

Block**3****MEDIA WRITING**

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INTRODUCTION TO BLOCK 3: MEDIA WRITING

Welcome to the third Block of this course on Media and Communication Skills. This Block is entitled **MEDIA WRITING** and has four Units. In order to view media intelligently, we need to develop ‘media literacy.’ We are literate in print and so can read and judge the merits of what we are. Similarly we need to become acquainted with the electronic media. Familiarity with media literacy may also be useful if we ever need to take part in a media programme or arrange one.

In Unit 1, entitled **Script Writing for Radio and TV** we have focused on what kind of language should preferably be used while scripting for the media.

Unit 2 entitled **Writing for News** takes up the process and principles involved in news scripting for the broadcast media. Broadcast copy is written for the ears rather than the eyes. Therefore, the writer must always be aware that the consumers of broadcast news will be **listening** to what they write, rather than reading it.

In Unit 3 which is entitled **Editorial Writing**, we have discussed the importance and validity of Editorials in the print media. This will help you to read editorials with a critical and analytical eye.

Finally in Unit 4, entitled **Editing for Print and Online Media** we have taught you how to edit material for print and online media.

We hope you enjoy studying this block.

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UNIT 1 SCRIPT WRITING FOR RADIO AND TV

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Unscripted Programmes: Interviews, Discussions, Audience Participatory Programmes
 - 1.2.1 Preparing for Unscripted Programmes
 - 1.2.2 Setting up a Panel
 - 1.2.3 Some Questions and Answers
- 1.3 A World of Many Voices
- 1.4 Some Popular Formats in Television
- 1.5 The Grammar of Television: Shots and Transitions
 - 1.5.1 Shot Sizes
 - 1.5.2 Camera Movements
 - 1.5.3 Transitions
- 1.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

1.0 OBJECTIVES

Out aim through this Unit is to help you to develop ‘media literacy’, by

- Understanding the various kinds of formats for media programmes,
- Understanding the process of preparation for an ‘unscripted’ programme,
- Illustrating the differences between ‘real’ speech and written language, using actual examples,
- Becoming familiar with the basics of the language of television, and
- To change how one views a programme or listens to a programme, by understanding these formats, processes and issues.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Not all of us will become producers for the media. But all of us are viewers and consumers of media programmes. If we know a little about how these programmes are produced, it will help us to judge the merits of what we hear and see on the media.

In order to view media intelligently, we need to develop ‘media literacy’. We are literate in print and so can read and judge the merits of what we read. In this century we need to similarly become acquainted with the electronic media. The basics of media literacy may also come in handy if we ever need to take part in a media programme, or arrange a programme in our own institutions for a live audience.

In this unit we will reflect on how careful preparation and imagination can raise the quality of even a programme that is ‘unscripted’. We shall look in some detail at

how a panel discussion may be set up. We shall also illustrate how the natural, spontaneous spoken language differs from written language. Finally, we shall mention some of the formats of television programmes, and familiarize you with the basic “grammar” of television – the elements of its “visual language”.

Throughout this unit, we invite you to watch television, or listen to the radio, to understand and reflect on the points we make. Much of the work required for this unit, therefore, is recreational. Happy viewing!

1.2 UNSCRIPTED PROGRAMMES: INTERVIEWS DISCUSSIONS, AUDIENCE PARTICIPATORY PROGRAMMES

1.2.1 Preparing for Unscripted Programmes

Interviews, panel discussions or group discussions, and audience participatory programmes are the prime examples of unscripted radio and television programmes. Unscripted does not mean unprepared for. If you are to be the interviewer or the moderator or the anchor, you will have to do a bit of homework about the subject, find out as much as you can about it, and think of how to approach the topic. This preparation will help you to guide the interview or the discussion in a focused way. If the interview or discussion has no focus and rambles on, the audience will lose their way, and lose interest.

In the media, there are two catchphrases for producers:

- 1) Well begun is half done; ill begun is undone.
- 2) Tell them what you’re going to tell them; tell them; and tell them what you’ve told them.

The first slogan emphasizes the necessity of catching the listeners’ or viewers’ attention right at the beginning, when they have the choice of switching to some other channel. Why should they listen to your programme? Ask yourself this question, narrow down the answer, and begin the programme with that point, which emphasizes the uniqueness of your programme. In advertising circles they talk of a USP or unique selling point. The advertiser is forced to think about and articulate to herself the one point which differentiates her product from all other products. Once you have caught your audience’s attention, the chances are that they will stay with you, unless you really have nothing more to say!

The second slogan points to the temporal nature of these media. When people are watching a broadcast, they cannot stop and go back to refresh their memory. It is therefore good practice to introduce the programme with a brief overview, present the main points, and conclude with a recapitulation of the main points.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Space given below the question is for writing your answer.
b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

i) From your experience of watching television or listening to radio, name a programme which in your opinion illustrates slogan number 1 given above.
.....
.....

.....

 ii) Which of these two slogans is illustrated by the daily news on radio or TV?

.....

1.2.2 Setting Up a Panel

Let's suppose you want to host a panel discussion about how to prepare for an interview. How large should it be? Apart from yourself, the anchor or the moderator, you need at least two others (if you have only one other person, it will be simply an interview). But perhaps two is too few. Your two guests may agree totally with each other (which makes it a little dull and boring), or they may disagree so much that you are caught in between. Two guests, then, do not allow much scope for interaction and debate; a minimum of three would be better. What about a maximum? It may be difficult to manage more than four people: to give them each enough time for their say, and to remember each person's opinions and react to it, in a fifteen or twenty minute programme. So let's say you settle on a panel of three or four people, and yourself.

You then have to think of the kind of people you want on the panel, A panel is supposed to be representative of the people connected with the topic. So there should be different kinds of people who are connected with interviews, on the panel. You may want to start with the interviewers themselves: Who better than them to speak about how an interviewee should prepare? One kind of person on your panel, therefore, could be the executive of an important company, the kind of person who interviews candidates for the most sought-after kind of jobs. Then you may want to include a representative of the government, or a public sector enterprise; for the perception of the public and private sector interviewers may differ. For a third, why not look for a placement consultant, or the kind of person who trains candidates in communication skills and helps them prepare for the interview? The fourth member of the panel – if one is required – could then be a candidate: either someone who is disillusioned after a number of failed attempts to get a job, or someone who seems to have the magic wand that opens all doors after every interview. In this way you could get four perspectives on the panel.

Now that you have your people together, you must think of what to say.

- How should you begin the programme?
- How should you introduce the panelists, and in what order?
- Most importantly, what questions do you ask, and in what order?
- What do you think the answers are likely to be?

This imaginative exercise is the crucial preparation for the panel discussion. It does not mean you should make a rigid plan and stick slavishly to it. But with this

preparation, you will be a good host who can better listen to what the panelists say. You can react to them better, because you will have thought about what they may say.

Check Your Progress 2

- Note:** a) Space given below the question is for writing your answer.
 b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1) Watch a discussion in English, on TV, or listen to a discussion in English on the radio. Then do the tasks suggested below.

Note: You may not be able to do all these tasks if you are watching or listening to a live programme, and all alone. If possible, work with a recorded programme, and in a group.

If this is not possible, you may have to watch or listen to three or four different discussion programmes. Try answering only one of the questions each time.

i) Note down how many discussants there are, and who they are.

.....

ii) Note down the topic, and how the anchor introduces them.

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iii) Finally, note down the questions the anchor asks the discussants.

.....

1.2.3 Some Questions and Answers

Continuing with our example, let us now look at how one anchor prepared for this panel discussion on how to prepare for an interview. She noticed from her research that three kinds of preparation for interviews were often mentioned:

- Intellectual preparation,
- Physical preparation and

- Mental preparation (attitude, control of nerves, and so on).

So the questions to the panelists begin – which of these topics should be addressed first? Should the discussions begin with tips about how to control your nervousness, or with tips about how to dress for the interview, or with tips about how to study your subject for it? Notice that these three kinds of tips relate to the three areas mentioned above, of mental preparation, physical preparation and intellectual preparation respectively.

Here the anchor asked herself: if I were going to take an interview next week, and I was watching this programme, what would I be most interested in? The answer: I'd love to know what kinds of questions I will be asked. Indeed, the books on preparing for interviews encouraged candidates to think of and predict questions they would be asked. So she decided to begin with the broad and general question:

“What are the kinds of questions you would ask a candidate?”

Notice that this is a general, broad question, which doesn't relate to any particular kind of preparation by the candidate. But the panelists' answers indicated that the questions would mostly be about the candidate's background, and abilities. That is, the answers related to intellectual preparation. This helped her to ask the next question.

Her second question was: “Is the focus on a person's knowledge, or the ability to communicate?” Then she asked questions about self-confidence and nervousness: “What if a candidate fumbles at an interview?” These questions all addressed the area of mental preparation. Finally, she asked: “Do dress and appearance matter? To what extent are you influenced by it?” This was a question about physical preparation.

Notice that the anchor asked five questions during this twenty minute programme. These five questions covered the three areas of preparation she had identified during her research. Notice too that her questions rearranged the points she had noted during her research, and that she did not use bookish words such as “intellectual preparation, mental preparation, and physical preparation”.

1.3 A WORLD OF MANY VOICES

Unscripted programmes present speech in its most natural, everyday form. We have already learned that spoken language is a little different from written language. When we speak we may pause to think. We may correct ourselves as we speak. We may hesitate or discontinue a thought; we may repeat ourselves. All this makes unscripted spoken language a little different from the neatly thought out and well arranged sentences we see in our textbooks and in print.

What would our speech look like if it were written down (“transcribed”)? Here are a few examples of real speech, taken from a discussion about how to face an interview.

“The questions will go on changing depending upon the candidate, his background – particularly his educational background, and his past experience, if any.”

When written down, this sentence might read: “The questions will go on changing depending on the candidate's educational background and past experience, if any.

The spoken sentence expresses each thought and afterthought as it occurs: the candidate, his background, his educational background.....When writing these

thoughts down, they are presented in a complete form, without repetition for television.

“We probe. We probe in the sense we try to see whether the candidate knows what he’s going in for.”

Notice how the speaker expands and explains his idea of ‘probing’, and uses the phrase ‘in the sense’ to signal this.

Notice the parallelisms in sentence structure in these examples:

“He has to give his opinions; he has to make some decisions....”

“How well aware is he? How much does he know about what is happening not only in this country but also in the world?”

“Nothing too loud, nothing too jazzy, nothing ‘mod’ at all”.

Notice the parenthetical thoughts in the transcript below. The speaker explains who he means by “we”. He adds the emphasize “believe me” to break the sequence of three parallel phrases introduced by the words “half One-fourth One-fourth.”

“Looks are fairly important and we, all of us who deal in personnel recruitment, believe that half the interview is over when you enter, one-fourth is what they talk to you and believe me, the last one-fourth is again how you rise and get out.”

The speakers quoted below put the main word first in the sentence.

“Dress, I don’t think it is very important.”

“Ambition – ambition was a bad word till recently.”

And this speaker begins with a half-sentence. Moreover, this half sentence seems to end with an extra word, “candidates”, which strictly belongs to the next sentence; the first half-sentence would be fine if it ended with “looking for”. Such mix ups and slight ungrammaticalities often occur in speech.

“Depends on which function you’re looking for in candidates. For example, if you are looking for candidates for the marketing department, yes, it has a higher weightage than if he has to be working in R & D for example”.

Here are some examples of words repeated for emphasis.

“At the bio-data stage, the prospective employer doesn’t know you at all, at all, absolutely. All he has to go by is your bio-data that is in front of him’.

Words like “absolutely” occur more often in speech to emphasize a point. Again, there is a frequent occurrence of words like “well”, “now”, and other such adverbs which allow the speaker to take some time to think, as in this example.

“Well, one standard question is “where do you see yourself five years from now?” Now, when I got this question first I said, ‘I’m looking at myself in your seat’. I got the job.”

In short, speech has characteristics of spontaneity and thinking while we speak that get reflected in hesitations, false starts, self-corrections, and sentences that do not strictly ‘hang together’ grammatically. Because even the most proficient language user does not speak English “like a book”, these errors and inadequacies are forgiven in speech. So also many learners sound alright when they speak, but fare very poorly when they have to write!

Check Your Progress 3

Note: a) Space given below the question is for writing your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

- i) Read the spoken discourse given below, about the importance of the biodata, and identify the words and phrases and other aspects of language that strike you as ‘spoken’ rather than ‘written’.

“You see the one thing one should always remember the bio-data reaches before the person comes. So unless we do campus recruitment where also we do ask them to fill up personal data forms the individuals must always realize that the bio-data is going before he goes so the bio-data should be able to carry as much about the person as it can. (Pause)

So while there are lots of bio-data we see where a lot of irrelevant information is given which doesn’t impress at all –but a crisply presented bio-data which tells everything the interviewer would like to know about, is extremely important-format, the neatness, the details....”

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- ii) Try to analyse and ‘edit’ this passage to make it appropriate for a book.

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1.4 SOME POPULAR FORMATS IN TELEVISION

The format of the programme we have been discussing until now may be termed the ‘expert panel’ or the ‘studio discussion’ (if the panel includes non-experts). We have also referred to audience participatory programmes, and studio based discussion programmes. There are some other well known formats in television programming.

Given below is a list that includes the formats we have discussed. Can you say which of these formats allow for unscripted programmes, and which are likely to be scripted? Remember that it also possible to have a part of a programme scripted: e.g. in a quiz show, the quiz master has prepared questions, alternative choices for answers, and the correct answers. (S)he might even have rehearsed or scripted some light-hearted talk to introduce the questions. But the audience comes without a script, and the quizmaster must have the presence of mind to react appropriately to what the audience says and does.

- 1) Audience participatory: e.g. game shows, quizzes, skills (music, comedy,...)

- 2) Expert panel: e.g. election coverage, issues related to education, gender, etc.
- 3) Studio based discussion programme: e.g. weekly discussions with an invited audience and an anchor, on some issue of general interest
- 4) Field documentaries: e.g. on wildlife, on social or political issues, on travel
- 5) Folk-forms: e.g. puppetry, folk theatre
- 6) Demonstration: e.g. cookery
- 7) Live programmes: coverage of sports, parliament, election news, disasters, etc.
- 8) News and current affairs
- 9) Drama

1.5 THE GRAMMAR OF TELEVISION: SHOTS AND TRANSITIONS

1.5.1 Shot Sizes

News programmes, and some discussion programmes, are the reason why television is sometimes called a medium of ‘the talking head’. You do not often see a ‘talking head’ in a film or movie; the screen is too large, and the size of a talking head would be intimidating. The television screen can project an image of a person up to their bust or chest, which is almost the size of a person sitting across you at that distance; television is an intimate medium. It has been said that a discussion programme on television should have the atmosphere of an intelligent after-dinner conversation.

Now think of the picture of the talking head – or watch a news presenter sitting at her or his desk as (s)he presents the news. How much of the person do you see? We have suggested above that you see the face and head, and below that, the neck, up to the chest. This picture size is called a ‘bust shot’, and it is standard size of the image for television presenters.

Suppose you are watching a family drama. You see a clever villain planning and plotting some mischief; you see from the expression on the actor’s face. To show you this, the camera moves ‘closer’ to the actor, to give you a ‘close up’ shot of just the face, with a little bit of the neck. The camera can move even closer and give you an ‘extreme close up’ of just the persons’ eyes and forehead, for example, if the moment is dramatic enough.

On the other hand, suppose you are watching a ‘walking interview’, where the interviewer and the interviewee are touring a house, or walking in a garden. To begin with, you need to know where these people are. So you might be looking at a picture which shows you some of the background – the landscape or scene where the interview is taking place – and the full height of the interviewer and interviewee. This is called a ‘long shot’. It is the typical shot to begin a programme that is not set in a studio. If much more of the scene and background is shown than the people, we have a ‘very long shot’.

The other two shot sizes are the ‘knee shot’ (an image of a person up to the knee) and the ‘mid shot’ (up to the waist).

In this way the television camera can look at only a part of the human body. It must take care not to cut the picture at a joint of the body; as long as care is taken about

this, the viewer will not have a feeling of seeing a cut-up body! The viewer’s mind will ‘fill in’ what his eye cannot see. But if the camera frames the picture in such a way that the edge of the frame cuts the picture at one of the joints of the body – the knee, the elbow, or the shoulder – then the picture will tend to make a person look like an amputee.

We have described the ‘shot sizes’ in television in terms of the human body, and this is the standard practice, perhaps because television is more about people than anything else. But the terms we have introduced apply to all shots on television – of places, of things, of events. So in a cricket match you can have an extreme long shot of the entire stadium, or a close up of a ball passing next to the bat of the batsman, to let you see whether he ‘nicked’ it.

By now you must have understood that the ‘size’ of a shot is the extent of the image that is framed by the camera lens.

Check Your Progress 4

- Note:** a) Space given below the question is for writing your answer.
b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.
- i) Name the various shot sizes and describe them.

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1.5.2 Camera Movements

To attract our attention and to keep it, the picture on the television screen must show movement of some sort. Otherwise it becomes a still image, a photograph.

In the case of talking head programmes, sports programmes and the like, the movement is provided by the subjects themselves: people speaking, laughing, gesturing; players moving around, and so on. But in addition to such intrinsic movement, the image on your television screen can be kept alive by using a variety of camera movements.

To understand the movements being described now, you must watch television with these descriptions in your hand. Suppose the camera shows you one end of a room – its left wall, perhaps, and a window – and then starts to move sideward, as if you are looking around a room till it comes to the right wall. This movement of the camera is called ‘a pan’. Why did the camera make you look along the room from the left to the right? Perhaps at the right edge of the room you discovered – the camera discovered for you – an intruder, waiting to pounce on whoever came into the room. The dramatic effect is heightened by panning across the empty room until you suddenly see the intruder. This is why the pan is often called movement of discovery. In sports programmes, the camera might pan along the path taken by a ball, or the players, and let you discover where the ball went, or the players.

The position of the camera does not change during a pan: only its lens moves, as if a head turns. But in a ‘track’ shot, the camera moves along with a moving subject,

keeping it in sight. Think of a jogger in a park, or a car on a road. You can shoot these by moving alongside them as they move – by tracking them.

The camera can move not only sideward, but also up and down. Again, the camera itself may be fixed in its position, but tilt its lens upwards to look at a man on a roof about to jump: this is a ‘tilt up’. Or it may tilt its lens down to look at a borewell hole on the ground: a ‘tilt down’. On the other hand, the camera may rise along with a subject (‘elevate’), or move downwards on the vertical axis along with a subject (‘depress’).

Finally, how does the camera go closer into a subject? It can move physically closer (‘track in’), or it can use the zoom lens to zoom in. The zoom lens also allows the camera to zoom out.

1.5.3 Transitions

A transition links the end of one shot and the beginning of another. It is comparable to punctuation, and shows to what degree each shot or scene is related to the next.

The grammar of television is made up of shots, sequences and transitions. Shots are like words, the basic building blocks of the visual language. The way they are composed leads to sequences. The manner in which shots are put together into sequences is the transition.

The **cut** is the simplest transition. One image is replaced by another. When you watch the news, the image often cuts from one newsreader to the other or from a newsreader to a news item on location.

An inexpert cut can be the most abrupt way of putting two images together. But used appropriately, it has great visual impact, and quick cuts can give a very dramatic impact. Alfred Hitchcock is reputed to have used the cut to great effect in the shower scene from *Psycho*. It is also used in montages, as it can give a sense of movement to images that are static.

The **fade (out)** means the image disappears gradually by fading away, often to a black screen (“fade to black”). It signals an end to a statement, like the end of a paragraph. An image can also gradually appear on the screen: This is a **fade in**.

The **mix** or **dissolve** is a fade out accompanied by a fade in. This is a very useful transition technique to signal, for example, that a person is remembering something. The scene of the present dissolves into the past. Again, you can mix from a photograph of a person to the person himself. It can also be used instead of a zoom to go to a small detail of a larger object: for example, an image of the Taj Mahal may dissolve into an image of some intricate carving at its entrance arch.

There are other transitions called ‘wipes’ and ‘flips’ that are done electronically at the editing stage.

1.6 LET US SUM UP

- In order to understand the electronic media and its programmes, we need to develop ‘media literacy’. This involves a knowledge of how media programmes are produced so that we can judge the merits of what we hear and see on the media.

- The format of the media programmes can be scripted, as in the case of news presentations, or documentaries; or unscripted, like in interviews, group discussions, or panel discussions; or partly scripted, like in a quiz show where the quiz-master has prepared questions and their correct answers, while the audience comes without a script.
- The grammar or the basics of television programmes comprise shots, sequences and transitions—all based on the movements of the camera.
- The extent of the image framed by the camera lens decides the ‘size’ of a shot.
- The picture on the TV screen must constantly show movement of some sort otherwise it will be like a still image or photograph and cease to hold our attention.
- The end of one scene on the TV screen and the beginning of another is called transition. When the image disappears gradually from the screen it is called ‘fade out’ and, its gradual appearance is the ‘fade in’; ‘the mix’ or ‘dissolve’ is a ‘fade out’ accompanied by a ‘fade in’.

1.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- Choose any programme you have liked.
- The news begins with the headlines, which tell us what they are going to tell us. It then tells us each item in detail. Finally it reannounces the headlines. So it illustrates the second slogan.

Check Your Progress 2

Please provide your own answers based on your listening.

Check Your Progress 3

- Words and phrases like “**you see**”, “**so**”, “**the one thing**”, “**a lot of**”, “**doesn’t.**” occur more often in spoken language. Notice also the repeated use of emphasis: “**always remember**”, “**always realize**”, “**where also we do ask them**”, “**Doesn’t impress at all**”.
- In the first sentence, it is not specified where the biodata “reaches” or the person comes”—this is obvious from the context. Such omissions are not allowed in written language. The omission of “that” in the phrase “one should always remember (that) the biodata reaches before the person comes” is acceptable in spoken language, where a slight pause and a change in the tone of the voice signal the beginning of a new clause. It is not acceptable in written English, unless there is an appropriate punctuation mark (‘always remember: the biodata...’).

Even more striking is the way the thoughts tumble out and run into one another, resulting in sentences that start in one way and end in another. The second sentence, for example, begins with “unless we do...” The subject of this clause is “we”. But the main clause tells us what the “individuals” must realize—the thought has shifted. Similarly, the last sentence collapses two thoughts, and the speech trails off. This vagueness of ending is quite polite in conversation, where it is seen as an invitation for someone else to take a turn; but it is hardly appropriate in writing.

A written version of this spoken discourse might read as follows:

“Remember that the biodata reaches your prospective employer before you get there. So the biodata must carry as much about you as a person as it can except perhaps in campus recruitment, where you fill up personal data forms, but are physically present when you do so. We see many biodata with a lot of irrelevant information, which does not impress us at all. A neat, crisply presented biodata in the right format, with relevant details that the interviewer would like to know about, is extremely important.

Check Your Progress 4

The ‘long shot’ is the typical shot to begin a programme that is not set in a studio. It shows you some of the background—the landscape or scene where the people are—and their full height.

If much more of the scene and background is shown than the people, we have a ‘very long shot’.

The other two shot sizes are the ‘knee shot’ (an image of a person up to the knee) and the ‘mid shot’ (up to the waist).

In a ‘bust shot’, you see the face and head, and below that, the neck, up to the chest. This picture size is the standard size of the image for television presenters. To show you the expression on the actor’s face, the camera moves ‘closer’, to give you a ‘close up’ shot: of just the face, with a little bit of the neck.

The camera can move even closer, and give you an ‘extreme close up’ of just the person’s eyes and forehead.

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UNIT 2 WRITING FOR NEWS

Structure

2.0 Objectives

2.1 Introduction

2.2 What is News?

2.2.1 Elements of News

2.2.2 Gathering of News

2.2.3 Sources of Information

2.3 Scripting for Broadcast

2.3.1 Selection of News

2.3.2 Characteristics of News Writing for Broadcast

2.3.3 Story Structure

2.3.4 More Writing Tips

2.4 Let Us Sum Up

2.5 Answers to Check Your Progress

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of your study of this unit, you will be able to:

- State the meaning of the term “News” and describe its elements;
 - Explain the process involved before scripting news for broadcast; and
 - Describe the principles of and process involved in news scripting for the broadcast media.
-

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this unit is to help radio journalists to improve their skills as writers and anchors for Radio broadcast. This unit is organized to include the following:

- 1) The fundamentals of radio broadcast writing.
- 2) The style of radio news writing.
- 3) News judgment.
- 4) Some features of a newsroom.

The public, in any society, gets most of its information on current affairs through the various media of mass communication – such as the newspapers, magazines, radio, television, internet, documentary films and occasionally even through motion pictures. But the effectiveness of any single medium for the dissemination of information is related to certain inherent characteristics of the medium. For example, print medium can be effective only if people are literate. They should also have the money to buy the dailies and magazines, which are priced high in a developing country, like India. In the countries with high illiteracy rates and with low average family incomes, the print medium has not served well as a means of mass communication. In the case of television, the cost factor is prohibitively high for the majority of the rural poor to buy a T.V. Unless rural community centres are activated and galvanized to help the poor towards T.V. viewing, T.V. will remain the monopoly of the urbans. Nevertheless, both T.V. and radio score over the print

medium. First, with receiving sets in about 80% of Indian urban homes, radio and television can reach a majority of the urban listeners. Secondly, because of the existence of national network, radio and television cut across regional barriers. Thirdly, in broadcasting news and in the coverage of special events, radio and television have a distinct time advantage over the print media.

Broadcasting stations can provide up-to-the-minute news, almost as it happens, while there is a delay of several hours before a newspaper can bring a news item to its readers. Moreover, it is axiomatic that in a democratic country like ours, citizens who participate in the political process should be well informed. Keeping in view the aforementioned factors, we shall, in the forthcoming section, examine the process of news casting in general, discuss the differences between news writing for different media, and finally study the special demand for scripting radio news.

2.2 WHAT IS NEWS?

What is news? News pertains to some recent event which is a matter of interest to readers or listeners. Also, news implies new or the latest information. News relates to information from North, East, West and South. There are many definitions of the term “News”. These definitions can be summed up thus:

“News is anything that is timely and significant to readers in respect of their personal affairs or their relation to society, and the best news is that which possesses the greatest degree of this interest and significance for the greatest number.”

Some of the important news-on-air include All India Radio News, BBC News, Internet Radio News, CNN News, Ham Radio News etc.

News should be:

- a) accurate/authentic
- b) of interest to the public
- c) timely
- d) significant in relation to matters of interest to the greatest number of people and
- e) unbiased in its account or events or affairs.

Further, the standard definition that only ‘man bites dog’ is news is obsolete and inaccurate. With fairly good communication facilities in our country, news reporting has gained considerable importance today.

Most of the definitions of “news” repeat that news is of interest to the public. The interest, however, differs from person to person and place to place. The two important things about news are its immediacy and authenticity.

2.2.1 Elements of News

News is built on some **news values** which you should know. These news values are the basis on which journalists decide whether or not an event is news. There are millions of ‘events’ which take place everyday. Only those few events which have at least one of the following criteria can be classified as news:

Impact: Events that affect people’s lives are classified as news. The event itself may involve only a few people, but the consequences may be wide-ranging. For example, if the Parliament passes a bill to raise taxes or to suddenly go in for

demonitisation, or if a researcher discovers a cure for a form of cancer; both are significant events that have a wide ranging impact. Hence these events are to be classified as news.

Timeliness: Timeliness is a value common to almost all news stories. It refers to the recency of an event. Without the elements of timeliness, most events cannot be considered news. For example, a trial that occurred last year is not news; a trial that is going on presently is news. 9/11 trial may be of interest, but is not news today; but if a 26/11 criminals are tried today for their Mumbai attack, it makes news.

Prominence: Prominent people, sometimes even when they do trivial things, make news. The actions and speeches of the Prime Minister of India are important to us in India. But they will not be news in USA or U.K. When prominent people undergo, a medical treatment, it is covered in great detail by the news media of India. People are very interested in matters concerning even their health. Movie stars, famous politicians, advocates of social causes, sports personalities all these people make news simply because they are well known.

Proximity: Events that occur close to home are more likely to be news than the same events that occur elsewhere. For example, a car accident killing two persons that happens on a road in our town is more likely to be reported in the local news media than the same kind of accident which occurs 1,000 miles away. We are interested in the things that happen around us.

Conflict: When people disagree, when they fight, when they have arguments – that is news. The demonetization announced by the government is a major issue debated by all political parties. This was an important news item that had to present both sides of the argument.

The bizarre or the unusual: A rare event is sometimes considered news: Like the sighting of a new star or planet or a new form of bloodless surgery with the help of laser technology or the birth of octuples.

Currency: Issues that have current interest often have news value, and events surrounding those issues can sometimes be considered news. For example, a conference on medical technology will be of interest to medical practitioners, but not to journalists, unless the discussion topic was “The Morality of Abortion”. Then the news value of the conference will change and there will be a number of journalists covering it.

You must assess the news value of events – if you want to be a news writer on the basis of the criteria given above.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Space given below the question is for writing your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

i) What are some of the news values on the basis of which one can decide whether or not an event is news?

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ii) Read the item given below. Does it constitute a news item? Give your arguments in favour or against it.

How can a man make his wife financially secure in his lifetime? He can assure that she is adequately provided for and she can handle her own investments after his death. But during his own lifetime, he can see to it that she is made financially independent in the manner suggested for the daughter's economic security. If a sum of Rs.10, 000 is invested in the daughter's name at birth and allowed to double itself every five years she gets a sum of rupees 2,00,000 free of income tax at the age of 25. Similarly, if the same amount is invested for the wife at the time of getting married she has much money by the time she is 45 or 50, since most women in the investing class marry between the age of 20 and 25, the wife can enjoy the income accrued from it. What is given to a wife at the time of marriage is considered streedhan and only she has the right to it even under the law.

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2.2.2 Gathering of News

A journalist gathering information tries to answer the following six basic questions for the reader:

Who: Who are the important people related to the news story? Is everyone included so that the story can be accurately and adequately told? Is everyone properly identified?

What: What is the major action or event of the story? What are the actions or events of lesser importance?

When: When did the event occur? The 'When element' is rarely the best way to begin a story because it is not often the most important piece of information, but it should come early in the story and should be closely stated.

Where: Where did the event occur? The location or locations of the event or action should be clearly written.

Why and How: If a story is about something bizarre or unusual, the writer should offer some explanation, so that the questions the event raises in the listener's or reader's mind are answered. The writer also needs to set the events or actions in a story in the proper context. Reference should be made to previous events or action if they help to explain things to the listener or reader.

2.2.3 Sources of Information

Before we begin gathering news, we should find out where the information in a news story comes from.

A news reporter has three fundamental sources of information for a news story. (i) People, (ii) records (any information that is written or stored), and (iii) personal observation. In this section, we shall discuss these sources.

- i) People:** People provide most information in most news stories. A news reporter is likely to spend most of his or her non-writing time talking to people either personally or over the telephone. In fact, the more people the reporter talks to, the better the story is likely to be, because of the variety of information and views the reporter can obtain.

To make things easier, reporters have to develop the information sources from among the people whom they contact regularly, that is, the reporters will have to identify people who have information and are willing to talk to the reporter about it. Reporters know that many people can provide them with information and sometimes that information can come from totally unexpected sources. For instance, most reporters who are assigned to a beat – (a term in journalism meaning a place or topic a reporter must write regularly about) – learn that personal secretaries, other than their bosses, are the best sources of information. As reporters and sources deal with each other, they should develop a relationship of mutual credibility and understanding. Reporters find out whom they can trust among these sources, and the sources realize that the information they give to reporters will be used wisely.

- ii) Records:** The second major source of information available to news reporters is records or stored sources. This type of information includes books, reports, articles, documents, and press releases.
- iii) Personal Observation:** The third major source of information for the reporter is personal observation. Wherever possible, news reporters like to attend the events they are writing about. They like to see for themselves and understand what happens even though they rarely write from a first person point of view. The personal observation is factual, authentic and accurate but care is to be taken not to introduce subjective assessments or judgments to bear on news reporting.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Space given below the question is for writing your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

- i) Look at three news stories in your local English newspaper. What news values are present in each of them?

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ii) Why is it important for a journalist to get information from more than one source?

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2.3 SCRIPTING FOR BROADCAST

There is very little doubt that broadcasting on radio and TV is a potent means of mass communication in the world today. Underdeveloped areas which cannot get access to even a small newspaper will usually have a transistor radio which serves as a link with the rest of the world. Moreover, with the advent satellite broadcasting, it has become possible to knit the world and relay information from anywhere to everywhere on the globe. Those who write news broadcasts must be good at the use of language that is comprehensible to all listeners. The language must be simple and direct. They should be willing to research their subjects thoroughly and understand them well, to report on them with clarity. Often the news writers may have to edit and rewrite main stories so as to prune them of any ambiguity. In addition, they should be able to work under pressure and meet deadlines.

2.3.1 Selection of News

Most of the news values discussed previously apply to news selection for broadcasting. However, news writers for radio and TV are likely to view events in a slightly different way than those who write for the print media. Listed below are a few points that every news writer must bear in mind:

Timeliness: This news value is even more important to the broadcast journalist than to the print journalist. Print journalists tend to work on daily cycles, broadcast journalists work on hourly or less than hourly cycles. News that is more than an hour or two old may be too stale to broadcast over the radio or TV. When you listen to a news report on a breathtaking news story, you expect to hear the very latest news, and that is what a broadcaster must try to give.

Information and explanation: News writers for the broadcast media look for stories which do not need a lot of explanation for listeners to understand them. They prefer stories which are self explanatory and which can be told in a simple, straight forward manner. The maximum length for any story or a radio newscast is two minutes; the normal length is 20 to 30 seconds. Some stories, of course, are complex and explanation cannot be avoided.

Audio impact: Broadcast journalists should select stories which will make an impact on the audience. For example broadcasting a part of the President’s Budget Session address is much more dramatic than a news reporter summarizing it. Whatever news is to be broadcast must have the dramatic element to sustain the listeners’ interest.

2.3.2 Characteristics of News Writing for Broadcast

While print journalism has the five Ws (namely – Who, What, When, Where, and Why), broadcast journalism has four Cs—Correctness, Clarity, Conciseness, and

Colour. These four Cs serve as the basis for broadcast writing and form a good frame-work for our discussion here.

The broadcast journalist is first and foremost a journalist, and the first commitment of a journalist is to accuracy or correctness. Everything that a broadcast journalist does, must contribute to the telling of an accurate story. Even though the broadcast journalist must observe some strict rules about how stories are written, these rules must contribute to, not prevent an accurate account of an event.

One important characteristic of writing for broadcast is the emphasis on the immediate. As we mentioned earlier, broadcast news must be up-to-the minute. It should also be written as if it is updated to the last minute. While the past tense for verbs is preferred in the print media the present tense is preferred when news is broadcast concurrently with the event happening. Consequently a newspaper story has to use past tense as the print begins after the event. For example in a newspaper we will have an item “The Prime Minister said yesterday that he would support the hiking of petrol prices....”

The broadcast news story if relayed when the PM is making speech in the Parliament will use present tense.

“The Prime minister says he is for the hiking of petrol prices.”

Another way of emphasizing the immediate is to omit the time element in the news story and assume that everything happened today. As we can see in the example above, the broadcast version has no time element since it would probably be heard on the day the Prime Minister made that statement. Of course, news which does occur on a day other than the day of the broadcast will have the time element.

Another important characteristic of writing for Radio is the use of **conversational style**. Writing for radio is writing for the ear. This is different from writing for print medium which is writing for the eye. Even the clearest, simplest newspaper style tends to sound a little stilted when it is read aloud. **Broadcast news should be written for the ear not the eye**. The writer should bear in mind that someone is going to read the news and others are going to listen to him/her. The writing style should be easy, direct and without any flourish and complexity. This does not give the writer freedom to break the rules of grammar, to use slang or off-colour phrasing or to use language which may be offensive to listeners. The style, in short, should be racy, lively and elegant.

Use word economy. Do not use ten words if you can effectively communicate with five words.

The tight phrasing which is characteristic of broadcasting writing is one of its chief assets and one of the most difficult things for a beginner to achieve. As time is short, the broadcaster cannot waste words. Hence the news scripter must work constantly to simplify and condense without losing out on significant and essential detail. There are a number of techniques for achieving this:

- a) **Eliminate all but the most necessary adjectives and adverbs.** Every news writer should know that the stories are built on nouns and verbs—the strongest words in the language.
- b) **Avoid using the passive.** Instead of saying “a meeting was held under the auspices of the Ministry of Human Resources Development”, it is better to say “The Ministry of Human Resources development held a meeting at Vigyan Bhagwan today.”

- c) **Use short and simple sentences.** Broadcast news does not need the variety of length and type of sentences which print journalists need to make their copy interesting. The news bulletins on radio and TV can give information to the listeners in short, simple sentences which get registered in their minds at once. One of the characteristics of good broadcast writing is its clarity. Listeners and viewers cannot go back and re-hear news broadcast in the way they can re-read a newspaper. This is like listening to dialogues on stage as against reading a play from a printed book. The listeners respond to the news as it is broadcast. Broadcast writers achieve clarity by using simple sentences and familiar words, by avoiding the use of pronouns and repeating proper nouns if necessary and by keeping the subject close to the verb in their sentences.
- d) Don't be repetitive because it wastes air-time. The lead should serve for what is to follow.
- e) Avoid clichés.
- f) Only mention what is necessary.
- g) When it comes to numbers, don't say "193 men", instead mention "about 200 men".
- h) Downplay unconfirmed facts and information.
- i) Ensure clarity and flow.
- j) **Deadline.** Another characteristic of broadcast writing is that it has to meet the deadlines. Deadlines are far more important to the broadcast writer than to the print journalist.

2.3.3 Story Structure

Most straight news stories for the print media are written in an inverted pyramid style, that is, the most important information is presented at the beginning and information of less importance is given later in the story. If necessary, a story may be cut from the bottom and essential news item still remains.

Broadcast journalists do not use the inverted pyramid story structure. In its place, they use something known as dramatic unity. The dramatic unity structure has three parts; climax, cause, and effect.

The **climax** of the story gives the listener the facts of the story in about the same way the lead of a print news story does; it tells the listener what happened. The **cause** portion of the story tells the cause—why it happened, and the circumstances surrounding the event. The last part of the story is related to the **effect** and gives the listener the context of the story and possibly some insight about what the story will mean for the future.

Broadcast journalists should think of their stories as completed circles rather than inverted pyramids. While the pyramid may be cut without losing the essential facts, the broadcast story, if written in the unified fashion, cannot be cut from the bottom or anywhere else. It stands as a whole unit.

Broadcast news stories must gain the attention of the listeners from the beginning. The first words in the story are extremely important. Getting the attention of the listener is some times more important than summarizing the story or giving the most important facts of the story.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: a) Space given below the question is for writing your answer.

b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

- i) Take a lead story of a newspaper and compare it with radio broadcast of the same.

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2.3.4 More Writing Tips

Titles usually come before names: Just as in print journalism, most people mentioned in broadcast stories need to be identified. This identification is handled differently in broadcast news writing. While a print story might have “P.N.Haksar, former Principal Secretary”, the broadcast journalist would say “Former Principal Secretary P.N.Haksar”.

Avoid abbreviations, even on second reference: Only the most commonly known abbreviation should be used in broadcast writing.

Avoid direct quotation, if possible: Unless a direct quote is essential to tell a story accurately, a broadcast writer should not use it. Paraphrasing quotes is preferred. Use as little punctuation as possible but enough to help the newscaster through the copy. The excessive use of commas, dashes, and semicolons will not help the newscaster.

Avoid extended description: Don't say: “Former Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister and Former Chairman of the Finance Commission, P.N.Haksar.”

Avoid pronouns, and when you have to use them, make sure it is clear to whom you are referring. Avoid writing sentences like the following: “The Prime Minister and the Foreign Affairs Secretary met yesterday. They discussed his trip to Japan” (whose trip?) such confusion should be avoided.

Other Script Writing Tips:

- Know the length of the programme. A typical news bulletin on radio is between 5 and 30 minutes.
- Decide on the length of each news item in relation to the total duration of the news. Most of us can speak at the rate of three words per second. So the script for a 30 second report should be approximately of 90 words.
- Write as you speak. This means you need not be restrained by formal language.
- When you read your scripts after writing, you can check how they sound.
- Liven up your reports with interviews and sound clips. Remember to mention the names of the interviewed persons and also give credit to the sources of your sound clips.

- f) Presentation of script to the news reader should highlight the words at the beginning (in words), words at the end (out words) and the length in minutes and seconds (duration) so that the presenter knows the beginning and end of each news item.
- g) Different styles for different networks and different duration. If it is a 30 minutes bulletin, more details have to be deployed.
- h) Don't write coarsely or colloquially nor sound heavy and stuffy.

Dos and Don'ts

- 1) Don't clutter the text with statistics. Instead of saying "19 percent", say "one-fifth".
- 2) Be specific about time references – say "this evening" instead of "at 17 hours or today".
- 3) Don't express your judgment. If a news item speaks about steps to thwart terrorism, say that "the government has announced steps to thwart terrorism". Don't make out a general statement, but pinpoint the source.
- 4) Avoid use of jargons and clichés and abbreviations, for listeners do not understand them.

2.4 LET US SUM UP

- Writing for broadcast places a different set of demands on the writer.
- Broadcast news is written in a different form than the inverted pyramid structure.
- Broadcast copy is written for the ear rather than the eyes; that is, writers must be aware that the consumers of broadcast news will be listening to what they write rather than reading it.
- Finally, in writing broadcast copy, the writer is less concerned with relating the details of a story than with making sure that a story is told as completely and clearly as possible in a short amount of time.

2.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) Impact, timeliness, prominence, conflict, the bizarre and issues of current interest are some values which decide whether an event is news or not.
- ii) This does not constitute a news' item as it does not have even one of the "news values" inherent in it.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) For this answer you will have to take today's newspaper and comment upon the three stories chosen.
- ii) This helps the journalist to verify what s/he has picked up and not rely on only one source which may be incorrect.

Check Your Progress 3

Your answer will focus primarily on the language used. Focus on the voice used i.e. active or passive. See whether more nouns and verbs have been used in the radio broadcast. Also notice whether the inverted pyramid style has been used for the print story and dramatic unity for the radio broadcast.

UNIT 3 EDITORIAL WRITING

Structure

3.0 Objectives

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 What is an Editorial?

3.1.2 Importance of an Editorial

3.2 Parallels of Editorials in other Media

3.2.1 Television Editorials

3.2.2 Radio Editorials

3.2.3 Internet Editorials

3.3 Writing an Editorial

3.3.1 Length of an Editorial

3.3.2 Language of an Editorial

3.3.3 Glossary

3.3.4 Steps to Writing Your Editorial

3.4 Types of Editorials

3.4.1 Staff Editorials vs. Front Page Editorials

3.4.2 Signed Vs Unsigned Editorials

3.4.3 Third Editorial or Entertainment Editorials

3.4.4 Critical Editorials

3.4.5 Persuasive Editorials

3.4.6 Interpretative Editorials

3.4.7 Advocacy Editorials

3.5 Structure of an Editorial

3.6 Let Us Sum Up

3.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After having read this unit you will be able to

- Read and analyze an editorial in a news paper;
- Identify the various types of editorials;
- Understand the different styles of editorial writing; and
- Write an editorial.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Newspapers report the news. When newspaper reporters tell a story, it is only facts and we readers can form our views. Journalists generally have to leave their opinions out of their writing. They have always been told to be unbiased and not to take a stance. Yet most newspapers do have opinions. This is a class of writing called “editorials” found in your newspaper every day.

Where can you find them? Are they on the same page everyday? Who writes them? Who is offering this opinion? Why do we need to write the editorials? This unit will answer all these questions.

3.1.1 What is an Editorial?

An editorial is an article that states the newspaper's views on particular news, events or an issue of concern. It is the official stance of the publication.

You can find them at the same place on the same page of the newspaper, everyday. This page is called the editorial page and the place is the left hand column of the page, from top to bottom.

3.1.2 Importance of an Editorial

An editorial is usually written by the editor, one of the associate or deputy editors or one of the writers on behalf of the editor. These opinions reflect the stance of the newspaper and do not have bylines.

Politicians, bureaucrats and the common people – all want to know the stand of the newspapers on matters which make a difference to society. Why is this view so important? Well, the press is the fourth estate and the watch dog of society. The rest of the world would definitely want to understand the policy of the newspaper, on issues of importance. The editorials not only persuade the reader to change their views, but also help them to form views. This creates a major public opinion and public wave. Hence, the interest of politicians and bureaucrats in editorials is justified.

The editorial acts as:

- A voice of the common man.
- Advocate of human rights
- Critique of government policies
- Interpreter of the Constitution
- Forecaster of political and social changes
- Informer and analyst of complicated issues
- Promoter of worthy activity
- Problem solver of any issue of social importance

3.2 PARALLELS OF EDITORIALS IN OTHER MEDIA

By now it must be clear to you, that the editorial is not only the view point of the media organization, but is also an important and essential part of the newspaper and is found in every issue. Does this mean that only the print media enjoys this privilege of commenting? Do we see editorials on the television? Do we hear them on the radio and in the virtual world do we read these on the internet? This section will answer all the above questions.

3.2.1 Television Editorials

It is surprising, but there is no exact parallel of a print editorial in the television news channels. There are panel discussions and analysis programmes, which are conducted by anchors of the channel and the expert is also a journalist working for the channel. These are the nearest television got to editorializing.

Some channels have fixed slots for these programmes whereas some do not. Television news channels, being guest and expert based, most of the times have outsiders commenting on various issues and the channel bears no responsibility for these comments.

In the case of Doordarshan, the official government media, the stand Government of India has to take on various issues, are telecast as statements made by the ministers or government public relation officers.

Check Your Progress 1

- Note:** a) Space given below the question is for writing your answer.
b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

i) Do you listen to the radio?

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ii) AIR, BBC, VOA or private FM channels, which of these channels do you listen to?

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iii) Which one do you like the most and why?

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iv) Does it have serious or light content?

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3.2.2 Radio Editorials

By now you must have understood that radio is a medium which is most convenient for information gathering and has the maximum reach. But one fact is also true that the private FM stations have not been granted the rights to broadcast news. So most of the serious and developmental content is audible only on All India Radio, the

official radio. AIR is the news station and broadcasting serious content along with entertainment is its agenda.

The private stations like Red FM, Big FM, Radio Mirchi and others have only entertainment based programmes but many a times as a humor or pun an issue is commented upon by the jockey. This is the nearest these stations can come to editorializing.

It is surprising, that no views of the government or the AIR are broadcast as editorials. Statements of ministers or government Public Relation Officers, on issues of importance are aired from time to time and analysis of these, as a part of news bulletin, is done sometimes. This is the nearest AIR gets to being a parallel of a newspaper editorial.

3.2.3 Internet Editorials

Internet or web journalism has its vestiges in the print media. If it is a website of the newspaper or magazine the editorial column is absolutely there at the allotted space, every day.

In case of other websites, the views of the organization are put on the site and regularly updated. In fact most of the content could be opinionated. Cyber media can also be called a comment based media.

Exact parallels between editorials cannot be drawn on the cyber media but comment is free here.

Blogs initiate a debate on an issue where the owner of the site gives his or her points of view and invites comments from the audience

3.3 WRITING AN EDITORIAL

An editorial is one of the writing styles used to express an opinion or reaction to timely news, an event or an issue of concern. Most editorials are used to influence readers to think or act the same way the writer does. Not all editorials take sides on an issue but have one of the following four purposes:

- i) Inform: The writer gives careful explanations about an important issue.
- ii) Promote: The writer tries to promote a worthy activity.
- iii) Praise: The writer praises a person or an event.
- iv) Entertain: The writer entertains the reader with light and humourous issues.

3.3.1 Length of an Editorial

An editorial is averagely of 500 words. Three editorials of 500 words each can fit into a full page editorial column of, for example *The Economic Times*. Some newspapers have editorials of 750 words. In such cases there are only two editorial columns, for example *The Indian Express*. There are exceptions to the rule when one editorial fits the complete length. This is normally in stories of grave importance.

3.3.2 Language of an Editorial

There are some magic tricks which when used can make a most effective editorial. These are clarity, rhythm, good word choices, active sentence construction, seamless transition and evocative phrasing. The assumption is that an editorial writer knows the language well.

Simple tips

- 1) Get the reader's attention quickly by the first paragraph being written in attractive language.
- 2) Write short paragraphs and vary the length of sentences for effect.
- 3) Write with strong verbs and adjectives.
- 4) Use transitional devices for continuity.
- 5) Avoid redundancies in an editorial.
- 6) Use of one word substitution is prominent in editorials
- 7) Use active verbs while writing an opinion
- 8) Use concrete nouns while writing a comment.

Special tips

- 1) Both direct and indirect speech can be used while writing an editorial.
- 2) Metaphors and similes or both to be used if required
- 3) A mixture of abstract and concrete expresses better while commenting.
- 4) Rhetoric can be used.
- 5) Direct affirmations and negations too can be written.
- 6) Use of exclamations is justified in persuasive writing.
- 7) Apostrophe and within quotes can be paraphrased.
- 8) Dangling modifiers are helpful in editorial writing.
- 9) Inadvertent comment can be written in loaded words.
- 10) Sequence of tenses can be past – present – future to create effect.

3.3.3 Glossary

Editorial	: An article expressing opinion of the newspaper on certain issues.
Masthead	: The information printed on the first page on the top with the name, ownership, logo, rate and date of the newspaper.
Op-ed page	: Page opposite the editorial which contains nationally syndicated columns and good writers pieces.
Editor	: A person who decides what news will go in the paper and where it will appear.
Editorial board	: A seven member board headed by the publisher which decides what issues the newspaper will offer an opinion on.
Editorial policy	: Policy of coverage of news and stances of the newspaper decided by the editorial board.
Column	: An opinion piece that expresses the writer's own view and carries his or her name and often a picture.
Syndicated column	: Columns sent by associations which buy and sell stories, features, etc.
Letters to editor	: Letters of feedback or opinion on various issues by the readers.

- Middle** : A humorous write up in the centre of the editorial page in a box.
- Editorial writer** : Any member of the editorial board who researches and writes the editorials that represent the newspaper's position on most issues.

3.3.4 Steps to Writing Your Editorial

Selection: Choose an issue—your editorial could be about how the readers could help the environment and ecology sustenance, inform the public about a particular scam, praise, an effort by a group who has helped to remove garbage dumps and recycle it or make the people aware of a social worker and his campaign on abolishing child labour or any other idea that can be used as an editorial.

Collecting: Gathering support – gather as many details to convince others about your opinion. These could be facts or evidence, written statements from sources or authorities on the subject, comparisons to similar situation to support your argument and be able to counter argue.

Connecting: Remember to brain storm before you write the first draft . The main body should have clean accurate details and examples. Give strong examples at the beginning and at the end. Show the opposing arguments and their weaknesses. Offer a solution in the end.

Correcting: Getting it right – your editorial should be clear and forceful. Do not preach. Be honest and accurate.

Sample of what could go into the five paragraph editorial:

- i) A personal experience, a thesis statement
- ii) Explanation of the other side of the issue
- iii) Examples to support your view points
- iv) Reasons for your view point
- v) The last paragraph should restate your thesis statement and end on a positive note.

Tips for writing Editorials

- 1) Don't use the word I. Your life is not interesting. Your personal experiences are tiresome. Using the first person also sounds preachy and righteous, which alienates readers.
- 2) Avoid sarcasm. You aren't very funny. Too much sarcasm comes off as immature and can ruin your credibility.
- 3) The sky is not falling – do not exaggerate. It makes you sound too emotional and irrational.
- 4) Challenge authority not personality. Attacking coaches or politicians simply attract letters to editors but attacking their ideas, policies and actions is great editorializing.

3.4 TYPES OF EDITORIALS

An editorial as a genre is considered a type of opinion discourse, that arms to persuade the reader to accept new opinions. Although the editorial is thought to be the personal

opinion of the newspaper, it is based on social opinions. It also evaluates news events and propagates ideologies. Let us see how the editorials can be classified. There are several parameters on which editorials are categorized. The first one being their location, the second one their bylines and the third their content.

3.4.1 Staff Editorials vs. Front Page Editorials

Staff editorials comment on the opinion page written by the editors or writers working for the newspaper.

Front page editorials are opinions of the editor-in-chief or owner of the newspaper in an editorial column format on the first page of the newspaper. These are written only in great emergencies or on topics of supreme importance.

3.4.2 Signed vs. Unsigned Editorials

The staff editorials are unsigned editorials, which mean that the name of the author is not given. It implies, that it is the opinion of the newspaper. Front page editorials are usually signed and this is to stress the importance of the viewpoint of not only the newspaper but also of the editor-in-chief or managing editor. Generally these people are persons of stature, with importance in society and their opinion makes a difference. After the cease fire of the Gulf War, *Times of India's* front page editorial Pax Americana signed by the Editor-in-Chief Dilip Padgaonkar was very popular. Events like September 11, deaths of nation heads and change of governments have also seen front page signed editorials written.

3.4.3 Third Editorial or Entertainment Editorials

Traditionally on the opinion page there are three editorials. The first two are on serious news issues. The third editorial often is humor based and entertains. Many a times newspapers follow this in their policy and other times they don't. At least once a week the edit pages of newspapers have a third editorial. This can or cannot have a byline, depending on the policy of the newspaper.

3.4.4 Critical Editorials

As the name suggests a critical editorial seeks to point out a flaw, judge severely and find fault. This is likely the type of editorial you are used to seeing.

3.4.5 Persuasive Editorials

A persuasive editorial seeks to persuade the readers about a sensitive issue. Is it the best way to convince the masses that your opinion is better? Yes, normally it uses valid examples that play on your emotions and also make sense. Remember, it is an editorial where the writer presents both the sides of the issues and illustrates why your opinion is logically better.

3.4.6 Interpretative Editorials

An interpretative editorial takes a complex issue and breaks it down. It tries to answer questions like why, how, whom, what, when and where. In addition such an editorial will also comment on the positive and negatives of the issue.

3.4.7 Advocacy Editorials

These are editorials which advocate certain causes or issues. These explain the significance of an idea and tell the reader, why whatever happened is important. Such editorials promote or advocate changes. They may also add solutions and

recombine a course of action. However, the overall tone of the editorial is neither negative nor is it point-by-point criticism.

Check Your Progress 2

- Note:** a) Space given below the question is for writing your answer.
 b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

i) How many types of editorials are there?

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3.5 STRUCTURE OF AN EDITORIAL

- The editorial is first of all a text. So remember no pictures or graphs can go into it.
- It will have an introduction, a body and a conclusion.
- Introduction – In the introduction answer the 5 Ws & 1H to attract the reader’s attention.
- Body – In the body persuade the reader by identifying the opposition, show why it is wrong and give your reasons for not supporting the issue.
- Conclusion – Prompt the reader into action by giving solutions. You can end with a famous quotation or a rhetorical question.

Use the SPECS formula:

- State the problem.
- Position on the problem.
- Evidence to support the position.
- Conclusions: Who’s affected and how.
- Solutions to the problem, at least two should be given.

3.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you learnt the importance of editorials in newspapers and their placement every day on the same page and same columns.

You have also learnt of the parallels television, radio and internet have of editorials and how they differ from newspapers in content and style.

This unit also teaches you to write editorials in correct length, language and usage akin to the policy of the organization.

In the second part of the unit you have seen the various types and styles of editorials. By now it must be clear that editorials are written with different slants and objectives, putting forth the views of the organization on a particular topic or event.

We hope now you will not skip the editorial page and will read the editorials judiciously. Also you will be able to write editorials with a critics' view point.

3.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

The answers to all these questions from i) to iv), will depend entirely on your preferences.

Check Your Progress 2

There are many types of editorials eg. Staff, Front Page, Signed, Third, Critical, Persuasive etc.



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UNIT 4 EDITING FOR PRINT AND ONLINE MEDIA

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
 - 4.1.1 What is Editing?
 - 4.1.2 Why do We Need to Edit?
- 4.2 Editing for Different Areas
 - 4.2.1 Television Editing
 - 4.2.2 Radio Editing
 - 4.2.3 Web Editing
 - 4.2.4 Photo Editing
- 4.3 Sub-Editing or Copy Editing
 - 4.3.1 Good vs Bad Editing
 - 4.3.2 Barriers Removed by Editing
 - 4.3.3 Role of a Sub-Editor
 - 4.3.4 Qualities of a Sub-Editor
 - 4.3.5 Duties of a Sub-Editor
- 4.4 How to Edit a Copy
- 4.5 Editor's Tool Box
- 4.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

4.0 OBJECTIVES

Through this Unit our aim is to give you an idea of how the raw creative input by reporters is converted into a finished well tailored output.

By the end of this Unit you should be able to:

- define news editing;
- describe the principles of editing;
- describe the functions of news editing;
- describe and discuss the problems encountered in news editing;
- describe the duties, responsibilities and qualities of a sub-editor ; and
- edit a Copy.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In a newspaper, editing plays a pivotal role. A news item or a news story, as it is called, is written by reporters who are on endless assignments and never have the time. So they give a rough draft to the story. The sub-editor gives finesse to this draft and polishes it to perfection. What you see as a reader in your newspaper is the effort of the desk editors. The desk ensures that you can read your paper along with the morning tea. This unit will give you an idea of how the raw creative input is converted into a finished well tailored output.

4.1.1 What is Editing?

News stories come in from various sources. If you pick up your newspaper and just read the first page, you will find that it has stories which are credited to either individuals or news agencies like PTI, UNI, AFP, UPI, TASS and many more, or to the correspondent or reporter. These stories are tailored to the required shape and size by using the right kind of symbols and expressions with news sense in mind. And all this happens before they come to you. This process of checking stories for grammatical errors, syntax or sentence structure and style, facts and figures clarifying for easy understanding, and condensing for economy of space is editing.

It also means writing the headlines, paraphrasing the story as per the style book of the organization, writing an attractive lead and allotting the story to a particular page

4.1.2 Why do We Need to Edit?

We need to edit because the first version is never perfect. The more you chisel the diamond, the sharper it gets. There are also other reasons listed below which will tell you of the need to edit.

- Because of lack of clarity in the writing the tone or mood may not be as it is intended to be. The story may not seem to be reader specific.
- There may be lack of space on the page and the story may be long. On the other hand there may be lots of space but the story may be short.
- Spelling mistakes need to be located and corrected
- There could be grammatical errors. One would need to check the verbs, nouns, adverbs and other parts of speech for their positions and usage
- Syntactical changes, if required would need to be made.
- Adhering to the rule book or style book of the newspaper is necessary. Checking and cross checking facts, numbers and names also has to be done.
- Writing headlines and subheadings, choosing appropriate pictures, and graphic representations need also to be done

Check Your Progress 1

- Note:** a) Space given below the question is for writing your answer.
b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

i) Why is editing required?

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4.2 EDITING FOR DIFFERENT AREAS

Editing doesn't mean deleting your words - it is actually a skilled exercise to align your grammar correctly. And it also means giving the final shape to a programme on radio, a television programme, an internet story or a picture for publishing and telecasting. Editing print copy is not the same as editing a web copy. The text must wrap correctly, the kerning and leading must be perfect, the style cannot be compromised with and all this to manage two extra words of hanging text. The television and radio editing means not only editing the script but also editing the audio and visual components by using softwares specially created for this task. Let's take an insight into the editing processes for these media and photographs.

4.2.1 Television Editing

Editing is often done to correct mistakes, by cutting out the bad parts, and/or replacing them with good ones. This can be quite simple and may only involve cutting out a few seconds during which the participant made a mistake. It also can become quite challenging, especially if the retakes do not quite fit the rest of the recording, as to color temperature, background sounds, continuity, or field of view.

The most difficult, but most satisfying editing assignments are those in which you must build a show from a great many takes. In this case, the edit is the major production phase. This is especially true in EFP post production, when all takes are shot with a single camera to be combined later.

On-Line and Off-Line: Off-line editing produces a work print, a preliminary and usually lower-quality tape dubbed from the higher quality master. On-line editing produces that master copy that is used on the air or for dubbing off copies. The terms off-line and on-line don't refer so much to the tape format used, but rather the intent of the edited product.

The major advantage of off-line editing is that you can take time for reviewing the unedited material and deciding where to cut, without tying up expensive equipment. With burn-in dubs (those with a window featuring time code numbers "burned into" the bottom of the frame), you can identify the exact spot where you'll cut, and note these decisions on an editing shot list. Later, you can proceed with the actual editing.

Too many times, however, people start editing without having properly thought about the editing sequence. This can sometimes help to save time, but more often than not you will get lost in a maze of detail. In all but the most routine editing jobs, you will need to do an editing outline, a list of the desired event sequences and the necessary transitions

4.2.2 Radio Editing

You must have listened to the radio and wondered how the sound comes into it. Well it is nothing but recording of the matter on tapes and transmission via radio waves. One of the advantages of working with reel-to-reel audiotape is that you can edit program material easily. You can remove mistakes and unwanted material from your program to form a cohesive, polished product. The editing process also will allow you to adjust the run time of a program by shortening or lengthening a taped segment. In addition, you may add taped material to another taped program through the editing process. The editing process consists of the most common method of editing audiotape ie. for the unwanted material to be cut out. Although this method

has been in place since the introduction of magnetic recording tape many years ago, the “cut and splice” technique is still the preferred editing method of the broadcast industry. The manual reel- to-reel tape edit is simple, requires no expensive or exotic equipment, and depending on the skill of the editor, can produce a clean and extremely accurate edit.

4.2.3 Web Editing

REMEMBER THE WEBSITE. We want the maximum number of readers to enjoy what we publish. It is already a fact that now more people read newspaper content online than in our newspapers. And it is also the case that more visitors arrive at our website via search engines and aggregators than any other route. It is therefore important, and likely to grow even more so, that when writing for the internet we “optimize” our copy so that the likes of Google can find articles and display them prominently. The easiest way to do this is to write headlines (and intros) that are “keyword-rich”. The sort of punning wordplay and vivid quotes that help make for an excellent, arresting headline on the printed page do not work online. On the internet, the priority for any headline is to inform search engines (and therefore, readers) what the article is about. Its language should, therefore, be concrete, not abstract, and contain full names. Thus “Brown will let Darling swing in the wind” is fine for the newspaper; online it would be better rendered as “Gordon Brown shuns Alistair Darling after Budget row”. (Courtesy: Telegraph, London)

Are you a frequent internet user? Do you like reading the news on the web? Does it attract your attention more than the hard copy newspaper? In any web content, designing plays a very important role. The parts of almost any kind of a document can be broken down into five main sections— Artwork, Titles, Body, Navigation, and Credits. Not every document will contain all these parts or may contain only some aspects of each. Let us try and understand each of these elements of web design.

- **Artwork:** Even before reading the headlines, readers are often drawn to the visuals on a page. Both the choice of images and their placement within a document provide information about the document, the purpose, and its organization.
- **Titles:** Typical headlines and titles are larger and more prominent than other text. These visual cues signal the start of a book, a magazine, an article, or a major division in a publication such as a chapter of a book or a sub-section of a report.
- **Body:** Body copy is the main text found in the publications we read. It is the text of the stories and articles. Body copy is not the headlines. Beyond the actual words, the body of a document uses paragraph and character emphasis and organizational elements to aid in the reading and comprehension of the material.
- **Navigation:** Longer publications such as books, newsletters, and annual reports need some way to help readers find specific information within the document. From a table of contents to page numbers, sectional elements provide a means of navigating through and finding specific portions of a document.
- **Credits:** Different types of publications have credits or other informational elements that contain such items as the name of the advertiser, publisher, or other entity, an address, a logo, copyright information, and other notices. The number of parts and where it appears varies by publication type.

4.2.4 Photo Editing

Pictures submitted for publication in the newspapers and magazines have to be edited to fit into the layout of the page, and also the unnecessary portions cut off, which the photographer might have added in the actual composition. The competent photo editor's job is to keep the essence of the subject intact. This reduction process, keeping the essential parts of the photographs intact, is called cropping. Since the photographers are emotionally involved in shooting their pictures, they might think whatever they have added in a picture would be published. This aspect is left to the judgment of the photo editor, when the final composition of the photograph for publication is made.

It is the job of the photo editor to select the best photograph which tells the story on its own. The photo editor edits it to suit the space in the page without destroying or distorting the essence of the picture, and gives it a good display. It is not always to the liking of the photographer, but the photo editor has to do his job. A good photo editor always takes the photographers into confidence, holding frequent discussions with them from the time the assignments are given to them till the final outcome of the photograph on the photo editor's desk. It is the photo editor's duty to give the photographers ideas about the picture possibilities. While the photographers are in the dark room with the enlarger, he joins them in composing the picture on the easel board, which saves a lot of time, and leaves no ill feeling with the photographers. What most of the photographers hate is when the picture is trimmed and edited in their absence.

Computer applications in photo editing: The latest technology enables one to use sophisticated equipment for photo editing. The selected negatives are scanned, the contrast adjusted, and the picture cropped on the computer video display terminal as required. Then, the image is directly transferred to the page. The elimination of the intermediary procedures, used in the conventional system until now, avoids handling of the negatives or transparencies, thus making sure that the reproduction is of a high class. A very important aspect of such a method is that the picture quality in terms of tones, density, color sharpness, and so on, can be reproduced to near perfection, which was not always possible in the previous conventional methods. This also applies to the 'Photo Fax', where photographs are faxed from outstation, and are transmitted directly to the computer, from where all necessary adjustments can be made. Photos can be stored and recalled on the computer as and when required.

Photo editing is one of the most powerful tools at the photographer's disposal. In classic photography, the term photo editing can refer to everything between processing the film in chemicals and seeing the final print. In modern digital photography most of the processing magic happens in the computer. This is good news for people without a studio and darkroom. Before digital technology came along, there was a limited amount that could be done using an enlarger with filters, masks and other manual devices; but the era of film and smelly chemicals seems to be drawing to a close. Nowadays we have computer software which we can use to achieve far more—ranging from simple improvements to dramatic effects. Photo editing techniques can be applied to all photos, whether taken by a digital camera or scanned from the negative or print from a film camera. The software which is used by most professional photographers is Adobe Photoshop. There are essentially two versions - the professional one which is very costly and Photoshop Elements which does most of the things an enthusiast could wish for at about one tenth the price.

4.3 SUB EDITING OR COPY EDITING

Copy editing is the editorial work that an editor does to make changes and improvements to a story. This is for the print media. Let us see what it is.

The “5Cs” summarise the copy editor’s job:

- a) clear
- b) correct
- c) concise
- d) comprehensible
- e) consistent.

These emphasize “make it say what it means and mean what it says”.

Copy refers to the written or typewritten text for publication. An editor who does the task of refining the copy is called the copy editor or sub editor. He renders the text to flow sensibly, fairly and accurately so that it poses no legal problems for the publisher.

Copy editors are also responsible for selecting which news agency’s wire copy the newspaper will use and for rewriting it to house style. Often, the copy editor is the only person, other than the author, to read an entire text before publication.

4.3.1 Good vs Bad Editing

Robert Gredy of The New Yorker said that the work of a good editor, like the work of a good teacher does not reveal itself directly. It is reflected in the accomplishments of others. There are no good or bad writers; there are only good or bad editors. Editing is “quality control” for the written word. A good editor is one who communicates effectively with the writer, consults about the theme, beefs up description, rearranges sequences, checks facts, corrects the language and conforms to the newspaper’s style. A bad editor does none of the above but just checks the copy for spelling mistakes.

4.3.2 Barriers Removed by Editing

- People do not want to read a document which is messy
- A structure which is hard to follow is an excuse to stop reading further
- Too much or too little content
- Bad headlines
- Inappropriate language
- Long, complicated sentences
- Lack of headlines and subheadings
- An inappropriate tone of voice
- Factual errors leave a bad taste in the mouth
- Legal repercussions as per rulings of Indian Penal Code or Press Council of India to be kept in mind
- Defamation liability to be removed

Certain redundancies should also be avoided while editing. Many a times we describe planes which are “totally destroyed” or a meeting where we “assemble together”. Remember when we refer to something as having got destroyed it means complete destruction. So the word totally is not required. Similarly, when you assemble, it means coming together and the word assemble need not be written. Such needless repetitions are called redundancies. Beware of these redundancies. Here is a list of the most common redundancies seen in the newspapers. You may add your own to the list:

- Absolutely necessary
- Advance planning
- Ask the question
- Assemble together
- Cancelled out
- Carbon copy
- Cooperate together
- Exactly identical
- Necessary requirements
- Postpone until later
- Temporarily suspended
- True facts
- Honest truth
- Fair and just
- Fall down
- Friend of mine

4.3.3 Role of a Sub-Editor

In the news business, presentation is everything and the correct use of language is its cornerstone. The sub-editor is responsible for ensuring every story that goes to print is in clear language that maintains the credibility and reputation of the organisation they work for. Many of you will want to become sub-editors. Come let's find out the role of the sub-editor. These are listed below:

- Editing copy to remove spelling mistakes and grammatical errors;
- Rewriting material so that it flows or reads better and adheres to the house style of a particular publication;
- Ensuring that a story fits a particular word count by cutting or expanding material as necessary;
- Writing headlines that capture the essence of the story or are clever or amusing;
- Writing stand-firsts or sells (brief introductions which sum up the story);
Liaising with reporters or journalists to clarify facts and details about a story;
Editing press releases or reports;
- Compiling routine information, such as tables of sports results or financial data;
- Checking facts and stories to ensure they are accurate, do not break the law or go against the publication's policy;

- Cropping photos and deciding where to use them for best effect; Writing the captions for pictures;
- Discussing concerns with editors;
- Proofreading complete pages produced by other sub-editors;
- Working to a page plan to ensure that the right stories appear in the correct place on each page;
- Laying out pages and, depending on the nature of the role, playing a part in page design;
- Adding last minute news stories;
- Keeping up to date with issues, e.g. by reading publications.
- Gate keeping – selection of a story which is print-worthy
- Paraphrasing and Rewriting

Some common Proof reading symbols are also necessary for sub-editors. These are as follows:

/	Substitute letter indicated	⊕#	Delete and leave space
—	Substitute word indicated	⊕#	Make spacing equal
∧	Insert new matter indicated	⊕/	Indent one em
⊙∧	Insert full stop	⊕∧	Indent two ems
∧,	Insert Comma	∥	Move lines to the right
⊙∧	Insert Colon	∥	Move lines to the left
—∧	Insert Hyphen	em	Insert em rule
⊕	Delete character indicated	2em	Insert two em rule
⊕	Delete and close up	⊕	Combine the paragraphs
◇	Remove space and close up	[take over	Take letter or word from end of one line to the beginning to next
⊕	Invert type]take back	Take letter or word from beginning of a line to the end of preceding line
x	Replace broken letter	⋯	Change to bold face
—Set	Leave as printed	↓	Lower lines
↔	Transpose the order of letters or words	↑	Raise lines
⊕	The abbreviation or figure to be spelt out in full	∥	Correct vertical alignment
=Caps.	Change to capital letter	=	Straighten lines
=S.Caps	Change to small capital letter	[n.p.	Begin a new paragraph
=l.c.	Change to lower-case letter	∪	Substitute apostrophe
—Ital	Change to italic words underlined	∪	Insert apostrophe
w.f.	Wrong fount	∪	Insert quotation marks
#∧	Insert space	∪	Insert inferior figure
#>	Increase space between lines or paragraphs	∪	Substitute inferior figure

4.3.4 Qualities of a Sub-Editor

The production of a newspaper calls for undivided attention of 200 to 300 people in different departments, as it is a delicate and complex process. There is tension since a deadline is to be met. In a news agency, the deadline is ‘now’. Amidst this tense atmosphere, the sub-editor has to perform his job meticulously. He should possess certain qualities to discharge his duties efficiently. Some of these qualities of a copy editor/sub-editor are:

- Calmness** : Be calm and composed, come what may. You should not get excited when a big story breaks – be it a disaster, calamity, the assassination of a big political leader or the collapse of a government.
- Decisive** : Take quick and correct decisions. The editorial department has no place for indecision.

Non-partisan	:	Never take sides; be non-partisan.
Memory	:	Have a sharp memory for counter-checking facts, if necessary.
Grasp	:	Size up the situation as it unfolds, and estimate its relevance.
Know your reader	:	Know the particular readership. This means you should engage one hand with subbing, and the other with the pulse of the reader.
Self-confidence	:	Have confidence enough to correct a bad copy written by anyone, even the senior most reporter or the paper's editor.
Mature	:	Be mature enough to correct only bad copy, and not just make changes for the sake of changing.
Skeptical	:	Do not accept anything at face value. You should approach everything as a source of potential error.
Knowledge	:	Be a Jack of all trades, because a sub-editor handles a wide range of stories (from killing, to all prices, to a satellite launch). You are required to have some knowledge about these, including how these compared with the past events, how the names of different nationalities are spelt. A good editor should store most of the information as it comes across, and search for more.
Stability	:	Have enough stability to work under pressure.

4.3.5 Duties of a Sub-Editor

Every sub-editor had a set of duties which are not a part of the rules and regulation book but are still there to enhance his professional performance. These are unwritten duties, more ethical in nature. As a sub-editor you have to remember them whenever you sit down to edit the story. With the passage of time they will get so engrained in the mind that you will not even have to remember them. These duties are to simplify the write up: Rewrite the story in the common man's language. Replace difficult words with easy ones. Shorten sentences so that it becomes easy to read.

Clarify the story: As a sub-editor you will have to give clarity to the story by making the story readable in writing style. Remove ambiguous words, and change sentence patterns to remove fog index, which is the measure of abstraction and complexity of words. Abbreviations, if less known should be elaborated and popular elaborations can be abbreviated.

Verify the facts: Be 200% sure of the facts in the write up you are editing. Check and cross check before finalizing the story.

Avoid sensationalizing the strong sentiments in the write up: Never play up or exaggerate facts in a news story. It not only puts a doubt on the authenticity of the write up but also reflects badly on the ethics and reputation of the organization.

Cut out on gender bias in the news item: The write up should neither be too anti-women or anti-men. Also objectionable pictures of women and comments on them should be avoided.

Remove leanings of class, caste, religion and creed from the story: Any write up should not instigate negative feelings for any class, creed, caste or religion in society. Also the story should not have obvious and apparent leanings to any of the above.

Keep stories akin to the policies of the newspaper: While writing and editing a news story the policies of the organization on various issues of importance should be kept in mind.

Check Your Progress 2

- Note:** a) Space given below the question is for writing your answer.
b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

i) What is the difference between a good and a bad editor?

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ii) What are the qualities of a good sub-editor?

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4.4 HOW TO EDIT A COPY

A news story must play upon the event reported therein. Ideally, read every story, preferably thrice—once for familiarization, once while you edit, and the third time to check your work. If the story has no glaring problems, and if you fully understand it, you would be ready to edit it. Now, you are concerned with spelling, punctuation, grammar, consciousness of expression, smoothness of writing, general accuracy and comprehensibility.

Format: A news story is divided in to two parts – the opening para called the “intro” (introduction) or the “lead”, and the body. The lead describes, simply and briefly, what happened. The body documents and elaborates the lead. Adequate attention should be paid to the lead, the most vital part of the story. Written in a single sentence, it should grab the reader and compel him to read the body. Normally, the lead is in about 25 words, or may be less. At the maximum, it should be limited to 40 words. The intro should be concise and crisp. It should not meander or puzzle the reader, but summarize the story. Details should be dispersed and blended in the subsequent paragraphs.

There is a famous example of an eye-catching introduction:

“James Wilson lit a cigarette while bathing his feet in gasoline. He may live.”

This is a masterpiece of economy of words in writing. It tells the whole story at once: the careless stupidity of the act, the swift act of retribution and the terrible consequences, all conjured up in our minds in vivid detail.

In a sense, we do not need to read on but we all would. We would want to know more about James Wilson, why he was soaking his feet in gasoline, where he was performing this act, and so on. And, all this would be told in subsequent paragraphs, in a logical order. This particular example is what is called a “teasing” intro, for it arouses our curiosity and makes us read on.

Opening para: Conventionally, the news story has followed the “inverted pyramid” structure. The most significant information is placed at the top, the story’s beginning and other details follow in their order of importance. Thus the story tapers to smaller and smaller details, until it disappears. It may begin with the five Ws and one H, i.e., the who-what-why-when-where and how. Basically, a news story should answer what, when and where. The answers should find place in the opening paragraph. The three other questions – who, why and how – do not necessarily arise in all the news copy. In case they do, the answers are accommodated in the subsequent paragraphs. Each succeeding paragraph should add an essential detail without being dependent in content or style on what follows.

The inverted pyramid style enables:

- i) a news story to be self-contained, even if paragraphs are deleted at the bottom due to space shortage [consequently, a coherent story is left at each point where it could be cut];
- ii) a hurried reader to skip over many stories in a short time by just reading the opening paragraphs [those with greater interest could read a story completely];
- iii) a sub-editor, to write the headline in the gist in the first few paragraphs; and
- iv) a sub-editor to change the order of paras or insert new material, even after the matter has been sent to the press for composing.

If the news is not in the opening paragraph, trace out where it is buried. Bring it to the top, and also locate its supporting details. If there are two important news points or angles that vie for the top spot, assess and evaluate which one is better and catchier. This could call for rewriting the entire news item.

4.5 EDITOR’S TOOL BOX

A copy editor must have aids which are indispensable to editing. Often you will come across mistakes both factual and grammatical, which you need to correct. For this the copy editor will require a set of tools, the lack of which may lead to the loss of valuable time while subbing the copy. These aids are indispensable. Often, you may come across problems of spelling and facts, arising out of an average day’s handing of the news. You should focus on the errors, and correct them. All this can be done with the help of some tools which should always be handy with you

As a budding journalist and a future sub-editor you should be aware that there are standards set by responsible news organizations for the guidance of their staff and by news agencies for their members and clients. These are available as booklets and are given to an employee when he or she joins.

Editors write stylebooks, copyeditors use them and reporters hate them. Probably they curb the independence of writing and reporting. Style books work as authority to usage but it cannot be a substitute for the hard work, acquired skills and natural artistry of the writer.

These are the Bible for any sub-editor. Remember to keep a dictionary and a thesaurus handy at all times. Good editors always keep a pocket sized dictionary and Roget's *Thesaurus* in their bags.

A dictionary explains the meanings and a thesaurus gives synonyms to all possible listed words. They will help you greatly in sub-editing and re-writing. A thesaurus will give you numerous alternatives both easy and difficult to choose from. It will help you to write better.

Some Do's and Dont's

Remember to break up long quotes where several sentences run together.

Avoid the gratuitous use of "woman" as in "a woman doctor/a woman Army officer/a woman scientist". The person should simply be described as a doctor/Major/scientist: the use of her full name and the ensuing text will make it clear that we are talking about a woman.

Similarly, we do not make gratuitous reference to a person's ethnicity or sexual orientation.

Companies, groups and organisations etc are inanimate. They take "that" or "which", depending on the syntax, and not "who". They take a singular verb. (But Sport uses plural verbs for teams).

Quotes must be accurate. While it is permissible to clear up illiteracies it is not permissible to alter words or sense. Inevitably, some quotes will include words disapproved of by this style guide. That they are within quotation marks makes it clear, however, that the words are not ours.

Yesterday. Increasingly, as the distinction between publishing the newspaper and producing the website fades, we will stop using such words as "yesterday" and "today" in copy except when necessary to avoid confusion or to promote exclusive stories. When we do use them, they should be put in the right place. Many introductions and captions are spoiled by the misplacing of these words, which makes the sentence sound like a translation from German.

Add a Note when something is correct but looks as though it may not be. Reporters can save news desk staff and production journalists (and themselves) much tedious secondary researching by noting unusual spellings or apparent contradictions in text.

4.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you read about editing and learnt the what, why and how of subediting and learnt to differentiate between good and bad editing. The unit also explained how editing for print is different from editing for radio, television and internet. You must have understood that for electronic media editing is a technical task whereas in the print media editing has a language orientation. The use of editor's tools like style sheet, thesaurus, editing symbols and grammar books is stressed on. By now you will be able to reunite passages, edit teleprinter copies and correct printed copies. You also learnt to catch printed grammatical and factual errors in the newspapers. We now hope you will read the newspaper with a vigilant eye.

4.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) Editing is required to give a final shape to the work ; to check for errors of grammar, syntax and spellings.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) A good editor beefs up descriptions, rearranges sequences, checks facts, corrects the language etc. A bad editor just checks the copy for spelling mistakes.
- ii) The qualities of a good sub-editor are that s/he needs to be calm, decisive, non partisan, confident and a mature person who knows his/her target readership and is knowledgeable.



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