
UNIT 3 TYPES OF NEWS REPORTING

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3.0 INTRODUCTION

In the earlier Unit, you have studied the concept of the 'News'. The concept of 'News Values' was also explained to you, and you are now familiar with the essential ingredients of news.

In this Unit, you are going to learn the art of news reporting. News Reporting can be classified broadly on the grounds of its sources, its subject and the nature of its content. This Unit will acquaint you with various aspects of news reporting, its techniques and basic guidelines for writing a news report.

3.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completing this Unit, you will be able to:

- identify the types of News Reporting depending upon sources of its origin, subjects of its manifestation and on nature of its content presentation;

- write a news report;
- apply News Reporting Techniques to news related assignments, and develop ethical skills in news reporting.

3.2 PREREQUISITES FOR NEWS REPORTING

Before we start discussing types of news reporting, we must know that the personality of a news reporter should be a blend of the commitment to the profession and determination of learning and exploring own ways of unfolding 'hidden and unknown truths' for the welfare of the society. A news reporter must possess some basic qualities, like integrity, diligence, empathy and be observant. He or she should be aware of the social, political and cultural environment of his or her domain. A reporter must also have good news sense and analytical ability to connect the missing threads of associated incidents easily. Above all, a reporter must have clarity overuse of the language so that his or her expressions are accurate and reliable. These qualities are attained in a slow process, and a reporter keeps updating oneself always to perform better. These are prerequisites of a news reporter, which are essentially required for all types of reporting.

3.3 TYPES OF NEWS REPORTING

News reporting is a process of gathering and presenting 'unknown or less-known matters of public interest, which may be collectively termed as the NEWS, to the periphery of the public acquaintance. This process gets facilitated by the use of Media Tools, and the public, in this context, is the Target Audience of the Media House, on behalf of whom the news reporter goes for reporting. The news reporting job commences by answering some of the basic questions – Who is the target audience? What is to be reported, or what will be the storyline? And how the proposed report will affect the target audience? After all these questions are answered, there are two more questions: How should the proposed news be reported? And in which format should it be written down?

When we find answers to the above questions, news reporting becomes focused, clear, and planned. News reporting can be classified based on sources of its origin, subjects of its manifestation and the nature of its content presentation. This classification answers the question – From where does the idea of reporting 'a piece of news' originate?

When we say, 'News Reporting is based on sources of its origin', it means the idea of news originated from the source of news itself. Most reporters visit some fixed sources regularly to gather news. When we say, 'News Reporting is based on the subject of its manifestation', the idea of news originated from the newsroom or the editorial meeting. The reporter pursues the subject and explores various sources for gathering information. And when it is stated that news reporting is based on the nature of its content presentation, it means the idea of news originated after the basic investigation of the issue and at the time of preparing the report, it is decided to pick a

particular content format to write the report. However, it is essential to understand that these classifications are made for the ease of the learning process only, and they keep overlapping very often.

3.3.1 Based on Sources of its Origin

When a reporter knows that he or she can gather a piece of news from a certain source, reporting becomes easier. Now, the only thing which has to be done is to approach the source of origin of the story and check, is there any specific information available, which may be reported as news. If yes, the reporter collects the required information in detail and tries to conceive an accurate picture of the incident by analysing all the views, facts, figures and evidence. After this, the reporter can write a news report. The reporting process varies a little according to the source of its origin, as structures of gathering information are different at different places. Let us see these variations.

3.3.1.1 Reporting from Government Establishments

Government Establishments like collectorates, police stations, hospitals, schools, academies, municipal corporations, transport authorities, railway stations, fire brigades, and many other departments work according to a definite set of rules and regulations. They have a fixed system of maintaining information. The reporter needs to develop and maintain contacts in the departments of the newsbeat one is covering. Also, one must know the exact procedure by which one can fetch authentic information. A reporter can dig up a pool of crime news from the premises of a police station. He or she can find a round of news related to health issues from hospitals. Also, as hospitals are home to many crime and accident victims, the premises may be the source of crime and accident news. Likewise, other government establishments are confirmed sources of various types of news. Apart from digging up the news, a reporter should be in touch with Public Relations (PR) personnel of these establishments to provide regular news inputs. But the reporter must verify the news inputs received from PR personnel.

3.3.1.2 Reporting from Non-Government Establishments

Non-government establishments are broadly categorised as business or corporate organisations and not for profit organisations. Academies and hospitals may also be non-government establishments, and as discussed earlier, they are also a rich source of news. There is a Public Relations department in both these establishments, which regularly channelise news of their achievements to the reporters. This is a good news source, but a reporter should be alert for not becoming a part of their PR cycle. For this, he or she should always try to smell anything undue news should concern the mass on a larger scale and should always be reported after a detailed investigation.

3.3.1.3 Reporting from Conflict Zone

Reporting from a conflict zone is the most challenging kind of reporting. Conflict zones are regions; which are either under a war, riot, mutiny, civil

war or under other kinds of conflict, which have accelerated the prevalence of mass violence regularly. A conflict zone remains under the control of two or more violent groups. A reporter has to go to this zone in person and report the reality without being influenced by any group. As the violence understands no law, reporters need to save their lives while reporting in conflict zones. Most of the time, reporters become part of a certain group in a conflict zone and report news according to the standpoint of an associated group. This group can be a military unit. This phenomenon is a special kind of reporting from a conflict zone, termed Embedded Reporting.

3.3.1.4 Parliamentary Reporting

Parliamentary Reporting in India is reporting from the premises of Parliament at Central Level or from the premises of Assemblies at State Level and Union Territory. Parliamentary Reporting is a specialisation that requires in-depth knowledge of the constitution, parliamentary proceedings, and familiarity with the region's political, cultural, social, and economic history. The reporter should be aware of local regulations for access, privilege, and use of cameras, recorders, and on the premises. Also, reporters must need to recognise the faces of members of the house they are reporting. The reporter, accredited to the press gallery of the house, is eligible to report for a given session of the house. The parliamentary reporter must possess the quality of fast grasping of speeches made by members. He or she should have the capability to interpret debates and reports presented on the desk of the house.

3.3.1.5 Participatory Reporting

This is a new kind of reporting from any source, where a reporter manages to connect to a place or organisation. After being a part of it, the process of reporting becomes more authentic and descriptive. For an example, Ted Conover, an American journalist took the job of correction officer at Sing Sing prison in New York (US), where he worked for nearly a year, without the state's knowledge and on his life experience, he wrote *Newjack: Guarding Sing Sing (2000)*, which nominated him for the Pulitzer Prize for general non-fiction. In the Indian context, a reporter may undergo the process of reporting movements of social changes and economic upliftments more efficiently through the technique of participatory reporting.

3.3.1.6 Judicial Reporting

Reporting from the various courts of law is called Judicial Reporting. One should understand the court proceedings for judicial reporting. The Indian judicial system works at different levels of district courts, high courts and the Supreme Court. There are separate courts for criminal cases and civil cases. The reporter must ensure that there is no mixing of personal opinion, comment or forecasts at the time of reporting any sub-judice case, as doing so can be deemed as contempt of the court, which is an offence by law.

Activity – 1

After reading a newspaper thoroughly, make a chart and organise each piece of news based on their source of origin. Repeat the process for three different newspapers.

3.3.2 Reporting based on Subjects of its Manifestation

We can broadly categorise news items based on the subject with which it deals. As assigned by the editor, the reporter goes to report a story, which may be categorised under a predefined subject. Ideas of these stories are generated in an editorial meeting or the newsroom. Some traces of information regarding any new development of the concerned are available from various sources. Then it is decided to report and file the story in detail.

3.3.2.1 Developmental Issues

Development is a concept with two different paradigms. There is a dominant paradigm, according to which it is a process of economic upliftment, which is a result of the ongoing process of industrialisation, mining, urbanisation, building infrastructures, dams and roads, production and consumption of the huge amount of energy and increase in the use of technology in every sphere of the social and economic realm. The dominant paradigm of development may have repercussions like displacement of mass, employment and labour related issues, environmental threats, people's resistance and militarisation.

There is an alternate paradigm of development, according to which the real development is the development of quality of human life, which can only be attained through production, procurement and distribution of social benefits like food sufficiency, good health conditions, good education and a sense of social harmony, social justice and love for the entire humankind. Issues of science and technology are also subjects of developmental news, and the vision of their implementation puts them in the category of dominant or alternate paradigm.

Issues mentioned earlier of both paradigms of development, and the associated issues can be reported as developmental issues. A reporter must understand the philosophy of development before pursuing any issue under this head. He or she should try to answer some basic questions – What are the benefits of a development project? Who are beneficiaries? Who is paying the price of it in the long run? And what will be the associated cultural and social change?

3.3.2.2 Events

There are various types of events, which attract the attention of the mass audience. Be it a sport or an event of mass entertainment, and readers take a deep interest in knowing their details. In the age of online and TV reporting, these events are reported live, and the audience gets the dose of their news instantly. Some of the events are political, like a political rally or swearing-in

ceremony or a public meeting or an occasion of celebration, like flag hoisting etc. Reporting these events should be planned, and tickets, entry passes etc., should be arranged. Also, one should request a one-to-one appointment with the concerned person so that a reporter can have an exclusive bite to enrich his reporting.

3.3.2.3 Arts, Fashion, Entertainment and Glamour

Areas of art, theatre, cinema and cultural activities are fields, which stimulate mass fantasy and thus become the domain of wide public interest. All the news from this segment caters to readers from all the sections of society. There are segments of newspapers or entire magazines that deal with this segment. Reporting in this segment needs good connectivity of contacts with celebrities and an ability to raise some good questions of mass appeal.

3.3.2.4 Politics

No one in society remains unaffected by any change in the political scenario of the region, although the level of this effect may vary from person to person. Consequently, reporting political affairs is an important genre of news reporting. A political reporter emphasises each and every change in the state of affairs of any political party, their ups and downs and their stand on various socio-economic issues. Political reporters should be in touch with spokespersons of political parties, maintain contact with prominent leaders and have the ability to connect undefined threads of two associated issues.

3.3.2.5 Corporate World and Economic Affairs

A reporter reporting the Corporate World and Economic affairs must have knowledge of basic principles of trade and business. He or she should be aware of trade practices and the economic history of the region. Also, a reporter of this beat is expected to have the ability to understand financial statements, ups and downs of share markets, shareholdings of companies, international trade market and elements of market behaviour.

3.3.2.6 Crime and Accident Reporting

No society is free of crime and accidents. Reporting them may also be a kind of news, the idea of which generates at the source of its origin, but most of the time, crimes and accidents are reported much later than their occurrence. A reporter needs to visit the place of occurrence of crime and accident, and he or she should personally examine the place. He should try to interview eyewitnesses, asking them all the possible questions related to the incident. The reporter should take the viewpoints of all concerned persons or groups into account. The reporter should also collect the required documentary and substantial evidence, if available and cross verify all the facts.

3.3.2.7 Investigative Reporting

Investigative reporting is a kind of reporting in which facts are not accessible. A reporter needs to investigate in-depth to uncover the secrets and bring the accessible news to common acquaintances. The area of investigative

reporting may be serious crimes, political corruption, or corporate misdeeds. This is a process of reporting facts of grave seriousness duly covered and put out of the sight of the masses by the perpetrators. A reporter, in this case, is expected to dig and present these hidden facts. The perpetrators of the crime may belong to an influential section of society. An investigative reporter may face danger while unravelling the complications of hidden realities and facts that society must know.

Activity – 2

Write down 10 Story Ideas of Developmental News Reporting.

3.3.3 Reporting based on Nature of its Content Presentation

News reports may be written down in different formats, and based on their content presentation, there needs to be a slight change in approach to reporting.

3.3.3.1 Objective Reporting

When a news report has to be presented as the fact is, it is called objective or factual reporting. In this case, the reporter only reports the facts he or she experiences through sensory organs like eyes and ears or when some documentary evidence is available. In objective reporting, the reporter does not mix up personal views with the news reported. One is not allowed to share one's logical interpretation. The reporter abstains from any kind of value judgment, and he or she should also not show empathy or hostility. In the process of objective reporting, a reporter very smartly withdraws oneself from the piece of news. This is the purest form of news reporting.

3.3.3.2 Interpretative and Analytical Reporting

Apart from the purest form of reporting, i.e. objective or factual reporting, other forms are not so pure because they are an amalgamation of news and features. When a reporter takes the liberty of expressing his or her explanations, interpretations and analysis while reporting a piece of news, it is called interpretative or analytical reporting. Contrary to the principles of pure reporting, analytical reporting is the art of presenting the analysis of known facts to interpret and find out the most logical conclusion for any unknown or hidden truth. The process may include investigation and research.

Interpretative reporting has many variants. This is also called featured reporting, in which a reporter gathers news, makes interpretations and presents the story as a blend of news and feature. This may include making a word sketch of a historical event or just a backgrounder of any other factual story.

3.3.3.3 Commentary Reporting

There is a type of reporting called Commentary reporting, in which a reporter reports by making a commentary of what he/she sees. This is live and has sequential continuity. A reporter tries to translate what he/she sees in words of his report. Commentary reporting is commonly done, when any, to report a sports event or a travelogue, where a reporter writes down his or her travel experiences in a sequential manner.

Activity – 3

Search on the internet, 5 Famous cases of investigative Reporting. Read their details.

Check Your Progress: 1

Note: 1) Use the space given below for your answer

2) Compare your answer with those given at the end of this Unit.

1. What is the difference between reporting from government establishments and reporting from non-government establishments?

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2. Why is development reporting important for a developing country like India?

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3. Point out various dissimilarities between factual and analytical Reporting.

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3.4 NEWS REPORTING TECHNIQUES

Reporting news includes various steps of which a news reporter should develop expertise. These steps are –

3.4.1 The Subject of Reporting

The first and foremost issue, before starting reporting, is to ascertain the exact storyline. The storyline is a basic idea around which a reporter reports a piece of news. For this, either the reporter should go to regular sources of news origin or pursue the editor's instructions. Still, before starting, one must know the storyline on which the whole reporting process has to be carried out. One should feel free to ask around, especially PROs and concerned officials, for story ideas. The reporter can generate story ideas by studying earlier published news items. Social Media and online social forum websites may also lead a reporter to a brilliant story idea. Press Releases and Press Conferences are also regular sources of news ideas.

3.4.2 Creating and Managing Network of Contacts

Contacts, in the field of journalism, are the most precious asset. From the first day of being in the profession, a reporter must start various exercises to create an extensive network of useful contacts, which may convert to potential news sources when required. Internet and Social Media can also be used as a link to create resourceful contact, leading to competent news ideas.

3.4.3 Personally visit the Location

A reporter needs to visit the location of any event to report it as a piece of news to have a first hand and most authentic short of information. He/ she should meet the concerned persons and try to know what happened from the eyewitnesses or are associated with the occurrence in any way. A reporter should try to record verbal evidence, copy documentary evidence and take some photographs of the locality if required.

3.4.4 Interviews

Interviewing connected persons is a meaningful way to gather information required to file a news report. A reporter should try to get interviews from all concerned parties without being biased. After knowing the opinions of all concerned parties, a reporter doing objective reporting should only present the actual views of parties. But, when doing a piece of interpretative reporting, a reporter has the liberty to examine the in-depth authenticity of the opinions gathered from various interviews.

3.4.5 Use of Secondary Sources

Secondary sources are the sources, which a reporter has not personally met or gathered information from. Secondary sources include the information gathered by others. This information may be in the form of earlier news reports, research findings, answers to RTI queries and facts or information

collected from archives, libraries or from the internet.

3.4.5.1 Research Findings and Reports

Various government departments release research and survey data under various fields regularly. Annual Reports of Various Ministries, Census Records and Data from National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) are secondary information sources that reporters can use in news reporting. Reports from international agencies also publish research and survey data with plenty of analysis. A reporter should be familiar with the language of these reports and use their concerned findings selectively in a related news report.

3.4.5.2 Use of Right to Information (RTI)

According to the Right to Information Act, 2005, every Indian citizen has the right to ask questions and have information in written form from all the constitutional authorities, including the executive, legislature and judiciary; any institution or body established or constituted by an act of Parliament or state legislature, by submitting an application and the requisite fee. An Indian reporter may also use this act to gather information from all the government set-ups controlled by either central or state governments.

3.4.5.3 Exploring Library or Archive or Internet

Library, Archive and Internet are sources of plentiful information, and a reporter must-have capability to search out the required piece of information required for supplementing a news item. Also, one can start a story by revisiting and rechecking the kind of information as one would find a wide scope for stories in such a vast information pool.

3.4.9 Following up the News Chain

The job of reporting does not end after filing a news report. There are follow-ups of each news item. A dutiful reporter keeps his or her eyes on every new development of news he had earlier reported. When any significant development occurs, and the reporter understands that the development will be of interest to the reader, he or she keeps providing follow-ups.

3.5 ETHICS OF NEWS REPORTING

News reporting is a work that demands diligence, and it becomes essential to comply with some ethical standards to deliver the results in a tradition of healthy journalism. Accuracy is the most important among these ethical standards. A reporter must not file inaccurate, misleading or distorted information, data, facts or images. One should neither misquote anyone nor distort the statement by deleting lines. A reporter should publish only the sources' facts on record, and a reporter should never report off the record statements. The reporter should protect the privacy of the source. The news reported should not be meant to harass in any way, i.e. it should not evoke communal violence or should not hurt the sentiments of a particular social

group or class. Naming a sexual victim is not ethical. While reporting, a reporter should not intrude into someone's grief or sorrow. Asking a victim how he feels is just a kind of insensitive behaviour and thus an unethical approach to reporting. Interrogating minors without the guardian's permission is also unethical. A reporter should always avoid these unethical approaches.

3.6 BASICS OF WRITING A NEWS REPORT

The final stage before filing a news report is to write it down in the most communicative way. While writing a news report, the following points should be kept in mind –

3.6.1 Constraints: Word Limit, Deadline and Editorial Policy

A reporter faces various constraints in writing a news report, which cannot be overlooked. The most common constraints are word limit and deadline. Print space in a newspaper or magazine always remains restricted, so a reporter cannot traverse the prescribed word count of the news report. Secondly, a reporter has to submit the news report on or before the deadline. The deadline is a point of time at which the editorial works in a print media stop.

One more constraint while writing a news report is the editorial policy. There are some predefined set of rules which decide the editorial functioning of a media house. These sets of rules can stop a reporter from using some words in the news report, or it can restrict him or her from exploring some restricted domain of issues. A reporter has to be conscious of the editorial policy of the organisation while finalising the news report.

3.6.2 Content: Sequence and Style

The reporter should write every news report in a sequence. There should be continuity in the matter, and the reader should not feel any lag or discontinuity. The tense used for news style articles is always past tense. Also, a reporter should follow the style sheet of the organisation. The *style sheet* is a manual detailing the house style of a publisher, publication, etc., and includes a list of words, spellings and signs, regularly practised in a media house.

A reporter should also take care of sentence structure. He or she should also maintain the sequence in which the report explains the information in terms of relative importance, tone, and target audience. A news report should have answers to the 5W1H questions – What happened? Who is involved? When did it take place? Where did it take place? Why did that happen? How did it happen? This structure of writing news in a diminishing significance of information in subsequent paragraphs is called Inverted Pyramid.

3.6.3 Packaging

After keeping all the things mentioned above in account, a reporter finally starts writing a news report. A news report can be normally divided into the following parts–

3.6.3.1 Heading

The heading of a news report is a phrase or sentence that conveys its core theme. It only attracts the attention of the reader at first. It always exists in larger and bold font sizes. The common practice is to keep the heading like an umbrella to the whole story.

3.6.3.2 Lead/Introduction

The lead or the introduction is the first paragraph of a news story. This introduces readers to the subject of the news report. Apart from flashing the central theme, a lead should always successfully create excitement and curiosity. The reporter can write a lead in a wide range of forms. It may be narrative or descriptive. The reporter can also write down a paradoxical or interrogative form of introduction. A lead can just be a quotation from a concerned person. It may also be startling or show contrast and or comparison. You will learn more about leads and types of leads in unit 9 of the Course and 'Writing Editing for Print Media.'

3.6.3.3 Body

The body of a news report tries to answer all the questions raised in the lead. The main thing in writing a body of news is to maintain continuity and the story's mood.

3.6.3.4 Quotes/Attributions

News reports should have quotes and attributions. Quotes and attributions authenticate the factuality and truth of the report. Any news without attribution lacks completeness.

3.6.3.5 Summing up

In the end, a news report should have a conclusive line. The conclusion in a news report is written at the end, leaving scope for the follow-up.

3.6.3.6 Image and Caption

Photograph or image with a suitable caption adds value to the news report. It also helps create a visual memory of readers, which keeps them connected to the news follow-ups.

3.7 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, you have learnt about the fundamentals of news reporting. You have learnt about the types of news reporting, basic techniques, types of news reporting, basic techniques, how to write a news report and most importantly, the ethical practices while covering a story. The next Unit will give you a vivid idea about the in-depth research that goes into a story.

In this Unit, we learnt the fundamentals of News Reporting. We had a vivid description of various types of news reporting. Also, we learnt basic reporting

techniques and the ethics of news reporting. We also went through how to write a news report.

3.8 KEYWORDS

Caption: Elucidation of an image or illustration

Deadline: The point of time till when reporter should submit a story

Press Gallery: A space in an assembly or Parliament, allotted for accredited media persons.

Public Relation: Procedure by which organisations, companies and individuals communicate with the public and media.

Story: News report

Target Audience: A group of people, targeted as the reader of a newspaper or magazine.

3.9 FURTHER READINGS

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2. Bill Kovach & Tom Rosenstiel (2014, 3rd Ed.): The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know, and the Public Should Expect, Crown Publishers, New York
3. David Spark & Geoffrey Harris (2012, 4th Ed.): Practical Newspaper Reporting, Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi
4. Jorgen Westertahl, "Objective News Reporting: General Premises" Communication Research, 10, no 3 (1983) p. 403-405
5. Tim Harrower (2010) Inside Reporting: A Practical Guide to the Craft of Journalism, Tata McGraw-Hill, New Delhi
6. Tony Harcup (2015, 3rd Ed.): Journalism Principles and Practice, Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi

3.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress: 1

1. Government Establishments work according to a definite set of rules and regulations. They have a fixed system of maintaining information. The reporter needs to develop and maintain contacts in the departments of the news beat one is covering. Also, one must know the exact procedure by which one can fetch authentic information. Apart from digging up the news, a reporter should be in touch with Public Relations (PR) personnel of these establishments to provide regular news inputs.

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2. Development is a concept with two different paradigms. There is a dominant paradigm, according to which it is a process of economic upliftment, which is a result of the ongoing process of industrialisation, mining, urbanisation, building infrastructures, dams and roads, production and consumption of the huge amount of energy and increase in the use of technology in every sphere of the social and economic realm. The dominant paradigm of development may have repercussions like displacement of mass, employment and labour related issues, environmental threats, people's resistance and militarisation. There is an alternate paradigm of development, according to which the real development is the development of quality of human life, which can only be attained through production, procurement and distribution of social benefits like food sufficiency, good health conditions, good education and a sense of social harmony, social justice and love for the entire humankind. Issues of science and technology are also subjects of developmental news, and the vision of their implementation puts them in the category of dominant or alternate paradigm.

Issues mentioned earlier of both paradigms of development, and the associated issues can be reported as developmental issues. A reporter must understand the philosophy of development before pursuing any issue under this head. He or she should try to answer some basic questions – What are the benefits of a development project? Who are beneficiaries? Who is paying the price of it in the long run? And what will be the associated cultural and social change?

3. Apart from the purest form of reporting, i.e. objective or factual reporting, other forms are not so pure because they are an amalgamation of news and features. When a reporter takes the liberty of expressing his or her explanations, interpretations and analysis while reporting a piece of news, it is called interpretative or analytical reporting. Contrary to the principles of pure reporting, analytical reporting is the art of presenting the analysis of known facts to interpret and find out the most logical conclusion for any unknown or hidden truth. The process may include investigation and research.