use music, use enough of it in one place so the viewer can grasp it (melody, rhythm etc); don't pick it up or lose it in the middle of a musical phrase. And find a way to end the music gracefully at the end of the piece, before or after the sign off.

#11 Remember you are writing for the ear. There are some words that are easier for the ear to hear than others. Generally, contraction's are not.

#12 finally, beyond the basics. Too many of our pieces seem the same. They lack feeling. They lack elements to which the viewer can relate. Take risks. Look for different approaches, build around specific angles, take the small things and broaden them, focus on people. (For example, if you can cover a blizzard that lasts for days, focus on one family and how they are trying to cope. Or go to a hospital and try to find a victim who will let you accompany them home. Or ride along with the driver of a city truck that removes snow then ask him about his job.)

## **Mandatory Shopping List**

First: You must have an idea about a story

Research- You must prove the story is real. How do you do that?

You must make **phone calls before you do anything else.**

If necessary, Research must involve you going to see the possible interviewee in person.

Once you identify the characters in your story and the information for the narration:

You must make a list for me:

- A. Names of people and location
- B. What they will say – be specific
- C. What pictures you want to get to illustrate your story

Then you come to me:

1. YOU MUST EXPLAIN STORY
2. YOU MUST MAKE A LIST OF VIDEO SHOTS
3. YOU MUST GIVE LIST OF EDITORIAL POINTS
4. YOU MUST WRITE VOICE OVERS
5. YOU MUST PRESENT TEXT FOR STANDUPPERS
6. YOU MUST LIST QUESTIONS YOU WILL ASK

STUDENTS MUST SHOW THIS LIST TO ME **BEFORE** THEY GO OUT TO SHOOT.

REMEMBER PLEASE: WRITE **SIMPLE, SHORT** SENTENCES. **ONE** THOUGHT IN EACH SENTENCE.



## Comments

