

BMC-III PAPER-I (REPORTING)
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REPORTING (Paper: I)

Block: A

Unit: I

Lesson: 1

INTRODUCTION TO REPORTING

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LESSON STRUCTURE:

This lesson shall provide an introduction to reporting. We shall discuss the broad aspects of newspapers. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Presentation of Content
 - 1.2.1 Reporting: An Overview
 - 1.2.2 Reporting Practices
 - 1.2.3 Reporters, Correspondents, and Stringers
 - 1.2.4 Working Conditions of Reporters
 - 1.2.5 Entry Level Requirements and Training
 - 1.2.6 Reporters' Code of Ethics
- 1.3 Summary
- 1.4 Key Words
- 1.5 Self-Assessment-Questions (SAQs)
- 1.6 References/Suggested Reading

1.0 OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of this lesson are as follows:

- *To Get an Overview of Reporting*
- *To Know About Reporting Practices*
- *To Know About Reporters, Correspondents, and Stringers*
- *To Know About the Working Conditions of Reporters*
- *To Know About the Entry Level Requirements and Training*
- *To Know About Reporters' Code of Ethics*

1.1 INTRODUCTION:

Newspaper reporters gather and analyze facts about current events through interviews, investigations, or observations and write news stories describing the events, background, meaning, and effects. They are given assignments such as disasters, crime, and human interest. They take notes (or sometimes use a tape recorder) while covering a story. They check reference materials such as books, news files, and public records including criminal and civil court files for additional relevant facts. Basic tasks of reporters involve viewing events objectively, reporting them accurately, and explaining their significance.

Depending on the nature of job, reporting could be classified into three groups: Event reporting, Interpretative reporting, and Investigative reporting. On the basis of subjects covered reporting can be classified as follows: Political reporting, Economic reporting, Social reporting, Parliamentary reporting, Business reporting, Development reporting, Crime reporting, Legal reporting, and Science and Technology reporting. We shall discuss about all the above-mentioned types of reporting later in other lessons.

In this lesson, we shall discuss the broader aspects reporting.

1.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- *Reporting: An Overview*
- *Reporting Practices*
- *Reporters, Correspondents, and Stringers*
- *Working Conditions*
- *Entry Level Requirements and Training*
- *Reporters' Code of Ethics*

1.2.1 REPORTING: AN OVERVIEW:

Reporting involves researching and presenting information newspapers and other mass media. Reporters gather their information in a variety of ways, including tips, press releases, and witnessing an event. They perform research through interviews, public records, and other sources.

Most reporters are assigned an area to focus on, called a beat or patch. They are encouraged to cultivate sources so they will not miss news.

Reporters usually have a college degree. The degree is sometimes in journalism, but that is not required. When hiring reporters, editors give much weight to the reporter's previous work (such as newspaper clippings), even when written for a student newspaper or as part of an internship.

1.2.2 REPORTING PRACTICES:

The three traditional methods for gathering information for a news story are through interviews, observation and document searches.

Interviewing means finding out what is happening? Find people who know and talk to them. The best sources are folks who were or are directly involved in the incident or subject that you're covering. If you are unsure of your ability to take accurate notes, record the interview. Start by getting the source's name, and its spelling, as well as his or her official title, if it is relevant to the story. Ask questions that cannot be answered with a 'yes' or a 'no.' Instead, ask people to describe the incident or situation. Listen as they respond and imagine what additional information a reader would want. Then ask follow-up questions to get that information.

Don't get intimidated and feel afraid that you are asking "dumb" questions. If your source says something you do not understand, ask them to explain it in simpler terms. If something a source says does not make sense to you, say why and ask for an explanation. If you don't understand something, your readers likely will not as well. Always be polite and respectful when interviewing someone, but respect your readers as well. Don't allow a source to intimidate you into not asking tough, appropriate questions.

Observation involves getting relevant information first hand. Your five senses can provide the details. What do you see? Hear? Smell? Feel? Drop those details into your story to provide your reader a better perspective about what you are reporting.

Looking through documents is another way of finding relevant information. Reporters can find thousands of stories in public documents. Government databases on crime, school test scores, population statistics, accident reports, environmental safety and more can keep a

motivated writer busy for years. Documents also provide a great way to fact-check statements made by an interview subject.

Journalists often use computer-assisted reporting to find trends in large datasets, including budgets and crime reports.

No matter which method you use - and you should try to use them all on each story - you want to find information that illustrates and explains the issue or incident you are reporting. The trick is to use as many methods of collecting information. First observe. The next step is to interview. Then, if necessary, go back and do more interviews. Look for documents to find more information.

Check, check and double-check all your facts. Try not to make mistakes when transcribing an interview, copying data from official records or describing something you've seen. Everyone makes a mistake at some point, but that does not excuse carelessness.

1.2.3 REPORTERS, CORRESPONDENTS, AND STRINGERS:

Reporters usually have a general assignment, special assignment, or have a regular "beat." Beat Reporters are responsible for news originating from specific areas such as municipal offices, hospitals, and police departments, etc. Reporters are also assigned to cover news in special fields such as medicine, foreign affairs, consumer affairs, fashion, art, education, labor, or social events.

Reporters who are expert in certain fields may specialize in one type of story including stories involving sports, politics, or financial affairs. Reporters may also form their own concept for a feature story and newspaper pictures. They may carry their own camera and obtain photographic coverage or they may request a photographer.

Newspapers also get news stories from "correspondents" and "stringers" who report from distant locations such as state capitals, important national places and international locales. Stringers are freelance reporters, often students or nonprofessionals, who write news stories about their campus, community, or local areas.

Reporters usually return to the office to write copy on a computer. As Reporters type their copy, it can appear simultaneously on their screen and the editor's terminal screen, or the story can be sent to the editor after it has been polished. From the editor, it is transmitted to the composing room computer, which produces the story. Sometimes, to meet deadlines, reporters deliver their news story over the telephone or use portable computers to enter the story, which is then sent by modem directly to the newspaper's computer system.

1.2.4 WORKING CONDITIONS:

Although electronic technology has brought change to the newspaper office, it has not diminished the need for reporters. Automation has eliminated the complexities of the newsrooms. Automation and electronic technology have resulted in a more high-tech information producing operation.

Reporters often work unscheduled overtime, and must have a high energy level to keep up with the fast pace of this occupation. They must also be prepared to work under stressful situations such as earthquakes, fires, floods, shoot-outs, and other dangerous conditions.

Reporters work both indoors and outdoors, dealing with all kinds of people. They may work for long periods on unproductive leads. Editors have the option of revising, shortening, or deleting their stories from the newspaper.

Entry into this profession is difficult due to a wide variety of reasons. The situation is brighter at suburban newspapers, which are doing better than their urban counterparts.

Newspaper Reporter salaries vary depending on whether the publication is weekly or daily, its circulation, experience level of the reporter, the type of publication, etc.

Critics, columnists, feature writers, and other specialists usually receive salaries based on individual contracts. Stringers are paid according to the size and type of news stories printed.

1.2.5 ENTRY LEVEL REQUIREMENTS AND TRAINING:

Employers look for those who write clearly, accurately, and with correct spelling and grammar. Typing ability is essential and using computer terminals for word processing is almost always necessary. Bilingual skills are necessary for some assignments. At least some prior work experience on an actual publication is expected. Internships, work on school newspaper or as stringers is acceptable.

A two-year degree is sometimes considered the minimum educational requirement. Increasingly, large newspapers prefer applicants with a master's degree. Smaller papers, on the other hand, prefer generalists rather than specialists and look for people with broad experience in different fields. Aside from academic and career related achievements, most papers also place a great amount of emphasis on personal characteristics such as curiosity, resourcefulness, competitiveness, and nose for news.

Education or exposure in such subjects as political science, economics, business or finance can help in a job search.

Reporters get salary increases and more interesting or challenging assignments as they advance. After many years of experience, reporters with suitable talents may become columnists, special correspondents, or critics; those with executive ability can become editors or administrators.

1.2.6 REPORTERS' CODE OF ETHICS:

The duty of a reporter is to seek the truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues. Conscientious reporters from all media and specialties strive to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty. Professional integrity is the basis of a reporter's credibility. Reporters should be honest, fair and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.

In addition, reporters should:

- *Test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error. Deliberate distortion is never permissible.*
- *Diligently seek out subjects of news stories to give them the opportunity to respond to allegations of wrongdoing.*
- *Identify sources whenever feasible. The public is entitled to as much information as possible on sources' reliability.*
- *Always question sources' motives before promising anonymity. Clarify conditions attached to any promise made in exchange for information. Keep promises.*
- *Make certain that headlines, news teases and promotional material, photos, video, audio, graphics, sound bites and quotations do not misrepresent. They should not oversimplify or highlight incidents out of context.*
- *Never distort the content of news photos or video. Image enhancement for technical clarity is always permissible. Label montages and photo illustrations.*
- *Avoid misleading re-enactments or staged news events. If re-enactment is necessary to tell a story, label it.*
- *Avoid undercover or other surreptitious methods of gathering information except when traditional open methods will not yield information vital to the public. Use of such methods should be explained as part of the story.*
- *Never plagiarize.*

- *Tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience boldly, even when it is unpopular to do so.*
- *Examine their own cultural values and avoid imposing those values on others.*
- *Avoid stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance or social status.*
- *Support the open exchange of views, even views they find repugnant.*
- *Give voice to the voiceless; official and unofficial sources of information can be equally valid.*
- *Distinguish between advocacy and news reporting. Analysis and commentary should be labeled and not misrepresent fact or context.*
- *Distinguish news from advertising and avoid such publicity material. Recognize a special obligation to ensure that the public's business is conducted in the open and that government records are open to inspection.*

REPORTERS SHOULD CAUSE NO HARM:

Also reporters should:

- Show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by news coverage. Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.
- Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.
- Recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance.
- Recognize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than do public officials and others who seek power, influence or attention. Only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone's privacy.
- Show good taste. Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity.
- Be cautious about identifying juvenile suspects or victims of sex crimes.
- Be judicious about naming criminal suspects before the formal filing of charges.
- Balance a criminal suspect's fair trial rights with the public's right to be informed.

REPORTERS ACT INDEPENDENTLY:

Reporters should be free of obligation to any interest other than the public's right to know. In this regard, reporters should:

- Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived.

- Remain free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility.
- Refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel and special treatment, and shun secondary employment, political involvement, public office and service in community organizations if they compromise journalistic integrity.
- Disclose unavoidable conflicts.
- Be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable.
- Deny favored treatment to advertisers and special interests and resist their pressure to influence news coverage.
- Be wary of sources offering information for favors or money; avoid bidding for news.

REPORTERS BE ACCOUNTABLE:

Reporters are accountable to their readers, listeners, viewers and each other. Thus reporters should:

- Clarify and explain news coverage and invite dialogue with the public over journalistic conduct.
- Encourage the public to voice grievances against the news media.
- Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.
- Expose unethical practices of journalists and the news media.
- Abide by the same high standards to which they hold others.

1.3 SUMMARY:

- Reporting involves researching and presenting information newspapers and other mass media. Reporters gather their information in a variety of ways, including tips, press releases, and witnessing an event. They perform research through interviews, public records, and other sources.
- Depending on the nature of job, reporting could be classified into three groups: Event reporting, Interpretative reporting, and Investigative reporting. On the basis of subjects covered reporting can be classified as follows: Political reporting, Economic reporting, Social reporting, Parliamentary reporting, Business reporting, Development reporting, Crime reporting, Legal reporting, and Science and Technology reporting.
- Interviewing is a method of gathering information. It means finding out what is happening? Find people who know and talk to them. The best sources are folks who were or are directly involved in the incident or subject that you're covering. If you don't understand something,

your readers likely will not as well. Always be polite and respectful when interviewing someone, but respect your readers as well. Don't allow a source to intimidate you into not asking tough, appropriate questions.

- Observation is another method of gathering information. It involves getting relevant information first hand. Your five senses can provide the details. What do you see? Hear? Smell? Feel? Drop those details into your story to provide your reader a better perspective about what you are reporting.
- Looking through documents is another way of finding relevant information. Reporters can find thousands of stories in public documents. Government databases on crime, school test scores, population statistics, accident reports, environmental safety and more can keep a motivated writer busy for years. Documents also provide a great way to fact-check statements made by an interview subject.
- Reporters usually return to the office to write copy. They work with in the publication center i.e., the place from where the newspaper is being published. Newspapers also get news stories from “correspondents” and “stringers” who report from distant locations such as state capitals, important national places and international locales. Stringers are freelance reporters, often students or nonprofessionals, who write news stories about their campus, community, or local areas.
- Electronic technology has brought change to the newspaper office. But it has not diminished the need for reporters. Reporters often work unscheduled overtime, and must have a high energy level to keep up with the fast pace of this occupation. They must also be prepared to work under stressful situations such as earthquakes, fires, floods, shoot-outs, and other dangerous conditions. Reporters work both indoors and outdoors, dealing with all kinds of people. They may work for long periods on unproductive leads. Editors have the option of revising, shortening, or deleting their stories from the newspaper.

1.4 KEY WORDS:

Reporting: Reporters gather and analyze facts about current events through interviews, investigations, or observations and write news stories describing the events, background, meaning, and effects. They are given assignments such as disasters, crime, and human interest. They take notes (or sometimes use a tape recorder) while covering a story. They check reference materials such as books, news files, and public records including criminal and civil

court files for additional relevant facts. Basic tasks of reporters involve viewing events objectively, reporting them accurately, and explaining their significance.

Types of Reporting: Depending on the nature of job, reporting could be classified into three groups: Event reporting, Interpretative reporting, and Investigative reporting. On the basis of subjects covered reporting can be classified as follows: Political reporting, Economic reporting, Social reporting, Parliamentary reporting, Business reporting, Development reporting, Crime reporting, Legal reporting, and Science and Technology reporting.

Interviewing: Interviewing means finding out what is happening? Find people who know and talk to them. The best sources are folks who were or are directly involved in the incident or subject that you're covering.

Observation: Observation involves getting relevant information first hand. Your five senses can provide the details. What do you see? Hear? Smell? Feel? Drop those details into your story to provide your reader a better perspective about what you are reporting.

Looking Through Documents: Looking through documents is another way of finding relevant information. Reporters can find thousands of stories in public documents. Government databases on crime, school test scores, population statistics, accident reports, environmental safety and more can keep a motivated writer busy for years. Documents also provide a great way to fact-check statements made by an interview subject.

Reporters, Correspondents and Stringers: Reporters usually return to the office to write copy. They work with in the publication center i.e., the place from where the newspaper is being published. Newspapers also get news stories from “correspondents” and “stringers” who report from distant locations such as state capitals, important national places and international locales. Stringers are freelance reporters, often students or nonprofessionals, who write news stories about their campus, community, or local areas.

Working Conditions of Reporters: Automation has eliminated the complexities of the newsrooms. Automation and electronic technology have resulted in a more high-tech information-producing operation. But it has not diminished the need for reporters. Reporters often work unscheduled overtime. They must also be prepared to work under stressful situations such as earthquakes, fires, floods, shoot-outs, and other dangerous conditions. Reporters work both indoors and outdoors, dealing with all kinds of people. They may work for long periods on unproductive leads. Editors have the option of revising, shortening, or deleting their stories from the newspaper.

Qualities of a Good Reporter: The ideal reporter has the following qualities: a good sub-editor has a sharp news sense. He does not bring his own particular prejudices or interests into sub editing. His news sense is related to his newspaper so that he can create exciting stories. A good reporter has to get the facts clear and in sequence in his mind or on his copy pad.

Responsibilities of Reporters: Reporters also have many responsibilities. These are: *ensuring accuracy, cutting down unnecessary words, eliminating scandalous and libelous statements, making sure the story is readable and complete.*

1.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

1. What is reporting? Discuss with suitable examples.
2. Discuss some major reporting practices.
3. Write a short note on the working conditions of reporters.
4. Throw some light on the codes of ethics for reporting.

1.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED READING:

Reporting by Charnley

Active Reporter by James Lewis

Professional Journalist by John Hohenberg

Professional Journalism by Patanjali Sethi

Professional Journalism by M.V. Kamath

News Writing by George Hough

PRINCIPLES OF REPORTING

Writer: Sh. Mahesh Kumar

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LESSON STRUCTURE:

This lesson shall discuss some principles of reporting. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Presentation of Content
 - 2.2.1 Reporting Process
 - 2.2.2 News Values
 - 2.2.3 The Five W and the H
 - 2.2.4 The Inverted Pyramid
 - 2.2.5 Points to Remember
- 2.3 Summary
- 2.4 Key Words
- 2.5 Self-Assessment-Questions (SAQs)
- 2.6 References/Suggested Reading

2.0 OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of this lesson are as follows:

- To Know About the Reporting Process
- To Know About the News Values
- To Know About the Five W and the H
- To Know About the Inverted Pyramid
- To Know About Points to Remember

2.1 INTRODUCTION:

According to a recent study in the USA, more than 72 percent of newspaper readers enjoy the newspaper reading experience, 64 percent would miss reading it if taken away and 54 percent

say reading the paper is an absorbing activity. 40 percent say newspapers are trustworthy and believable. And more importantly newspapers help create emotional connections. Some other results of that study are:

- *Enjoy reading newspapers:* 73%
- *Feel better informed after reading:* 68%
- *Miss Reading it if taken away:* 64%
- *Good use of my time:* 57%
- *Reading newspapers is relaxing:* 56%
- *Some stories touch me personally:* 64%

Newspapers are popular and liked so much because of good quality reporting along with other material. In this lesson, we shall discuss the principles reporting.

2.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

Here's something very few people realize: News reporting or writing news stories isn't particularly difficult. It does take practice and not everyone will be an expert but if you follow the guidelines you should be able to create effective news items without too much problem.

In this lesson, we shall discuss some very basic principles. The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- *Reporting Process*
- *News Values*
- *The Five W and the H*
- *The Inverted Pyramid*
- *Points to Remember*

2.2.1 REPORTING PROCESS:

While writing a news story, remember one thing - news revolves around life. Any local, state, or national event that has a direct impact on the community will make for good news. As reporters, it is our job to seek relevant information. Also reporters look for the odd, the interesting and the unusual. This way they capture the news in its essence.

Try not to let your personal feelings be reflected in the news story. As the reporter, you distill the facts--and only the facts. At times, it may be necessary to include the opinions of other

people and officials, but reporting anything other than the information you're given can get you in trouble.

Once you have established an angle to the event or subject you are covering, you are ready to write your lead. The lead sentence should be short, concise, yet interesting enough to catch the reader's attention. Starting a lead with a question, a startling fact, or a famous quote are all good examples of lead sentences. Leads can be colorful, disturbing, or thought provoking. Keeping it short with just enough information to interest the reader is your goal. Once you have achieved this, cover the 5 W's (who, what where, when and why) within the first few paragraphs. Write with the average person in mind. Speak in language that's neutral.

2.2.2 NEWS VALUES:

News values determine how much prominence a news story is given by a newspaper. In practice editors on the basis of their experience and intuition make such decisions informally. These include frequency, negativity, unexpectedness, unambiguity, personalization, meaningfulness, references to elite persons, continuity. Analysis shows that several factors are consistently adopted in many news organizations.

In 1965, Galtung and Ruge enumerated these factors. The following list is based on their analysis, which remains popular today.

FREQUENCY: Events which occur suddenly and fit well with the news organization's schedule are more likely to be reported than those which occur gradually or at inconvenient times of day or night. Long-term trends are not likely to receive much coverage.

NEGATIVITY: Bad news is more exciting than good news. Bad news receives more attention because it shocks us and creates discussion.

UNEXPECTEDNESS: If an event is out of the ordinary it will have a greater effect than something, which is an everyday or routine occurrence. As Charles A. Dana famously put it: "*if a dog bites a man, that's not news. But if a man bites a dog, that's news!*"

UNAMBIGUITY: Events whose implications are clear make for better copy than those which are open to more than one interpretation, or where any understanding of the implications depends on first understanding the complex background in which the events take place.

PERSONALIZATION: Events, which can be portrayed, as the actions of individuals will be more attractive than one in which there is no such "human interest."

MEANINGFULNESS: This relates to the sense of identification the audience has with the topic. "Cultural proximity" is a factor here -- stories concerned with people, who speak the same language, look the same, and share the preoccupations as the audience receives more coverage than those concerned with people who speak different languages, look different and have different preoccupations.

REFERENCE TO ELITE PERSONS: Stories concerned with the rich, powerful, famous and infamous get more coverage.

CONTINUITY: A story, which is already in the news, gathers a kind of inertia. This is partly because the media organizations are already in place to report the story, and partly because previous reportage may have made the story more accessible to the public (making it less ambiguous).

The other major news values are *proximity, relevance, immediacy, and drama*.

2.2.3 THE FIVE 'W'S AND THE 'H':

This is the crux of all news. For writing good news stories, you need to know five things: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?

Any good news story provides answers to each of these six questions. You must drill these into your brain and they must become second nature. For example, if you wish to cover a story about a local sports team entering a competition you will need to answer these questions:

- Who is the team? Who is the coach? Who are the prominent players? Who are the supporters?
- What sport do they play? What is the competition?
- Where is the competition? Where is the team normally based?
- When is the competition? How long have they been preparing? Are there any other important time factors?

- Why are they entering this particular competition? If it's relevant, why does the team exist at all?
- How are they going to enter the competition? Do they need to fundraise? How much training and preparation is required? What will they need to do to win?

2.2.4 THE INVERTED PYRAMID:

This refers to the structure of news stories which places the most important facts at the beginning and works "down" from there. Ideally, the first paragraph should contain enough information to give the reader a good overview of the entire story. The rest of the article explains and expands on the beginning.

A good approach is to assume that the story might be cut off at any point due to space limitations. Does the story work if the editor only decides to include the first two paragraphs? If not, re-arrange it so that it does.

2.2.5 POINTS TO REMEMBER:

Here are few points that reporters should remember while working:

IT'S ABOUT PEOPLE:

News stories are all about how people are affected. In your sports story, you might spend some time focusing on one or more individuals, or on how the team morale is doing, or how the supporters are feeling.

HAVE AN ANGLE:

Most stories can be presented using a particular angle or "slant". This is a standard technique and isn't necessarily bad - it can help make the purpose of the story clear and give it focus. Examples of angles you could use for your sports story:

- "Team Tackles National Competition"
- "Big Ask for First-Year Coach"
- "Local Team in Need of Funds"

KEEP IT OBJECTIVE: You are completely impartial. If there is more than one side to the story, cover them all. Don't use "I" and "me" unless you are quoting someone.

QUOTE PEOPLE:

For example: "We're really excited about this competition," says coach Greg Chappell, "It's the highest target we've ever set ourselves". Such quotes add credibility to the news stories.

DON'T GET FLOWERY:

Keep your sentences and paragraphs short. Don't use lots of heavily descriptive language. When you've finished, read the entire story. And try to remove any words, which aren't completely necessary.

OBJECTIVITY:

News organizations are often expected to practice objectivity: Reporters try to cover all sides of an issue without bias, as compared to commentators or analysts, who provide opinion or personal point-of-view.

In the United Kingdom, limits are set by the government agency *Ofcom*, the *Office of Communications*. Both newspapers and broadcast news programmes in the United States are generally expected to remain neutral and avoid bias except for clearly indicated editorial articles or segments. In India, we do not have any such rules.

Objectivity is expected from newspapers and journalists. But it is difficult to achieve, and individual journalists may fall foul of their own personal bias, or succumb to commercial or political pressure.

Many believe that there is no such thing as objective reporting, that there will always be some form of implicit bias, whether political, personal, or otherwise. Such bias could be intentional or subconscious. This is about our inability to report on it in a value-free fashion. And many journalists accept the idea that pure "objectivity" is impossible, but still seek to minimize bias in their work. Other journalistic standards, such as balance, and neutrality, may be used to describe a more practical kind of "objectivity".

NEWSWORTHINESS:

To be considered newsworthy, an event usually must have broad interest in one or more news values:

- Effect (how many people were, are or will be affected?)
- Timeliness (did the event occur very recently?)
- Revelation (is there significant new information, previously unknown?)

- Proximity (was the event nearby geographically?)

In recent years increasing weight has also been given to the following news values:

- Entertainment (does it make for a fun story?)
- Oddity (was the event highly unusual?)
- Celebrity (was anyone famous involved?)

News items and journalism can be divided in various ways, although there are debatable areas. Distinctions include between hard news (serious and timely topics) and soft news (lighter topics); breaking news (immediate events); news analysis; and enterprise or investigative reporting, in which a topic is examined in great detail.

NEWS STORY WRITING EXERCISES:

Use the following information to write a news story. All the information came from the police.

An airplane has crashed.

It crashed at 10:42 a.m. today.

No one was killed.

One person was injured.

The pilot walked away from the crash, unhurt.

A passenger suffered cuts and bruises.

The pilot is Rajeev Sharma, age 45.

He is from Pune, Maharashtra.

The injured passenger is Mrs. Sabnam Pahwa, 49.

She was rushed by ambulance to a nearby hospital.

Witnesses said the plane took off, rose 60 feet in the air and then crashed to the ground.

Mr. Rajeev Sharma is a veteran IAF pilot.

He won the Medal of Honor, for bravery during that war.

The plane was completely destroyed.

The plane was a small plane, a Cessna.

The crash occurred at the local Chhatrapati Airport.

The cause of the crash is unknown.

Mr. Rajeev Sharma told police he "just lost control."

Write a news story using inverted pyramid format, which means that the main facts are written first, and the secondary facts are written in descending order of importance.

The paragraphs need to unfold in a way that makes sense, unfolding the story to give the reader the Who? What? Why? Where? When? Attribute the sources. Remain objective. Do not use words that create judgments or state opinions. Avoid redundancy or repetition. Be concise. Try to show or create mental pictures; don't just tell. Use quotes, when possible and appropriate, to build the story.

2.3 SUMMARY:

- As reporters, it is our job to seek relevant information. Also reporters look for the odd, the interesting and the unusual. This way they capture the news in its essence.
- News values determine how much prominence a news story is given by a newspaper. In practice editors on the basis of their experience and intuition make such decisions informally. These include frequency, negativity, unexpectedness, unambiguity, personalization, meaningfulness, references to elite persons, continuity. Analysis shows that several factors are consistently adopted in many news organizations. The other major news values are *proximity, relevance, immediacy, and drama*.
- For writing good news stories, you need to know five things: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? Any good news story provides answers to each of these six questions. You must drill these into your brain and they must become second nature.
- This refers to the structure of news stories, which places the most important facts at the beginning and works "down" from there. Ideally, the first paragraph should contain enough information to give the reader a good overview of the entire story. The rest of the article explains and expands on the beginning. A good approach is to assume that the story might be cut off at any point due to space limitations. Does the story work if the editor only decides to include the first two paragraphs? If not, re-arrange it so that it does.
- To be considered newsworthy, an event usually must have broad interest in one or more news values: Effect (how many people were, are or will be affected?), Timeliness (did the event occur very recently?), Revelation (is there significant new information, previously unknown?), and Proximity (was the event nearby geographically?). In recent years increasing weight has also been given to the following news values: Entertainment (does it make for a fun story?), Oddity (was the event highly unusual?), and Celebrity (was anyone famous involved?).

2.4 KEY WORDS:

News Values: News values determine how much prominence a news story is given by a newspaper. In practice editors on the basis of their experience and intuition make such decisions informally. These include frequency, negativity, unexpectedness, unambiguity, personalization, meaningfulness, references to elite persons, continuity. Analysis shows that several factors are consistently adopted in many news organizations. The other major news values are *proximity, relevance, immediacy, and drama*.

Negativity: Bad news is more exciting than good news. Bad news receives more attention because it shocks us and creates discussion.

Unexpectedness: If an event is out of the ordinary it will have a greater effect than something, which is an everyday or routine occurrence. As Charles A. Dana famously put it: *"if a dog bites a man, that's not news. But if a man bites a dog, that's news!"*

Unambiguity: Events whose implications are clear make for better copy than those which are open to more than one interpretation, or where any understanding of the implications depends on first understanding the complex background in which the events take place.

The Five Ws and the H: For writing good news stories, you need to know five things: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? Any good news story provides answers to each of these six questions. You must drill these into your brain and they must become second nature.

The Inverted Pyramid: This refers to the structure of news stories which places the most important facts at the beginning and works "down" from there. Ideally, the first paragraph should contain enough information to give the reader a good overview of the entire story. The rest of the article explains and expands on the beginning.

Newsworthiness: To be considered newsworthy, an event usually must have broad interest in one or more news values: Effect (how many people were, are or will be affected?), Timeliness (did the event occur very recently?), Revelation (is there significant new information, previously unknown?), and Proximity (was the event nearby geographically?). In recent years increasing weight has also been given to the following news values: Entertainment (does it make for a fun story?), Oddity (was the event highly unusual?), and Celebrity (was anyone famous involved?).

2.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

1. Discuss the reporting process? Discuss with suitable examples.
2. Discuss some major reporting principles.

3. Write a short note on the news values.
4. Throw some light on the five Ws and the H, and the inverted pyramid.

2.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED READING:

Reporting by Charnley

Active Reporter by James Lewis

Professional Journalist by John Hohenberg

Professional Journalism by Patanjali Sethi

Professional Journalism by M.V. Kamath

News Writing by George Hough

REPORTING TECHNIQUES

Writer: Sh. Mahesh Kumar
Vetter: Sh. Sushil K. Singh

LESSON STRUCTURE:

News is what something that people did not know before. News interests people, a large number of people, and some times even a nation or the world at large. It is what happened in North, South, East, and West, in short NSWE, which an imaginative editor rearranged to NEWS. News is the result of reporting.

In this lesson we shall discuss some techniques of reporting. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Presentation of Content
 - 3.2.1 Reporting- An Overview
 - 3.2.2 Gathering information
 - 3.2.3 Handling Sources
 - 3.2.4 News Elements
 - 3.2.5 News Elements
- 3.3 Summary
- 3.4 Key Words
- 3.5 Self-Assessment-Questions (SAQs)
- 3.6 References/Suggested Reading

3.0 OBJECTIVES:

Here is a beginner's definition of news. *News is something that interests, excites or concerns people.* News not only interests but also at times excites and at times concerns because it may be a mishap or a tragedy. John B. Bogart of the New York Sun defines News thus: *When a dog*

bites a man, that is not news; but when a man bites a dog, that is News. The crux or gist of this definition is anything *unusual* is News.

Whatever the type of news, it requires certain techniques for reporting any event. In this lesson we shall discuss some reporting techniques.

The objectives of this lesson are as follows:

- To have An Overview of Reporting
- To Know About Gathering Information
- To Know About Handling Sources
- To Know About the Art of Interviewing
- To Know About News Elements

3.1 INTRODUCTION:

Joseph Pulitzer of Pulitzer Prize fame and the publisher of the New York World defined News as: *original, distinctive, dramatic, romantic, thrilling, unique, curious, quaint, humorous, odd and apt-to-be-talked about.*

News may be broadly divided into hard news and soft news. News that has a great importance and impact on the life of a nation or people or news that has great significance or affects life of many people is termed hard news. And news that interests people but without great significance is called soft news. Every newspaper carries a mix of hard news and soft news daily.

The swearing-in of a President or Prime Minister, the presentation of the national budget, the passing of an important Bill in Parliament, the death of a major personality, a major earthquake, plane crash, etc. are examples of hard news. On the other hand, the wedding of a film actor, the birthday party of a celebrity, a rock show, a beauty contest, or a campus festival are examples of soft news. More about that shall be presented later in the lesson.

In this lesson, we shall first discuss some techniques reporting. We shall also discuss news values.

3.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- *Reporting- An Overview*
- *Gathering Information*

- *Handling Sources*
- *The Art of Interviewing*
- *News Elements*

3.2.1 REPORTING- AN OVERVIEW:

News is any new information or information on current events which is relayed by print, broadcast, Internet or word of mouth to a mass audience. The reporting and investigation of news falls within the profession of journalism. News is often reported by a variety of sources, such as newspapers, television and radio programmes, wire services, and web sites.

There are many categories of news. The major news categories are: politics, crime, business, sports, fashion, society, and entertainment.

In the earlier days, newsgathering was primitive by today's standards. Printed news had to be phoned in to a newsroom or brought there by a reporter where it was typed and either transmitted over wire services or edited and manually set in type along with other news stories for a specific edition. Today, the term "Breaking News" has become common as broadcast and cable news services use live satellite technology to bring current events into audiences' homes live as it happens. Events that used to take hours or days to become common knowledge in towns or in nations are fed instantaneously to consumers via radio, television, cell phones and the Internet.

Commonly, news content should contain the who, what, when, where, why and how of an event. There should be no questions remaining.

Newspapers normally write hard news stories, such as those pertaining to politics, murders, fires, wars, etc., in inverted pyramid style so the most important information is at the beginning. Busy readers can read as little or as much as they desire.

HARD NEWS AND SOFT NEWS:

Hard news and soft news are terms for describing a relative difference between two approaches to news. Because the term "news" is quite broad, the terms "hard" and "soft" denote both a difference in respective standards for news value, as well as for the structure and style of news writing.

The idea of hard news embodies two basic concepts:

Seriousness: Politics, economics, crime, war, and disasters are considered serious topics, as are certain aspects of law, science, and technology.

Timeliness: Stories that cover current events—the progress of a war, the results of a vote, the breaking out of a fire, a significant public statement, the freeing of a prisoner, an economic report of note.

The logical opposite, soft news is sometimes referred to in a derogatory fashion as infotainment. Defining features catching the most criticism include:

The least serious subjects: Arts and entertainment, sports, lifestyles, "human interest", and celebrities.

Not timely: There is no precipitating event triggering the story, other than a reporter's curiosity.

Timely events happen in less serious subjects—sporting matches, celebrity misadventures, movie releases, art exhibitions, and so on.

There may also be serious reports, which are not event-driven—coverage of important social, economic, legal, or technological trends; investigative reports which uncover ongoing corruption, waste, or immorality; or discussion of unsettled political issues without any special reason. Anniversaries, holidays, the end of a year or season, or the end of the first 100 days of an administration, can make some stories time-sensitive, but provide more of an opportunity for reflection and analysis than any actual "news" to report.

The spectrum of "seriousness" and "importance" is not well defined, and different media organizations make different tradeoffs. "News you can use", a common marketing phrase highlighting a specific genre of journalism, spans the gray area. Gardening tips and hobby "news" pretty clearly fall at the entertainment end. Warnings about imminent natural disasters or acute domestic security threats (such as air raids or terrorist attacks) are considered so important that broadcast media (even non-news channels) usually interrupt other programming to announce them. A medical story about a new treatment for breast cancer, or a report about local ground water pollution might fall in between. So might book reviews, or coverage of religion. On the other hand, people frequently find hobbies and entertainment to be worthwhile parts of their lives and so "importance" on a personal level is rather subjective.

3.2.2 GATHERING INFORMATION:

News reporters gather information in three ways: *by interviewing people, by researching the written record and by observation.* The better you are at these techniques, the better your

stories will be. This newsgathering triad underlies all good reporting and good writing. In fact, good information, even poorly written, is better than soufflé writing, or writing with no substance.

- The more ways you gather information, and the more information you gather, the better your story will be. You will move closer to the "actual reality" of the event. Remember your goal is to use any legal and ethical means to learn what's really going on.
- Let's start with the simplest type of newsgathering, the story gathered in only one of the three ways. It is based on what you are told, rather than what you discover for yourself. This is source-controlled, source-originated journalism.
- Such stories result from handouts, press releases, press conferences, speeches and statements. They result from what someone tells you. It is surface journalism. It is the work of a clerk, not a reporter. This type of reporting doesn't have to be bad. It can be information from the city as to when the trash will be picked up, or when to register to vote.
- But source-originated journalism has its problems. The material can be one-sided. It can be offered by the source for personal, political or economic gain. If the newspaper is filled with this kind of material, the reading public becomes apathetic and distrustful.
- Worse than being one-sided, this kind journalism can be wrong. Frequently, people don't know what they are talking about, and sometimes they lie. So, what's a reporter to do? Be skeptical. Good reporters question what they are told. They check and double check. They rely on what they are told, but they improve upon it by talking to more than one person, by searching the written record, by trying to see for themselves. As President Reagan said of the Russians, "Trust but verify."
- A word of caution: There is a difference between skepticism and cynicism. A skeptic is one who wants proof, but he or she is not prejudiced against face-value explanations. A cynic, on the other hand, refuses to believe face-value explanations and is ready to ascribe almost evil motives to those he or she covers. A good reporter is skeptical but not cynical.
- When you take what someone tells you, and supplement it with information from your own research, your own observations, or with what others tells you, you move to the next level of journalism.
- By operating on the information you have been told, you move from the first level of journalism closer to the "actual reality." You provide background, details, and reaction from others, and your own observations as verification for what has been provided.

- Suppose you were sent to cover a speech by the director of a university writing center on the subject of student writing. If you went to the speech and reported strictly what the speaker said, that's source-originated reporting. If you talked with tutors, students, professors, other writing centers, if you visited there yourself, if you provided a history of the center, then that's observational reporting.

To summarize, we can say that reporters gather information by:

Personal observation

Researching the written record

Interviewing people

3.2.3 HANDLING SOURCES:

A good reporter makes or creates contacts and stays in regular contact with his or her sources. This requires what is called the human touch. That is a reporter goes to the well when he's thirsty, but he also goes to the well when he's not thirsty. There is no substitute for actually being there, for personal contact. See your sources; speak to them when you need something from them, but more importantly, when you don't need anything.

1. One of the most important qualities that a reporter must have is being comfortable with strangers. Familiarity doesn't breed contempt. It lowers barriers.
2. A reporter is an information broker. Share information when you can.
3. You also have to be careful. You must learn to walk a fine line between getting close but not too close. As Walter Lippmann said, "There has to be a certain distance between a reporter and the source, not a wall or a fence but an air space." You serve the reader, not the source.
4. If you have obtained information from a source on the understanding that it is off the record, then let it be. Remember, a source is a source for life. You may change beats, newspapers, even cities, yet your reputation will follow you. The only way to be a successful reporter over the long haul is to operate honestly. If you don't, you will be without that most valuable of all commodities, good sources.
5. Make one more call. Ask your source, "Who else can help me?" "Who holds an opposite view?" Work down the organization chart. If possible, talk to the policeman who made the arrest, not the supervisor; the teacher rather than the principal.

6. Be polite but persistent with your sources. Insist on a responsive answer to your question. Follow slow-developing stories by checking periodically with your sources. If the event or issue is still on their agenda, it probably should be on yours as well.

Summing up, it can be said that: In working with sources, a reporter:

Shares information, if possible

Translates their jargon

Is polite but persistent

Maintains a certain distance

3.2.4 THE ART OF INTERVIEWING:

There are three ways to gather information for your story—research, observation and interviewing. Of these, interviewing is clearly the most important. It can be done in person, over the phone, and now even by e-mail. It can be extensive or just a few questions. In whatever form, it is the key to the stories you write. Your ability to talk to people is the difference between being a mediocre reporter and a good one.

1. Ask smart questions. Ask smart questions. Be prepared always with a store of questions.
2. Preparation allows you to ask good questions and tells your interviewee that you are not to be dismissed lightly. Read all that is available. Talk to those who know the interviewee. As writer Tom Rosenstiel said, "A common ingredient of the superb interview is a knowledge of the subject so thorough that it creates a kind of intimacy between the journalist and the interviewee."
3. What is the tentative theme for your story and how will this interview fit that theme? When you have answered those questions, prepare a list of questions. The best way to have a spontaneous conversation is to have questions ready. That way you can relax, knowing that you will not miss an important topic.
4. Phrase your questions in a neutral way. Mix open-ended questions with closed-ended ones. The closed-ended ones elicit basic information; the open-ended allow the interviewee to reveal information or feelings that you did not anticipate.
5. Decide how you will dress. You would dress differently for a hockey player than for the mayor. Ask yourself, how will my subject be dressed? Avoid anything in your dress or grooming that could be considered impertinent, flashy, sloppy or rebellious.

6. Think of your meeting with the subject as a structured but friendly conversation, not an interview.
7. Try to establish a rapport with the person early on. You may want to wait a bit before pulling your notebook out. This meeting stage may determine how the rest of the interview will go. Do you share a common interest or friend? If so, mention that.
8. Look the subject in the eye and listen carefully to his/her answers. Be sure to smile. A smile, they say, is lubrication for the words and collaborator of the eyes in contact. A smile helps both you and your subject relax.
9. When the source is speaking, nod or make some verbal remark to show you are listening and understand. Sit on the edge of your chair and lean forward. This is a posture that projects an eager, positive attitude.
10. Observe and record the person's body language, mannerisms, dress, physical features, distinctive characteristics and interactions with others. These allow you to paint a word picture for your reader and may reveal something that is not being said. Observe and record the sights and sounds of the surroundings. Take good notes during the interview in a handwriting you will be able to read later.
11. Focus on what the source is saying, not on what you will ask next. Your next question will be better if you heard the answer to the last one. Listen critically. Do you understand what the source is saying? If not, ask the source to repeat or explain. Listen for what isn't said. Is the source avoiding a topic?
12. Don't interrupt, don't ask long questions, don't talk too much, don't challenge too early in the conversation. You're there to hear opinions, not offer them. Nevertheless, it can help to build rapport if you reveal something of yourself. Offer your own thoughts or observations, but sprinkle lightly.
13. Control your physical actions and mental attitude. If the subject senses that you disapprove of him or his opinions, the interview is doomed. If the subject wants to take you on a tour of her home, office, factory, garden, etc., accept the offer and record what you see.
14. Begin with easy questions, perhaps biographical ones. Ask for examples or anecdotes. Use the list of questions you have prepared and return to it frequently. Interviewing is a lot like talking, but you have to guide the conversation. You have to know what you want and go about getting it.
15. If the subject takes the interview in an unexpected direction, go with her/him. But remember, you are in charge of the interview. Make sure you accomplish your goals and be assertive if

necessary. Stop after one hour. Be alert to the fact that the best material sometimes comes when you have reached the end and thanked the subject for their cooperation. Be sure to ask what the future holds.

16. Make accuracy your goal. Be sure your quotes are accurate. If not, paraphrase. Ask for correct spellings. Don't pretend to know something that you don't. Summarize for the subject in your own words some of his main points.
17. Tell the subject you will be calling back later to check facts (not quotes) and do so. Make the call when you are almost finished with the story. Use it as a second interview. Ask about areas you did not understand, or about areas that will be a part of the story but were not covered well during the original interview.
18. Tape record the conversation if time permits and the story demands. Is this a profile? Does your subject have a distinctive way of speaking? Is this a controversial topic? Will the presence of a recorder put a chill on the conversation? If you decide to use a recorder, ask permission of the subject. Place it off to the side, but where it can be seen. Make sure it is in good working order with good batteries. Use it as a backup to your regular note taking.
19. Assume that the conversation is "on the record." If the subject asks for parts of it to be "off the record," try to convince him/her otherwise. If unsuccessful, make sure you and the subject understand the ground rules. Does "off the record" mean you can use the material, but not with her name attached to it? Can you go to someone else and get the information on the record? Or does "off the record" mean you cannot use the information, even without his name attached, and you can't go to someone else to get the information?
20. Direct quotes from your subject are essential for your story. They allow your reader to "hear" the person you are writing about. They also create the impression of objectivity, that you, the reporter, are simply telling the world about something that happened. But quotes must be 100 percent accurate. If you are not certain of every word of the quote, remove the quote marks and paraphrase. However, it is permissible to "clean up" bad grammar within a quote.
21. Make sure the quote is revealing of your subject. Avoid direct quotes if the material is boring, if the information is factual and indisputable or if the quote is unclear. Make sure the quote advances the story and does not repeat the material above it.
22. Often the advice given for interviewing makes it sound like a game of wits with your subject. They've got something you want, and they won't give it to you. You are advised to "flatter them," "make them feel comfortable," "lead up to the tough questions with easy ones," "don't

take no for an answer." What's implicit here is that there are several realities that you can report. A good reporter reports at one level.

23. Figure that there is material that your subject knows, will tell you and will let you report. That is the "reportable reality." There is another reality that the subject knows, will tell you, but will not let you report. This is the "private reality." There is a third reality that the subject knows but will not tell you, much less let you report. Strive to discover through every legal and ethical means this "actual reality" and report it. Remember, journalism is what somebody doesn't want you to print. Everything else is publicity.

Here we can summarize that during the interview one should:

- # Look your subject in the eye
- # Sit forward in your chair
- # Respond to answers with a nod
- # Listen carefully
- # Smile

3.2.4 NEWS ELEMENTS:

There are seven news determinants or attributes upon which news is judged and selected for publication. They are **Impact, Unusualness, Prominence, Conflict, Proximity, Timeliness and Currency.**

The impact a news story could create on society is a good measure for including it on the front page, and when you have two such items of equal importance, you need another criterion to decide which of the two should get precedence over the other, and the unusual comes in handy. Add to that, you have prominence, which is all about celebrities or people who matter. So your decision now is sharper in view of the three criteria at your disposal.

Conflict has an element of drama that gets attention and hence serves as a criterion for news selection. What happens in and around your city interests you more than what happened in a far-flung region. Therefore, newspapers allocate greater space for local news coverage because of the proximity factor.

Timeliness is the essence of news and is understandably a criterion for news selection. Currency is the people's viewpoint or what they talk about on a major issue, which is an important feedback for governments and media writers.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD NEWS WRITING:

Characteristics of Good News Writing (also called news values) are:

*

Accuracy,

- * Attribution,
- * Balance and Fairness,
- * Brevity,
- * Clarity,
- * Readability,
- * Human interest, and
- * Sharp observation.

The newsman should be obsessed with accuracy because one mistake can destroy the reputation of a newspaper or magazine, and it takes just fraction of a second to make one. Checking and crosschecking names, figures, and verifying facts are of utmost importance. Always attribute the news to the source so that readers can judge its credibility. “ A highly placed Defense Personnel, Finance Ministry Sources”, etc. are attributions that help readers to arrive at their own conclusions, while steering clear of the suspicion that the reporter is giving his own version of the story.

Balance and fairness form the foundation of good journalism. Balance is giving both sides of the picture, while fairness is not taking sides. It also means not providing support to political parties, institutions, communities or individuals, etc. through the columns of the newspaper. It is the attribute of a professional reporter and the duty of a sub editor to implement it.

Brevity is a great virtue in journalism appreciated by readers and editors alike. It is telling a story, as it should be, without beating around the bush. It saves time and space and wins applause when consummated to perfection.

Clarity is the ability to think clearly and translate it into paper - a quality that can take one to the higher echelons of media hierarchy. Readability has a bearing on sentence length and simple and forthright manner of expression.

The average length of a sentence should not exceed 18 words, which is standard. It is not easy to read a sentence with more than 18 words. Beyond 25 words the sentence would be very difficult to read, though some accomplished authors have far exceeded the standard and yet remained readable because of their craftsmanship.

But beginners are advised to stay out of long-winding and complicated sentence constructions. The best way is to write news stories using simple words, short and simple sentences.

Writing in a style that arouses human interest is what the craft of writing is all about. Newsmen should see the events from the readers' point of view and write the news stories keeping the reader ever in mind along with his hopes, fears and aspirations. The news writer should identify himself with the proverbial common man who does not exist but represents the silent majority whom the journalist is duty-bound to defend and protect.

Sharp observation is the hallmark of an ace communicator, particularly in the field of journalism. It recreates reality, imparts dynamism to reporting, heightens the reading pleasure and fine-tunes readers' perception.

3.3 SUMMARY:

- News is something that interests, excites or concerns people. News not only interests but also at times excites and at times concerns because it may be a mishap or a tragedy. John B. Bogart of the New York Sun defines News thus: *When a dog bites a man, that is not news; but when a man bites a dog, that is News.*
- Joseph Pulitzer of Pulitzer Prize fame and the publisher of the New York World defined News as: *original, distinctive, dramatic, romantic, thrilling, unique, curious, quaint, humorous, odd and apt-to-be-talked about.*
- News may be broadly divided into hard news and soft news. News that has a great importance and impact on the life of a nation or people or news that has great significance or affects life of many people is termed hard news. And news that interests people but without great significance is called soft news. Every newspaper carries a mix of hard news and soft news daily.
- There are seven news determinants or attributes upon which news is judged and selected for publication. They are Impact, Unusualness, and Prominence, which form the primary criteria and conflict, proximity, timeliness and currency, which form the secondary criteria.
- Characteristics of good news writing are: Accuracy, Attribution, Balance and Fairness, Brevity, Clarity, Readability, Human interest, and Sharp observation.

3.4 KEY WORDS:

News: News is something that interests, excites or concerns people. News not only interests but also at times excites and at times concerns because it may be a mishap or a tragedy. John B. Bogart of the New York Sun defines News thus: *When a dog bites a man, that is not news; but when a man bites a dog, that is News.*

Hard News: News that has a great importance and impact on the life of a nation or people or news that has great significance or affects life of many people is termed hard news.

Soft News: News that interests people but without great significance is called soft news. Every newspaper carries a mix of hard news and soft news daily.

News Values: There are seven news determinants or attributes upon which news is judged and selected for publication. They are Impact, Unusualness, and Prominence, which form the primary criteria and conflict, proximity, timeliness and currency, which form the secondary criteria.

Impact in News: The impact a news story could create on society is a good measure for including it on the front page, and when you have two such items of equal importance, you need another criterion to decide which of the two should get precedence over the other, and the unusual comes in handy. Add to that, you have prominence, which is all about celebrities or people who matter. So your decision now is sharper in view of the three criteria at your disposal.

Characteristics of Good News Writing: Characteristics of Good News Writing are: Accuracy, Attribution, Balance and Fairness, Brevity, Clarity, Readability, Human interest, and Sharp observation.

Interview: A face-to-face or telephonic conversation between a reporter wanting information on a particular issue and a person who can give it.

Interviewee: The person from whom information is sought by a reporter through a interview.

3.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

1. Discuss the concept of news and the various attributes of news in detail.
2. Discuss the basics of news writing.
3. Discuss the basic news elements.

3.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED READING:

Reporting by Charnley

Active Reporter by James Lewis

Professional Journalist by John Hohenberg

Professional Journalism by Patanjali Sethi

Professional Journalism by M.V. Kamath

News Writing by George Hough

Bachelor of Mass Communication (3rd year)

REPORTING (Paper: I)

Block: B

Unit: II

Lesson: 4

SOURCES OF NEWS

Writer: Sh. Mahesh Kumar
Vetter: Sh. Sushil K. Singh

LESSON STRUCTURE:

This lesson shall discuss some major sources of news. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Presentation of Content
 - 4.2.1 News Sources- An Overview
 - 4.2.2 Unidentified Sources
 - 4.2.3 Source Confidentiality
- 4.3 Summary
- 4.4 Key Words
- 4.5 Self-Assessment-Questions (SAQs)
- 4.6 References/Suggested Reading

4.0 OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of this lesson are as follows:

- To Have an Overview of News Sources
- To Know About the Unidentified Sources
- To Know About Source Confidentiality

4.1 INTRODUCTION:

News at a basic level is information presented in a particular way so as to whet the curiosity of readers. So the first task of reporters is to collect information. As we have discussed in the previous lessons, there are three ways of collecting information. These are observation, interviewing, and referring to relevant documents.

Here it is important to mention that good news usually has a human touch. And perhaps a very good way of attaining this human touch is through human beings. So reporters interview people who are involved with an incident, event, or issue directly or indirectly. These involved people are the primary sources. Sometimes, the places where events and incidents take place are also primary sources. Then there are documents. From old newspapers, journals, books, official documents, Internet sites; all these form important sources of information. These are called secondary sources.

In this lesson, we shall discuss some major sources of information for news writing.

4.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

News Sources- An Overview

Unidentified Sources

Source Confidentiality

4.2.1 NEWS SOURCES- AN OVERVIEW:

In journalism, a source is a person, publication or other record or document that gives information.

Examples of sources include: official records, publications or broadcasts, officials in government or business, organizations or corporations, witnesses of crime, and most importantly involved people.

According to Shoemaker (1996) and McQuail (1994) there are a multitude of factors that tend to condition the acceptance of sources as credible by journalists. Reporters are expected to develop and cultivate sources.

This applies especially if they regularly cover a specific area or topic, known as a "beat". However, beat reporters must be cautious of becoming too close to their sources. Reporters often but not always give greater leeway to sources with little experience.

For example, sometimes a person will say they don't want to talk, and then proceed to talk. If that person is not a public figure, reporters are less likely to use that information. Journalists are also encouraged to be skeptical without being cynical.

As a basic rule, but especially when reporting on controversy, reporters are expected to use multiple sources.

4.2.2 UNIDENTIFIED SOURCES:

Most sources are not confidential. In many countries, most news organizations have policies governing the use of anonymous sources. Critics sometimes cite instances of news organizations breaking these policies. Research indicates that anonymous sourcing undermines credibility; however, in some instances, journalists may have no other recourse. Whether anonymous sources are used may depend on:

- * *Whether the information is available any other way.*
- * *If getting the information out serves a greater good.*
- * *Whether competing news outlets might do so.*

Many news organizations require use of anonymous sources to be approved by someone senior to the reporter. Some also require the reporter to tell a senior person the identity.

When a source requests anonymity, they are referred to as a "confidential source". They may appear in news stories:

- With information about why they must be confidential: "One worker, who requested anonymity out of fear of retaliation..."
- Cited with authority: "sources close to the investigation", or "a senior administration official said"

Sometimes, though rarely, sources are impersonal or unknown. Sources may engage in disguise and/or voice alteration, nicknames, aliases, or simply not mention their identity, as attempts to ensure their anonymity. In some cases, this may be due in part to lack of trust between sources and reporters or their news organizations.

In reality, few journalists will accept information from an anonymous source, though they may pretend to have done so in order to protect the source's identity, or to protect themselves in case a court later orders them to name the source.

Journalists can usually count on the support of their editors and publishers when refusing to identify a confidential source. In many countries, courts uphold the sanctity of the informal privacy agreement between a journalist and his/her sources on the basis of a right known as the protection of sources, in the belief that the confidential nature of the journalist-source relationship underpins the existence of a free press.

In some cases, courts will break the notion of reporter-source privilege, and demand a reporter reveal their source under pain of contempt of court. Often, reporters will resist such demands.

4.2.3 SOURCE CONFIDENTIALITY:

Communications between a source and a journalist can be governed by a number of terms of use. These have developed over time between journalists and their sources, often government or other high-profile sources, as informal agreements. These agreements are regarding how the information will be used, and whether the identity of the source will be protected. These terms may apply to an entire conversation, or only part. Some of the terms are not clearly defined; so experienced journalists use them with caution.

ON THE RECORD:

The phrase **on the record** is used to refer to making an audio or video recording, making a transcription, or taking minutes.

By analogy, it has also come to be used by sources to indicate that the information they are giving may be freely reported, and that they may be fully identified.

PROTECTION OF SOURCES:

The protection of sources, sometimes also referred to, as the confidentiality of sources or as the reporter's privilege, is a right accorded to journalists under the laws of many countries, as well as under international law.

Simply put, it means that the authorities, including the courts, cannot compel a journalist to reveal the identity of an anonymous source for a story. The right is based on a recognition that without a strong guarantee of anonymity, many people would be deterred from coming forward and sharing information of public interests with journalists. As a result, problems such as corruption or crime might go undetected and unchallenged, to the ultimate detriment of society as a whole.

A famous instance of the use of an anonymous source is the series of news stories and articles by Washington Post reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein that uncovered the Watergate Scandal, ultimately leading to the resignation of US President Richard Nixon. Woodward and Bernstein relied extensively on information provided by someone known to the world only under the nickname *Deep Throat*. Only in 2005 did *W. Mark Felt*, who at the time had been Associate Director of the US Federal Bureau of Investigation, reveal that he was "Deep Throat".

Woodward and Bernstein were not forced to invoke the protection of sources, since the US authorities made no attempt to uncover the identity of "Deep Throat".

USING CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION:

Off-the-record material is often valuable and reporters may be eager to use it, so sources wishing to ensure the confidentiality of certain information are generally advised to discuss the "terms of use" before actually disclosing the information, if possible. Some journalists and news organizations have policies against accepting information "off the record" because they believe it interferes with their ability to report truthfully, or because they suspect it may be intended to mislead them or the public.

Even if they cannot report certain information directly, journalists can use "off the record" information to uncover related facts, or to find other sources that are willing to speak on the record. This is especially useful in investigative reporting. Information about a surprise event or breaking news, whether on or off the record is known as a "tip-off". Information that leads to the uncovering of more interesting information is called a "lead".

The identity of anonymous sources is sometimes revealed to senior editors or a news organization's lawyers, who would be considered bound by the same confidentiality. (Lawyers are generally protected from subpoena in these cases by attorney/client privilege.) Legal staff may need to give counsel about whether it is advisable to publish certain information, or about court proceedings that may attempt to learn confidential information. Senior editors are in the loop to prevent reporters from fabricating non-existent, anonymous sources, and to provide a second opinion about how to use the information obtained, how or how not to identify sources, and whether other options should be pursued.

NOT ON TAPE:

Whether in a formal, sit-down interview setting or an impromptu meeting on the street, some sources request that all or part of the encounter not be captured in an audio or video recording ("tape"), but continue speaking to the reporter. As long as the interview is not confidential, the reporter may report the information given by the source, even repeating direct quotes (perhaps scribbled on a notepad or recalled from memory).

Some interview subjects are simply uncomfortable being recorded. Some are afraid that they will be inarticulate and make fools of themselves when the interview is broadcast.

Others might be uncooperative or distrust the motives or competence of the journalist, and wish to prevent them from being able to broadcast an unflattering sound bite or part of the interview out of context. Professional public relations officers know that having the reporter repeat their words, rather than being on the air themselves, will blunt the impact of their words.

The audience need not see or hear them being uncomfortable (if they have unpleasant news), and not being on air also allows them to be anonymous or identified only by title.

ATTRIBUTION:

In journalism Attribution is the identification of the source of reported information. Journalists' ethical codes normally address the issue of attribution, which is sensitive because in the course of their work journalists may receive information from sources who wish to remain anonymous.

In investigative journalism important news stories often depend on such information. For example, the Watergate scandal that led to the downfall of U.S. President Richard Nixon was in part exposed by information revealed by an anonymous source ("Deep Throat") to investigative reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein.

NOT FOR ATTRIBUTION:

This simply means that the information given can be used but the source must not be identified. Individuals can be quoted and depending on the source, their general occupation can be named. For instance, someone may be named as a "senior Justice Department official" or a "spokesman" without the speaker's name.

ETHICS:

Journalists do not like divulging the identity of a confidential source. In some countries, journalists can be compelled by law to identify their sources, and journalists can and have been jailed for upholding this principle.

There are several reasons to protect confidential sources:

- In some cases serious harm might befall the source if their identity is uncovered.
- The willingness of other potential sources to share information with reporters may be eroded if confidential sources are identified.
- The public perception of journalistic integrity is damaged when assurances about confidentiality are breached.

- The so-called "chilling effect," which serves to dissuade sources in the future from stepping forward with unknown information for fear of reprimand or retaliation.

There are several categories of agreements concerning source identification that cover information conveyed in conversations with journalists. The following conventions are generally accepted:

- "On-the-record": all that is said can be quoted and attributed.
- "Unattributable": what is said can be reported but not attributed.
- "Off-the-record": the information is provided to inform a decision or provide a confidential explanation, not for publication.

4.3 SUMMARY:

- In journalism, a source is a person, publication or other record or document that gives information. Examples of sources include: official records, publications or broadcasts, officials in government or business, organizations or corporations, witnesses of crime, and most importantly involved people.
- Most sources are not confidential. In many countries, most news organizations have policies governing the use of anonymous sources. Whether anonymous sources are used may depend on: Whether the information is available any other way, If getting the information out serves a greater good, and Whether competing news outlets might do so.
- When a source requests anonymity, they are referred to as a "confidential source". They may appear in news stories: With information about why they must be confidential: "One worker, who requested anonymity out of fear of retaliation...", and Cited with authority: "sources close to the investigation", or "a senior administration official said".
- The phrase **on the record** is used to refer to making an audio or video recording, making a transcription, or taking minutes.
- The protection of sources, sometimes also referred to, as the confidentiality of sources or as the reporter's privilege, is a right accorded to journalists under the laws of many countries, as well as under international law. Simply put, it means that the authorities, including the courts, cannot compel a journalist to reveal the identity of an anonymous source for a story. A famous instance of the use of an anonymous source is the series of news stories and articles by Washington Post reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein that uncovered the Watergate Scandal, ultimately leading to the resignation of US President Richard Nixon. Woodward and Bernstein relied extensively on information provided by someone known to

the world only under the nickname *Deep Throat*. Only in 2005 did *W. Mark Felt*, who at the time had been Associate Director of the US Federal Bureau of Investigation, reveal that he was "Deep Throat".

- Off-the-record material is often valuable and reporters may be eager to use it, so sources wishing to ensure the confidentiality of certain information are generally advised to discuss the "terms of use" before actually disclosing the information, if possible. Some journalists and news organizations have policies against accepting information "off the record" because they believe it interferes with their ability to report truthfully, or because they suspect it may be intended to mislead them or the public.
- Whether in a formal, sit-down interview setting or an impromptu meeting on the street, some sources request that all or part of the encounter not be captured in an audio or video recording ("tape"), but continue speaking to the reporter. As long as the interview is not confidential, the reporter may report the information given by the source, even repeating direct quotes (perhaps scribbled on a notepad or recalled from memory).
- In journalism Attribution is the identification of the source of reported information. Journalists' ethical codes normally address the issue of attribution, which is sensitive because in the course of their work journalists may receive information from sources who wish to remain anonymous.
- In investigative journalism important news stories often depend on such information. For example, the Watergate scandal that led to the downfall of U.S. President Richard Nixon was in part exposed by information revealed by an anonymous source ("Deep Throat") to investigative reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein.

4.4 KEY WORDS:

News Sources: In journalism, a source is a person, publication or other record or document that gives information. Examples of sources include: official records, publications or broadcasts, officials in government or business, organizations or corporations, witnesses of crime, and most importantly involved people.

Source Confidentiality: Most sources are not confidential. In many countries, most news organizations have policies governing the use of anonymous sources. Whether anonymous sources are used may depend on: *Whether the information is available any other way, If getting the information out serves a greater good, and Whether competing news outlets might do so.*

On the record: The phrase **on the record** is used to refer to making an audio or video recording, making a transcription, or taking minutes.

Protection of sources: The protection of sources, sometimes also referred to, as the confidentiality of sources or as the reporter's privilege, is a right accorded to journalists under the laws of many countries, as well as under international law. Simply put, it means that the authorities, including the courts, cannot compel a journalist to reveal the identity of an anonymous source for a story. A famous instance of the use of an anonymous source is the series of news stories and articles by Washington Post reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein that uncovered the Watergate Scandal, ultimately leading to the resignation of US President Richard Nixon. Woodward and Bernstein relied extensively on information provided by someone known to the world only under the nickname *Deep Throat*. Only in 2005 did *W. Mark Felt*, who at the time had been Associate Director of the US Federal Bureau of Investigation, reveal that he was "Deep Throat".

Using confidential information: Off-the-record material is often valuable and reporters may be eager to use it, so sources wishing to ensure the confidentiality of certain information are generally advised to discuss the "terms of use" before actually disclosing the information, if possible. Some journalists and news organizations have policies against accepting information "off the record" because they believe it interferes with their ability to report truthfully, or because they suspect it may be intended to mislead them or the public.

Not on tape: Whether in a formal, sit-down interview setting or an impromptu meeting on the street, some sources request that all or part of the encounter not be captured in an audio or video recording ("tape"), but continue speaking to the reporter. As long as the interview is not confidential, the reporter may report the information given by the source, even repeating direct quotes (perhaps scribbled on a notepad or recalled from memory).

Attribution: In journalism Attribution is the identification of the source of reported information. Journalists' ethical codes normally address the issue of attribution, which is sensitive because in the course of their work journalists may receive information from sources who wish to remain anonymous.

In investigative journalism important news stories often depend on such information. For example, the Watergate scandal that led to the downfall of U.S. President Richard Nixon was in part exposed by information revealed by an anonymous source ("Deep Throat") to investigative reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein.

Ethics in Source Confidentiality: Journalists do not like divulging the identity of a confidential source. In some countries, journalists can be compelled by law to identify their sources, and journalists can and have been jailed for upholding this principle.

4.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

5. What are the major news sources? Discuss with suitable examples.
6. Discuss some major news sources.
7. Write a short note on the confidentiality of news sources.
8. Throw some light on the protection of news sources.

4.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED READING:

Reporting by Charnley

Active Reporter by James Lewis

Professional Journalist by John Hohenberg

Professional Journalism by Patanjali Sethi

Professional Journalism by M.V. Kamath

News Writing by George Hough

Advanced Journalism by A.K.Varma

QUALITIES OF REPORTERS

Writer: Sh. Mahesh Kumar
Vetter: Sh. Sushil K. Singh

LESSON STRUCTURE:

A talented reporter writes to build his own image and that of his institution. An alert mind and a sense of curiosity are important assets to him, no matter what is his beat. Besides these qualities, he must develop certain specific qualities to excel in his field.

This lesson shall discuss some major qualities of reporters. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Presentation of Content
 - 5.2.1 Nose for News
 - 5.2.2 Interpersonal Skills
 - 5.2.3 Developing Contacts
 - 5.2.4 Being Objective and Fair
 - 5.2.5 Clarity of Expression
 - 5.2.6 Team Spirit
 - 5.2.7 Coping with Pressures
 - 5.2.8 Other Qualities of Reporters
- 5.3 Summary
- 5.4 Key Words
- 5.5 Self-Assessment-Questions (SAQs)
- 5.6 References/Suggested Reading

5.0 OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of this lesson are as follows:

- To Know About Nose for News
- To Know About Interpersonal Skills
- To Know About Developing Contacts
- To Know About Being Objective and Fair
- To Know About Clarity of Expression
- To Know About Team Spirit
- To Know About Coping with Pressures
- To Know About Other Qualities of Reporters

5.1 INTRODUCTION:

A journalist must possess certain basic qualities to be a successful professional. Integrity of character, commitment to the truth and the reasoning power are quintessential to building credibility. A good perception and interpersonal skills to elicit news would stand him in good stead in reporting.

A well-read reporter can do justice to his beat. He needs to know all aspects of his beat-laws and byelaws, functions and areas of operations and jurisdiction and so on. He should cultivate contacts in and out of his beat to get information. A perfect talker, he should be able to handle difficult people and difficult situations. A competent reporter anticipates news rather than be taken by surprise. This ability is of great importance to face situations that arise suddenly.

Primarily, a reporter has a 3-fold responsibility: responsibility to society, responsibility to the newspaper/news organization and responsibility to his source of information. We shall discuss about the qualities of reporters in this lesson. We shall discuss the responsibilities of reporters in the next lesson.

5.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

Reporters basically play the role of watchdog. To be the eyes and ears of the people, the reporter must be committed to the society; he must use the power of the pen for the well being of the society and resist the temptation to destroy. Nevertheless, he is neither a social worker nor a morality preacher.

More important than social and moral issues, a reporter has to do a job. This involves many roles and many responsibilities. To do the job well, a reporter has to have certain qualities. We shall discuss about these qualities in this lesson. The content of this lesson shall

be presented as follows:

- *Nose for News*
- *Interpersonal Skills*
- *Developing Contacts*
- *Be Objective and Fair*
- *Clarity of Expression*
- *Team Spirit*
- *Coping with Pressures*
- *Other Qualities of Reporters*

5.2.1 NOSE FOR NEWS:

A reporter's primary job is discovering the new. But quite often, most of the material before a news reporter may just be publicity matter or advertisements in disguise. Therefore, a reporter must check his material and swift the news from publicity.

The golden rule in reporting is to go by the reader's interest. Most of the time, a reporter will be covering routine matters like press conferences, which are hardly exciting. And the beginner would learn his craft by doing city reporting in the beginning before graduating into highly specialized reporting.

Reporting speeches of politicians could be less challenging but the keen-eyed reporter looks for something unusual that may be lurking under the ordinary occurrence. His sharp sense of observation may help him gather amusing sidelights of interest to his readers and report an exciting news story.

5.2.2 INTERPERSONAL SKILLS:

It is generally observed that introverts make poor reporters. Reporters move about meeting people, making and winning confidence. In this era of investigative reporting, readers are keenly interested to know what is going on behind the scenes.

5.2.3 DEVELOPING CONTACTS:

A friendly and affable nature helps develop sources that could provide precious information, clues, or other material for the reporter in search of a story. The ability to win the confidence and respect of the potential sources is an asset of the newsman.

People may hesitate to talk on sensitive matters, especially to a reporter on the investigative track. They may like to reveal but they are afraid of the consequences. There could be informers of the underworld. What may be at stake for them could be their jobs or their lives.

Often it may be quite difficult to win their trust, and the reporter has to assure his sources that they will remain protected and their identities kept a secret.

Beware of vested interests - be it political, business or professional -who would like to plant a story of half-truths or even lies. Crosscheck with other sources and establish the truth before you file the story, which may deceptively appear to be the greatest story of your career. The story could turn out to be your greatest career disaster.

Do not slight or show in bad light insignificant or ordinary people because a humble clerk or a lowly peon could give you a tip for a story.

The Watergate scandal was exposed by two cub reporters acting upon the lead given by an ordinary source.

The Harshad Mehta case began with a source contacting Ms. Sucheta Dalal of The Times of India, Bombay, with an unconfirmed report about some activities in the State Bank of India. Ms. Dalal, Assistant Business Editor of the paper, followed the lead provided by the source and got the story confirmed from reliable contacts bringing to light the stock scam concerning stock broker Harshad Mehta and others involving a staggering Rs. 6000 crore.

5.2.4 DEVELOPING CONTACTS:

The reporter must be a sharp observer of events, presenting the facts in a balanced and objective manner. How does one maintain balance and objectivity in reporting? The first thing to do is to write the news story properly to assure the reader that what he reads is news not the reporter's opinion or some publicity matter in disguise.

The sources must be quoted except when they want to remain anonymous. And ensure that the story is balanced, by giving adequate coverage to all the sides of the sides of the subject. Also ensure that the information one presents is true by counter checking.

Do not adopt an indifferent attitude seeing each event afresh, unconnected to any previous events or expectations or future possibilities.

5.2.5 CLARITY OF EXPRESSION:

Clarity of thinking leads to clarity in writing, and however complex and specialized the subject; the reporter should have the gift for simplification, reducing it to the layman's parlance. Explain difficult terminology and simplify government press notes, notorious for burying the new points.

5.2.6 TEAM SPIRIT:

News-breaking stories of dramatic dimension, sometimes, call for a team of reporters to handle them. The Bofors investigative stories had The Indian Express team working from Geneva and Stockholm besides New Delhi. The securities scam investigations by The Times of India involved Sucheta Dalal and Business correspondent, R Srinivasan who posed as an investor and went to the State Bank officers in Bombay to get confirmation about the goings on in the bank. The Statesman investigative stories are attributed to 'The Statesman Insight Team'.

Working in a team involves pooling you talents, sources and contacts to achieve synergy.

5.2.7 CLARITY OF EXPRESSION:

Investigative journalists thrive on exposing the bungling and misdeeds of men in power. On the other hand, men in power thrive on publicity and good press. Corrupt men at the top shudder at investigative journalists and hence try to put pressure to change the news or "kill the story".

While the government and advertisers could indirectly pressurize you through your news organization, direct pressure could also come from the government and political parties. In case you are doing stories, which could lead to harmful exposure of someone, he could take recourse to a range of legal and illegal options, including legal action, threats and violence to pressurize you.

There are three ways of coping with pressure:

- * Fighting it,
- * Giving in, and
- * Anticipating the pressure and taking preventive measures.

The first one is the most noble of the three options and history is full of shining examples of this category.

During the Quit India Movement Gandhiji said, "It is better not to issue newspapers than to issue them under a feeling of suppression." Because a newspaper is a business as well as a public-service employing thousands of people, you cannot expect to become a hero throwing

thousands unemployed and ruining a business. You cannot fight on your own and if your news organization does not back you, the consequences could be disastrous for you as a professional journalist.

The reporters who generally brave powerful pressures are those who have the full support of their organizations or their professional colleagues backing them in a united manner. It may be recalled that the journalists of the Punjab Kesari group of newspapers who have taken a courageous anti-terrorist stand in Punjab worked under extremely tight security. The group has lost two of its owners to terrorist bullets but has not given in to pressures.

5.2.8 OTHER QUALITIES OF A REPORTER:

Some of the essential qualities of a good reporter are:

Fairness: The newsmen's fairness is the credibility of the newspaper, the absence of which will affect its circulation.

Quick Grasp: The mental faculty to size up the situation as events unfold and the ability to find the right words to express it is a must.

Judgment: The ability to take quick and right decisions.

Calmness: Never be excited or perturbed when major stories break. Your calm nerves are important in objectively assessing the news and according it the priority it deserves. Remember, you are dealing with history in the making of which assassinations; collapse of governments, natural calamities and the triumph and tragedies of people play a part.

Positive Skepticism: While the gullible accept anything at the face value, experienced reporters cultivate a healthy skepticism to spot the source of potential errors.

5.3 SUMMARY:

- The reporters basically are the eyes and ears of the society. To play this role, the reporters must be committed to the society; he must use the power of the pen for the well being of the society. More important than social and moral issues, a reporter has to do a job. This involves many roles and many responsibilities. To do the job well, a reporter has to have certain qualities.
- A reporter's primary job is discovering the new. The ability to find news is called nose for news. But quite often, most of the material before a news reporter may just be publicity matter or advertisements in disguise. Therefore, a reporter must check his material and swift the news from publicity.

- A friendly and affable nature helps develop sources that could provide precious information, clues, or other material for the reporter in search of a story. The ability to win the confidence and respect of the potential sources is an asset of the newsman. Often it may be quite difficult to win their trust, and the reporter has to assure his sources that they will remain protected and their identities kept a secret.
- The reporter must be a sharp observer of events, presenting the facts in a balanced and objective manner. How does one maintain balance and objectivity in reporting? The first thing to do is to write the news story properly to assure the reader that what he reads is news not the reporter's opinion or some publicity matter in disguise.
- Clarity of thinking leads to clarity in writing, and however complex and specialized the subject; the reporter should have the gift for simplification, reducing it to the layman's parlance. Explain difficult terminology and simplify government press notes, notorious for burying the new points.
- News-breaking stories of dramatic dimension, sometimes, call for a team of reporters to handle them. Working in a team involves pooling you talents, sources and contacts to achieve synergy.
- Investigative journalists thrive on exposing the bungling and misdeeds of men in power. While the government and advertisers could indirectly pressurize you through your news organization, direct pressure could also come from the government and political parties. There are three ways of coping with pressure: Fighting it, Giving in, and Anticipating the pressure and taking preventive measures. The first one is the most noble of the three options and history is full of shining examples of this category.
- Some of the essential qualities of a good reporter are: Calmness, Judgment, Fairness, and Quick Grasp.

5.4 KEY WORDS:

Nose for News: A reporter's primary job is discovering the new. The ability to find news is called nose for news. But quite often, most of the material before a news reporter may just be publicity matter or advertisements in disguise. Therefore, a reporter must check his material and swift the news from publicity.

Interpersonal Skills: It is generally observed that introverts make poor reporters. Reporters move about meeting people, making and winning confidence. In this era of investigative reporting, readers are keenly interested to know what is going on behind the scenes. This

requires good interpersonal skills.

Developing Contacts: A friendly and affable nature helps develop sources that could provide precious information, clues, or other material for the reporter in search of a story. The ability to win the confidence and respect of the potential sources is an asset of the newsman. Often it may be quite difficult to win their trust, and the reporter has to assure his sources that they will remain protected and their identities kept a secret.

Objectivity and Fairness: The reporter must be a sharp observer of events, presenting the facts in a balanced and objective manner. How does one maintain balance and objectivity in reporting? The first thing to do is to write the news story properly to assure the reader that what he reads is news not the reporter's opinion or some publicity matter in disguise.

Clarity of Expression: Clarity of thinking leads to clarity in writing, and however complex and specialized the subject; the reporter should have the gift for simplification, reducing it to the layman's parlance. Explain difficult terminology and simplify government press notes, notorious for burying the new points.

Team Spirit: News-breaking stories of dramatic dimension, sometimes, call for a team of reporters to handle them. Working in a team involves pooling you talents, sources and contacts to achieve synergy.

5.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

1. Write in detail about the responsibilities of a reporter.
2. Discuss the major qualities of a good reporter.

5.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED READING:

Reporting by Charnley

Active Reporter by James Lewis

Professional Journalist by John Hohenberg

Professional Journalism by Patanjali Sethi

Professional Journalism by M.V. Kamath

News Writing by George Hough

Bachelor of Mass Communication (3rd year)

REPORTING (Paper: I)

Block: C

Unit: II

Lesson: 6

RESPONSIBILITIES OF REPORTERS

Writer: Sh. Mahesh Kumar

Vetter: Sh. Sushil K. Singh

LESSON STRUCTURE:

This lesson shall discuss about the responsibilities of reporters. We shall also discuss about reporters, correspondents, and stringers. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Presentation of Content
 - 6.2.1 Responsibility of Reporters
 - 6.2.2 Stringers
 - 6.2.3 Correspondent
- 6.3 Summary
- 6.4 Key Words
- 6.5 Self-Assessment-Questions (SAQs)
- 6.6 References/Suggested Reading

6.0 OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of this lesson are as follows:

- To Know About the Responsibility of Reporters
- To Know About Stringers
- To Know About Correspondents

6.1 INTRODUCTION:

Reporters play an important role in the society. They inform us about the happenings around the country and the world. They also help build public opinion through their news stories. Thus they have important responsibilities.

In this lesson, we shall discuss about the responsibilities of reporters. We shall discuss briefly about correspondents and stringers.

6.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- *Responsibility of Reporters*
- *Stringers*
- *Correspondent*

6.2.1 RESPONSIBILITIES OF REPORTERS:

Reporters have the following responsibilities:

RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS THE NEWS ORGANIZATION:

A reporter has to conform to the character, style and policy of the newspaper or magazine or news agency he is working for. Conservative papers shy away from investigation of scandals and when working for such a paper, you have to stick to its policy even if that cramps your style. But in a news organization with more dynamic approach to news, you must develop the skills of an investigator.

Whatever you do as a reporter will affect the newspaper and its reputation. So, you must take pains to ensure accuracy and objectivity in your stories.

RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS THE SOURCES:

Your credibility with your sources is a matter of vital importance to your career. If they so desire, you must keep their identity a secret. There have been cases in the West where reporters have defied court order and gone to jail rather than reveal the sources. Nevertheless, the responsibility of protecting the sources need not be considered absolute.

RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS THE READER AND SOCIETY:

“Good faith with the reader is the foundation of all good journalism worthy of the name”, says the code of ethics of the American Society of Newspapers Editors. As a news reporter, you have duty to provide accurate, unbiased and objective information to the reader.

However, publicity seekers and private businesses organize press conferences and conduct tours with attractive gifts and incentives. Private firms seek publicity since news carries greater credibility than advertisements. The two areas that need careful handling by the reporter are corporate news and communal news. With the proliferation of big companies and multinationals, their activities form a major subject of public interest.

On the one hand, the reporter risks becoming a publicity agent for corporate houses and on the other, he risks people's investments and reputations. Utmost care must be taken since everything he writes could have its repercussions in the society.

When reporting in a communally sensitive country like India, with linguistic and social diversities, care must be taken not to favour communities or groups nor offend them. Reputed newspapers while reporting Ayodhya controversy, referred to it as the "Disputed site" or as the "controversial structure", or simply as the "Ramjanambhoomi-Babri Masjid site".

Extremely careful reporting was done on Punjab and Kashmir problems too without aggravating communal tensions.

6.2.2 STRINGERS:

In journalism, a stringer is a freelance journalist, who is paid for each piece of published or broadcast work, rather than receiving a regular salary. They are heavily relied upon by most television news organizations. They mostly specialize in breaking news. In American newspapers the word carries a connotation of no-nonsense professionalism as compared to "freelancer," a term more likely to be used by newcomers to the business.

The etymology of the word is uncertain. Newspapers once paid stringers per inch of printed text they generated, and one theory says the length of this text was measured against a string. More likely is the theory given in the Oxford English Dictionary: that a stringer is a person who strings words together.

6.2.3 CORRESPONDENTS:

A correspondent or on-the-scene reporter is a journalist or commentator who contributes reports to a newspaper, or radio or television news, from a remote, often distant, location. A foreign correspondent is in a foreign country. The term correspondent refers to the original practice of filing news reports via postal letter.

REPORTER VS. CORRESPONDENT:

A correspondent generally interjects some of his/her own opinions into the reported news. A reporter on the other hand in general considered to be impartial, i.e. only reports and nothing more. The term and spirit of the reporter is found more in British news, such as the BBC. While the correspondent is more of an American term, used in media outlets such as NBC or Fox News.

In Britain the term 'correspondent' usually refers to someone with a specific specialist area, such as health correspondent. A 'reporter' is usually someone without such expertise who is allocated stories by the newsdesk on any story in the news.

WAR CORRESPONDENT:

A war correspondent covers stories first-hand from a war zone. It is perhaps the most dangerous form of journalism.

6.3 SUMMARY:

- A reporter has to conform to the character, style and policy of the newspaper or magazine or news agency he is working for. Conservative papers shy away from investigation of scandals and when working for such a paper, you have to stick to its policy even if that cramps your style. But in a news organization with more dynamic approach to news, you must develop the skills of an investigator.
- Your credibility with your sources is a matter of vital importance to your career. If they so desire, you must keep their identity a secret. There have been cases in the West where reporters have defied court order and gone to jail rather than reveal the sources. Nevertheless, the responsibility of protecting the sources need not be considered absolute.
- "Good faith with the reader is the foundation of all good journalism worthy of the name", says the code of ethics of the American Society of Newspapers Editors. As a news reporter, you have duty to provide accurate, unbiased and objective information to the reader.
- In journalism, a stringer is a freelance journalist, who is paid for each piece of published or broadcast work, rather than receiving a regular salary. They are heavily relied upon by most television news organizations. They mostly specialize in breaking news. In American newspapers the word carries a connotation of no-nonsense professionalism as compared to "freelancer," a term more likely to be used by newcomers to the business.
- A correspondent or on-the-scene reporter is a journalist or commentator who contributes reports to a newspaper, or radio or television news, from a remote, often distant, location. A foreign correspondent is in a foreign country. The term correspondent refers to the original practice of filing news reports via postal letter.
- A war correspondent covers stories first-hand from a war zone. It is perhaps the most dangerous form of journalism.

6.4 KEY WORDS:

Responsibility towards the News Organization: A reporter has to conform to the character, style and policy of the newspaper or magazine or news agency he is working for. Conservative papers shy away from investigation of scandals and when working for such a paper, you have to stick to its policy even if that cramps your style. But in a news organization with more dynamic approach to news, you must develop the skills of an investigator.

Responsibility towards the Sources: Your credibility with your sources is a matter of vital importance to your career. If they so desire, you must keep their identity a secret. There have been cases in the West where reporters have defied court order and gone to jail rather than reveal the sources. Nevertheless, the responsibility of protecting the sources need not be considered absolute.

Responsibility Towards the Reader and Society: "Good faith with the reader is the foundation of all good journalism worthy of the name", says the code of ethics of the American Society of Newspapers Editors. As a news reporter, you have duty to provide accurate, unbiased and objective information to the reader.

Stringers: In journalism, a stringer is a freelance journalist, who is paid for each piece of published or broadcast work, rather than receiving a regular salary. They are heavily relied upon by most television news organizations. They mostly specialize in breaking news. In American newspapers the word carries a connotation of no-nonsense professionalism as compared to "freelancer," a term more likely to be used by newcomers to the business.

Correspondent: A correspondent or on-the-scene reporter is a journalist or commentator who contributes reports to a newspaper, or radio or television news, from a remote, often distant, location. A foreign correspondent is in a foreign country. The term correspondent refers to the original practice of filing news reports via postal letter.

War correspondent: A war correspondent covers stories first-hand from a war zone. It is perhaps the most dangerous form of journalism.

6.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

9. What is reporting? Discuss with suitable examples.
10. Discuss some major reporting practices.
11. Write a short note on the working conditions of reporters.
12. Throw some light on the codes of ethics for reporting.

6.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED READING:

Reporting by Charnley

Active Reporter by James Lewis

Professional Journalist by John Hohenberg

Professional Journalism by Patanjali Sethi

Professional Journalism by M.V. Kamath

News Writing by George Hough

Advanced Journalism by A.K.Varma

REPORTING EVENTS

(CRIME, SPORTS, POLITICAL, BUSINESS, ETC)

Writer: Sh. Mahesh Kumar

Vetter: Sh. Sushil K. Singh

LESSON STRUCTURE:

This lesson shall discuss about reporters, correspondents, and stringers. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Presentation of Content
 - 7.2.1 Reporting Crime
 - 7.2.2 Reporting Courts
 - 7.2.3 Political Reporting
 - 7.2.4 Business & Commerce Reporting
 - 7.2.5 Sports Reporting
- 7.3 Summary
- 7.4 Key Words
- 7.5 Self-Assessment-Questions (SAQs)
- 7.6 References/Suggested Reading

7.0 OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of this lesson are as follows:

- To Know About Crime Reporting
- To Know About Court Reporting
- To Know About Political Reporting
- To Know About Business & Commerce Reporting

- To Know About Sports Reporting

7.1 INTRODUCTION:

On the basis of subjects covered reporting can be classified as follows: Crime reporting, Court reporting, Political reporting, Business and Commerce reporting, Sports reporting. The other types of reporting are Parliamentary reporting, Development reporting, and Science and Technology reporting, etc.

We shall discuss about all the above-mentioned types of reporting in this lesson.

7.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- *Reporting Crime*
- *Reporting Courts*
- *Political Reporting*
- *Business & Commerce Reporting*
- *Sports Reporting*

7.2.1 CRIME AND ACCIDENTS REPORTING:

Crime reporting is an important beat in all the major and medium-size newspapers. There is enormous public interest in crime stories and no newspaper can afford to ignore them without damaging its circulation and credibility.

Crime reporting is a highly responsible and specialized job, involving the shifting of the grain of truth from the chaff of rumours and mis-information.

Contacts with the top brass in the police and administrative machinery as well as a working knowledge of the penal codes, law on libel, etc., are necessary to be successful in this beat.

This crime reporter must never resort to gimmicks to catch the reader's attention. Nor should he suppress news of public interest to oblige people higher-up in the police or the powers that be.

Seeking to settle personal scores with anyone is lowering the dignity of the profession. And so is the intrusion into the privacy of a citizen.

Baseless allegations reported through news columns can damage the victim's reputation or that of his/her family members or community. Fictitious reports of gang rape and 'waylaid on national highway' have appeared in newspapers once considered reputed, which is a sad commentary of Indian journalism.

There are several types of crimes - murders, robberies, burglaries, fraud, blackmail, kidnapping, rape, etc. - which are manometers of law and order and good governance of a society.

The reporter must get his facts correct about the essential elements of a fire story - the number of persons killed or injured, the extent of damage to property the loss of valuables, etc. He is also duty-bound to find out if the fire brigade responded in time or was guilty of delaying the fire-fighting operations through sheer lethargy or incompetence or a lack of water supply. But he must rely on eyewitnesses to reconstruct the story in case he is not present there.

The names of the dead and the injured and the cause of the fire are substance of the fire mishap story.

Major murders warrant that the reporter rushes to the scene and gather all the relevant facts. Unfortunately, the police are our 'crime reporters' and the journalists merely reproduce the police version, which need not always be true.

A professional journalist worth the name covers the story from different angles talking to the victim's relatives, neighbours, and leading citizens of the neighbourhood who can give an insight into the murder mystery. His story could never be biased and he uses his own investigative techniques to bring out the truth even when the police version is contrary to it. His basic duty is to establish the cause of the death.

Most minor accidents are reported on the basis of police bulletins or information supplied by police spokesman. However, for major accidents like air, rail or bus mishap, or a drowning tragedy, the reporter rush to the scene and gathers the facts himself to give authenticity to his story. Accidents and natural disasters qualify themselves to the epithet, 'News Nobody Likes'.

7.2.2 LEGAL REPORTING:

The dramatic success of the public interest litigations has captured media attention, and judiciary today gets better coverage than ever before. Even so, it is the Supreme Court, the High Courts and Criminal Courts that get media attention while Civil Courts are seldom covered. One reason for it is they are slow-moving with thousands of cases pending for several years.

Only the largest newspapers have full time correspondents covering legal proceedings, while the medium-size newspapers hire part-time correspondents or stringers who may be professional advocates. A trainee journalist aiming to be a future Court Reporter must at first acquire some understanding of the court jurisdiction, its procedures and its hierarchy.

Much of the reporter's success depends on his contacts and sources and his ability to gain quick access to records. For a reporter the key person in a court is the clerk who keeps the records.

Court reporting involves diligent checking of records. It is a mistaken idea that the judge who presides a trial could be a source. Nevertheless, the reporter should introduce himself to the judge. He should also have good contacts with the lawyers working on either side of the case. For a case that attracts much public attention reporters may be under pressure from rival lawyers for a more favourable coverage. But fairness is what good reporting is all about.

When assigned to cover a major trial, the first thing a reporter should make sure of is a seat in the courtroom and adequate communication links with his/her newspaper or media office. For mid-day tabloids the stories may have to be filed even while the court proceedings are on.

If a reporter misses part of the proceedings, he/she can always approach the court stenographer. To make the report lively, the reporter must quote the major questions, answers, comments and remarks during the court's sittings.

CONTEMPT OF COURT:

The reporter must scrupulously avoid any Contempt of Court in his reporting. This offence is defined and amplified in the Contempt of Court Act, 1971. Contempt may be civil or criminal offence.

Civil Contempt means willful disobedience to any judgement, decree, direction, order or other process of a court, or willful breach of an undertaking given by a person to a court. There will be no civil contempt where there is ignorance of the order of a court leading to unintentional breach.

Criminal contempt mainly means publication of any matter or the doing of any other act, which:

- (i) Scandalizes or lowers authority of any court; or
- (ii) Prejudices or interferes with the due course of judicial proceedings.

SCANDALIZING THE COURT:

The publication of matter, which creates doubts about the ability, or fairness of a judge of a court is prohibited. A newspaper should not impute improper motives to a judge. In the famous case of Daphtary vs. Gupta (1971) the Supreme Court decided that to express an opinion that a judge “toes the line” of another judge is contempt. So is the expression that a judge pronounces his judgement under the influence of liquor or lure of wealth.

Casting defamatory allegations against a judge or judges, with or without reference to particular cases, is contempt because it creates distrust in the people's mind and shatters confidence of the general public in the judiciary.

However, it should be made clear that the Contempt of Court Act, 1971, is basically designed to protect the judiciary from unwarranted allegations, and not to safeguard corrupt judges.

JOURNALISTIC DEFENSE:

According to Sec. 5 of the Contempt of Court Act, 1971, a person shall not be guilty of contempt of court for publishing any “fair comment” on the merits of any case, which has been “heard and finally decided”. What then is “fair comment” and what is meant by “heard and finally decided?”

Fair Comment: This depends on the facts and circumstances of each case. To comment on the correctness of a judicial decision, whether on law or facts, is not contempt. Similarly, to point out inequality of sentences in two different cases of the same nature, is also not contempt.

However, while commenting on the merits of a case if improper motives are imputed to the judge, then the comment ceases to be fair. Similarly, to express that the judgement was arbitrary or the judge was incompetent is also contempt.

Heard and Finally Decided: A fair comment on the merits of a case can be made when it is heard and finally decided. A case cannot be said to have been finally decided until the period of limitation for filing appeal has expired. Where an appeal or revision has been filed the comments on the case should not be published until the appeal is finally decided.

Ignorance of Pendency: If a court story interferes with the course of justice, but its reporter has no reasonable ground to assume that the proceedings were pending, then one will not be guilty

of contempt of court. Prior to the enactment of Contempt of Court Act, 1971, ignorance of pendency was not a defense or excuse.

Fair and Accurate Report:

According to Section 4 of the Contempt of Court Act, 1971, fair and accurate report of the court proceedings is lawful. However, a report will be contemptuous if it has been prohibited by the court or is forbidden by any law.

Truth is No Defense: In *Perspective Publications vs State of Maharashtra* case (1971), the Supreme Court has held that though truthfulness of a statement is a good defence in an action for libel, it is no defence when it comes to Contempt of Court.

Academic Writings: Academic writings or a report written academically on a point of law is not a Contempt of Court; just on the ground that the law discussed is at issue in a court.

PUNISHMENTS:

The maximum punishment for Contempt of Court is simple imprisonment of six months, or fine of two thousand rupees or both. If the accused apologizes, the court without punishment may discharge the person. It is for the court to decide whether the apology is acceptable.

Generally, an apology, to be acceptable by the court, should be sincere, unconditional and without delay. An apology should be made in a manner that substantially wipes out the mischief.

OTHER STATUTES:

Apart from the Contempt of Court Act, 1971, there are some other statutes, which prohibit publication of court proceedings, or any part thereof. For example:

- i) Section 228-A of the Indian Penal Code prohibits publications of names of victims of certain sexual crimes. The section also prohibits any other matter by which the identity of the victim could be known to the reader. Section 228-A was inserted in the IPC by an amendment made in 1983.
- ii) Section 33 of the Special Marriage Act, 1954 requires that the proceedings under the Act should be held in camera if either party to the case wishes so, or if the court so directs.

- iii) Similarly Section 22 (1) of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, requires that the proceedings under the Act should be held in camera if either party to the suit wishes so, or of the court thinks fit to do so. Section 22 (2) of the Act prescribes punishment to be imposed on the person who prints or publishes proceedings without previous permission of the court.
- iv) In the interest of the security of the State, Section 14 of the Official Secrets Act, 1923, empowers the court to hold the proceedings of a case or any part thereof in camera.
- v) Under the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969, the commission may hear a case or any part thereof in camera.

LEGAL TERMS:

Some basic knowledge of the most frequently used legal terms is a must. The following are legal terms often used in news reports.

Adjournment Application: Request for more time for finding witnesses or important evidence or for other reasons.

Attachment Order: The court's authorization to take and hold a person's property.

Bail Bond: A security amount usually furnished to guarantee the appearance of an accused person in the court.

Change of Venue: Change of the place of trial.

Certorari: Writ from superior to inferior court requiring the records to be sent to the former for review.

Commutation: Reduction of sentence

Concurrent Sentence: Court's decision that a convicted person serves only the longest of several jail terms imposed on him.

Contempt of Court: An offence against the court, punishable by a fine, or imprisonment or both.

Consent Decree: Court order to which the defendant has consented.

Decree Nisi: Final judgement to take effect some time in the future.

Double Jeopardy: Plea that the defendant has already been tried for the same offence.

Extradition: Process of returning a prisoner from one country to another.

Habeas Corpus: Judicial procedure requiring production of a detained person in court to inquire into the legality of the detention.

Mandamus: Court's command to an inferior court, or ordering a person to perform a public or statutory duty.

Pardon: Action of executive relieving a criminal from sentence.

Parole: Release on promise of reappearance at regular intervals.

Plaintiff: Party who initiates litigation.

Reprieve: Delay in execution of a sentence.

Proceedings held in Camera: Proceedings held privately, i.e. not in public.

Respondent: Party against whom an appeal has been taken.

Proceedings Suo Moto: Proceedings launched by the court on its own.

Journalist practice demands that each technical (legal) term be briefly explained when used in a story for the first time. A legal term, not explained in the story, confuses the reader. Remember, English is the language of the higher courts in India. So, a good command of the language is expected of a legal reporter.

7.2.3 POLITICAL REPORTING:

An astute intelligence, instinctive perception of ground realities, good judgment of people, and a strong historic sense would make a good political reporter. Since politics is the main focus of newspapers, too many new entrants would like to be political reporters hoping that it would be a ladder to the coveted office of the editor.

Nevertheless, there is a dearth of good political reporting in India- reporting with insight, reporting that captures in flesh and blood the actors of the political play field, reporting that exposes the naked ambitions of political beings and the hypocrisy of political parties and the machinations of those in power.

Politics, undoubtedly, is a game for power, a game for supremacy, a game for personal aggrandizement, always played in the name of the people for evoking national greatness. An overwhelming majority of politicians are there because they were misfits everywhere else and are driven by a desire to make up for their past failures and frustrations.

For example, a first class medical doctor or a chartered accountant, a management wizard or an academic will not sacrifice his profession for politics. Politics is one of the few professions, which demand no particular qualifications, and it is now widely known that even criminals are joining politics enmasse.

The sad thing about Indian democracy is that it is they who guide the destiny of some 900 million people. Bereft of ideas, intelligence and character, they exploit caste, religion and language to stay in power and the country slip from crisis to crisis.

Political commentators and reporters should never glorify politicians but truthfully present their achievements and failures. Programmes of political parties should be critically evaluated

and their flaws commented upon, so that the people are not carried away by their rhetoric or patriotic postures. The performance of governments need constant review and herein is the wisdom and maturity of the political commentator or reporter set on a national spectacle.

A lot of things happen behind the scene: horse-trading, dinner diplomacy, lobbying, image-building, snake-charming and hatching conspiracies. Nothing much is visible to the outside world but the tip of an iceberg. And the challenge of political reporting is in unmasking the behind-the-scene operations, which has a high curiosity and readership value. Connections and inside sources are the strength of a political commentator/reporter.

Party conferences, campaigns and rallies and press conferences are normal reporting events. But to add news value to these the reporter should have 'inside' information or exclusive stories. The best selling newspapers in any country are those with a strong political bureau, satisfying the political curiosity of the readers.

Inadequate political coverage, not judged by quantity but quality, bring down the circulation of a newspaper.

Familiarity with politicians and discerning the promising ones from the rotten ones are quintessential to the reporter's task. The honest and well-meaning politicians deserve your support and the people's support. One of the basic duties of political reporting is to bring to national focus leaders who deserve to lead the nation and to warn the nation against criminals and psychopaths in political garment. Timely warning can avert a national catastrophe and Hitler's in the making can be halted before it is too late.

The political commentator/reporter should have a sound knowledge of history and the intellectual sensitivity to understand how ideas shape history.

Your political report could be history if you have the foresight or the ability to see the chain of events before it happened and the wisdom to translate your thoughts into memorable words.

Reading latest books and reputed international magazines like Time, Newsweek, Economist and Indian magazines like Outlook, India Today, Frontline, Week and Sunday could fine-tune your perception and your style. Students are advised to keep a diary of events with their comments, which could turn out to be a gold mine if tenaciously worked upon. It could be your ready reference book, giving ideas for articles and even your future book because the longest journey must begin with a single step.

Remember a book is nothing but a collection of articles and chapters, skillfully woven by the thread of a theme, be it a strong political personality around whom events galvanize or a decade or a martyr of a century or a country and its people.

7.2.4 BUSINESS & COMMERCE REPORTING:

The focus of Business reporting is the state of business, depending on the country's economic climate. The stock market, capital market, the wholesale and consumer price indices, metals and gold prices, industrial and agricultural production, consumer behaviour, inflation, money supply, foreign and Indian investments, unemployment, wages and labour disaffection, all are areas of interest to the Business Reporter.

The economy operates in a cycle of expansion and contraction known as boom and bust. The markets hit a low during bust, characterized by low demand, piling up of goods product (inventories) and at worst people are thrown out of employment.

At boom, the demand picks up, entrepreneurs invest, employment is generated, there is more cash flow and happier times return as the economy operates at its peak efficiency. After a few years, the economy goes back to bust to repeat its business cycle. The best indicator of the country's economy is the stock market represented by Bulls and Bears, the former denoting buoyancy and the latter low economic activity.

Low unemployment speaks of the ill health of the economy and the need for optimum level of investment. The developing nations, called the Third World, need massive investments to generate employment; and they also need the latest technology to catch up with the developed world.

Both investment and technology are prohibitively expensive and many Asian countries find a short cut to speedy development through foreign investment, especially in infrastructure and hi-tech areas.

But the problem with foreign investors is that they are coming to India lured by high profit motive, because India is the second largest global market. The moment another country offers larger profit avenues, there will a capital flight from this country to that country resulting in retrenchment and layoff of employees who were once cozy and prosperous.

Besides fluctuating labour scenario, it could lead to fluctuating economic scenario, which could be more dangerous. To cope with galloping inflation, governments through its federal/Reserve Bank introduce tight-money policy raising bank and interest rates. It may be

precisely then that the multinational corporations are pumping in more money, over which the governments have no control, in after rendering the federal excise futile.

Too much is in the hands of the MNCs'. This is an area that needs judicious handling and political maturity, which is the test of any government. Also care should be taken to see that MNCs do not gobble up Indian industry and market.

Business, industry and agriculture, year after year, look to the Finance Minister's presentation of the Union budget, which could change the business climate. Tax incentives to industry and agriculture can boost production, and surplus production can lead to export and prosperity.

Exporting nations like Japan, Taiwan, and Singapore in Asia enjoy a higher standard of living than many economic laggards of the continent, some of whom face miserable living conditions.

In Europe, France and Germany, Governments heavily subsidise their farmers who produce a surplus to keep the basic price level low, ushering in a rural prosperity that prevents an urban chaos because of mass migration.

The budget is a powerful instrument of transformation in the hands of an able Finance Minister, but there is nothing like a 'Rosy Budget', because people have to pay the price for national development.

Who should bear the brunt of taxation to pay for the country's development? It is a pertinent question frequently asked by economic commentators and journalists.

Any tax on industry is conveniently passed on to the consumer and the middle class end up bearing the beast of burden of the Finance Minister. The rich are smart enough to manipulate accounts to evade taxes. And it has been observed globally that higher the incidence of tax, higher the tax evasion.

So lower tax rates, easy mode of payments, and stringent punishment for tax evades would make taxation policies effective. Higher taxes are normally levied on goods whose consumption the government would like to discourage.

A business reporter should have a masterly understanding of economics at the macro and micro levels to interpret economic data and tell how they are going to affect business. He should sound an alarm when the economy is heading for a slump or recession.

And conversely, when the economic outlook is bright, he should bring cheer to industry. But he should desist from creating a panic in the stock market where people have invested their

life savings. To command respect in financial and business circles, you must be knowledgeable, credible and insightful.

To do so, you must be in contact with some of the best economic brains of the country, who may be in the finance ministry, universities, research organizations, and even corporate houses. The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) brings out a monthly journal giving valuable data for interpretative reporting.

Watch out for corporate newsmakers. Entrepreneurs are of two kinds, those with a broad vision and those with a tunnel vision. The former think laterally and are a creative lot, bringing new products, new designs, new models and new ideas that can transform the way people live, work and spent their leisure.

Entrepreneurs with a tunnel vision cannot look beyond moneymaking it the right way, making it the wrong way and making it both ways. While the dream landscape moves the former, the almighty Money moves the latter.

If Ratan Tata and Shiv Nadar symbolize the former, the latter are better left unnamed; it is the former who can give you exclusive stories, the latter can give you only statistics.

There is another breed of newsmakers, called the Corporate Raiders. These predators buy the shares of companies in bulk and try to dislodge the existing families out of their businesses. One of the open secrets of the Indian corporate world is that large business houses own only a limited percentage of shares but control the conglomerates with dexterity.

The majority of the shareholders being innocent of their rights are easily manipulated by holding meetings at sites most of them cannot reach or by deliberately delaying the intimation letters for such meetings.

Market-linked technology watch may signal the arrival of new products, impending competition and phasing out of old models. Computer and car markets are changing dramatically and will keep changing in the years ahead. Perceptible Business Journalists keep the readers well informed so that the discerning buyers can wisely choose their monies' worth. Exposing business frauds and manipulators is the high calling of business journalism, but favouring them for a pittance could tarnish the image of the profession.

Keep a tab on major stock market players, chairmen of blue chip companies and CEOs who could always spring a surprise. PROs of business houses and private secretaries of market players could be of help in getting the lead for a story; but these stories must be properly filtered for news.

Like the politician who generates political news, the corporate houses generate most of the business news. And the Finance and Commerce Ministries, the RBI, SEBI, FICCI, Assocham and Indo-American, Indo-British, Indo-German, Indo-French, and Indo-Japanese joint trade organizations keep the business journalist very busy.

Read newspapers like The Economic Times, The Business Standard, The Financial Express and magazines like Business India, Business World, Business Today and foreign publications like The Economist, The Business Week, The Fortune, The Financial Times, The Wall Street Journal to be well abreast of 'trends and events' that shape business journalism.

7.2.5 SPORTS REPORTING:

Sports writing and reporting demands, in the first place, an exceptional interest in the field of sports and a good writing style. Sports reporters are conversant with the rules of the game and have good relations with players and coaches alike. They are also knowledgeable about the lives of top players to dish out interesting anecdotes in sports features.

Sports reporters write to appeal to a class of readers who eat, drink and sleep sports.

Sports writing is as competitive as the game itself. Your focus is always on the theatre of action on the playing fields. Like all reporters, the sports reporter too works under pressure, but there is too much action in succession for him to recapitulate that it makes his job uniquely challenging.

To become a successful sports journalist, you should keep a sports diary. Renowned sports journalists have the habit of jotting down every idea or scrap of information, which they later skillfully weave into their reports and columns.

Clipping Library: Keep a clipping library of reports and articles of special interest to you, which you have come across in newspapers and magazines. This could be a ready reference library for facts and figures and back grounders. Classify under different names of games like 'cricket', 'hockey', 'athletics', etc. to make it handy.

Search for Ideas: Develop your own powers of observation and sensitivity to sights and sounds. Then you will see the world around you in a different perspective. Converse with leading sports personalities and suddenly ideas will strike you. Be on the look out for ideas and it could come to you from the least expected quarters or the least expected place.

Style in Sports Writing: In order to write well, you must develop an easy, conversational style that enables you to gain and hold the attention of the readers. You must learn to write simple sentences and use simple words instead of resorting to high-sounding words. Avoid clichés, jargons and slang. Hackneyed expressions have no place in good reports. Phrases like 'it may be recalled', 'it goes without saying', 'last but not least', etc. reduce the impact of a news story.

New Angle: Watch out for the turning point of the game to give a new angle to the story. Write vividly and succinctly to recapture the drama of the game. If you take the right approach, the readers will read your entire story.

Open Your Eyes and Ears Widely: In any game beat, keep your eyes and ears wide open. Even in a cocktail party, you get the lead for a sensational or exclusive story.

Descriptive and Analytical: Your report must be descriptive enough for those who have not seen the match and analytical enough for those who have seen it on television but are seeking something more to it. Develop a racy style that befits the game, recapturing the players in their best action, which is the difference between a good report and a bad report. As a writer, you must never be satisfied with your second-best but strive for excellence.

Writing to Space: It is often said sports journalism is precis writing. Newcomers are always advised to keep the copy short and crisp. This way both the busy reader and the editor trying to accommodate all the news that are fit to print will like you better.

A local school match may be dismissed in a paragraph or two, whereas a Cricket Test Match or a Davis Cup match or an Olympic event merits detailed coverage. Writing to space is a quintessential quality in reporting.

HOW TO WRITE SPORTS NEWS:

Before your start, know the landmarks in the history of the game, its rules and terminology and top ranking players and their achievements. Sports news could be as wide-ranging as athletics, swimming, gymnastics, weight lifting, wrestling or the popular national and international games.

The prospects of players and team as well as a postmortem of the contest are essential ingredients of good sports reporting. Studying the background material helps assess strong and weak areas of players and team, and state in simple terms the technicalities of the game.

Factors contributing directly or indirectly can be learnt from coaches and managers. The more you study the scenario, the better equipped you are to present a good report.

Sports reporting differs from general reporting in that sports reporters enjoy greater freedom for self-expression, which includes the use of superlatives. The famous among them do enjoy special privileges in keeping with their professional status. Sport reporting provides details on the fitness of players, points of play, individual performances, tactics and strategies adopted in the contest and crowd reaction.

To be an ace sports reporter, sharpen your power of observation and descriptive and narrative skills.

Your depth of knowledge is important while commenting on star performers. Everything that you write must be in good taste.

Specialize in Your Area: One must know something about every sport, at least the salient features, and specialize in one or two disciplines, say a combination of any of the following: cricket, hockey, football, tennis, badminton, table tennis, athletics, diving, gymnastics or swimming. The list is no means complete. And your interest should govern your choice.

ADVANCE COPY:

Very often you will have to depend on officials, coaches and managers for an advance copy for details. The better your relations with officials, the more information you will get from them. In the face of a defeat, an official may yet be willing to speak to you provided you have good relations with him. In winning moments, people like to be quoted but not in defeat.

Notice how important it is for your job that you maintain cordial relations with everyone around you.

Sports is not just a matter of limbs and body but as much a matter of the mind. Therefore the psychology and temperament of the players and team and their caving in under pressure are as much important as the skill and technique of the combat.

How to cover the Game: To churn out good copy, watch the match dispassionately and take notes systematically. When you write, tell the story immediately, which is the first rule in sports writing. Don't play the vocabulary snob but be reader friendly.

Sports Features and Columns: Sports features written with a deep insight and biographical touch become instantly popular. Once you emerge as an authority in your own right, you will be invited to write columns, which is your view from a vantage point.

You would by then have acquired a steady loyal readership who look up to your writing wherever it appears for a mature understanding of the game.

THE SPORTS PAGE:

In most Indian newspapers, sports reporters have to edit the copy as well. This job, better known as subediting (subbing in the British and Indian journalistic parlance) is the art of correcting and polishing up the language and filling into the allotted space with a headline that tells and arrests the readers' attention.

Sports headlines are known for their action, vigour and punch. They also glorify the victor and trounce the vanquished as though modern-day battles are fought in the fields of sports.

The distinct character of a well laid out sports page is a blown-up picture of action in the theatre of sports. Without that attention winning photo the sports page would have lost its charm.

7.2.6 PARLIAMENTARY OR LEGISLATURE REPORTING:

In a parliamentary democracy, parliament reporting assumes supreme significance for reasons not difficult to enumerate. The Government announces all the major policy decision in Parliament. Political news emanates from in and around the House in session and the relative strength of political parties is tested on the floor of the House.

Legislature reporting focuses on the day-to-day proceedings of Parliament as well as state legislature (Vidhan Sabha and Vidhan Parishad). Normally, seasoned special Correspondents are assigned to cover parliamentary proceedings, to ensure accuracy and maturity in reporting. Legislature reporting often involves taking copious notes of speeches made by ministers and members of the legislature, for which knowledge of shorthand is an advantage.

The exact quotes of the Prime Minister and senior Cabinet Ministers lent credibility to a news report. For security reasons, tape-recorders are banned in the press gallery.

THE PARLIAMENT: The Constitution Fathers have provided for a bicameral Parliament of Lok Sabha (the House of the People) and Rajya Sabha (the Council of States). The Lok Sabha, comprising members chosen directly by the people, has a strength of 547.

Of these, up to 525 members come from the states, up to 25 members from the Union territories and not more than two members of the Anglo-Indian community to be nominated by the President of India if in his opinion that community is not adequately represented in the House.

The Lok Sabha has a tenure of five years, if not dissolved by the President following political instability. Under the Emergency, this term may be extended by one year by a parliamentary legislation.

The Rajya Sabha consists of 250 members, of whom the President for their outstanding contributions to the field of literature, science, law, education, art and social service nominates 12.

The remaining seats are allocated to the states and Union territories, roughly in proportion to their population. Each state is, however, represented by at least one member. The legislative assemblies elect the members representing the states.

Parliamentary Correspondents should know the rules and procedures, which are, by and large, the same for parliament and state legislatures. He should know the rights and privileges and immunities and amenities of the members of Parliament.

Some states have with a bicameral legislature of Vidhan Sabha and Vidhan Parishad, the former equivalent of the Lok Sabha and the latter of the Rajya Sabha, while others have only the Vidhan Sabha.

BREACH OF PRIVILEGE:

No person commits any civil or criminal offence, if he publishes substantially true reports of the proceedings of a House. However, if the publication has been done with malice, the protection conferred on the journalist by Article 361-A does not apply.

The Publication of the expurgate portion of the proceedings of a House is breach of its privilege. So is the publication of proceedings held in camera?

Before 1977, the Parliamentary Proceedings (Protection of Publication) Act 1956, popularly known as Firoze Gandhi Act, was in force, which was repealed during the Emergency.

While Article 361-A covers proceedings of Parliament as well as that of the state legislature, Firoze Gandhi Act covered only the House of Parliament.

The custodian of its own privilege, the House is empowered to take action against a correspondent, if his conduct or writings are in breach of its privileges. Since the scope of parliamentary privileges has not been codified, the Correspondent has to use abundant caution in reporting the proceedings.

Deliberate distortion of speeches, aspersions cast on a member's behaviour in the House, and imputation of motives to him for his speech or behaviour in the House is serious transgressions of the privileges of the members.

Parliamentary or legislature reporting keeps the people abreast of the performance of their elected representatives, and helps them evaluate the political leadership to exercise their franchise meaningfully.

Publishing comments or any other statements which undermine the dignity of the House or the confidence of the public in the legislature are accordingly punishable by the Parliament as 'Contempt of Parliament', which is analogous to the power of a court to punish for 'Contempt of Court'.

Parliamentary Correspondents are given accreditation cards, which the Speaker can withdraw without assigning any reasons. Normally, a card is withdrawn if a journalist is found to be "misrepresenting proceedings of the House in the press (or any other media), or publishing (or broadcasting) matters not intended for the public, or casting aspersions against the Speaker".

7.2.7 SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY REPORTING:

Science journalism is an relatively new branch of journalism, which uses the art of reporting to convey information about science topics to a public forum. The communication of scientific knowledge through mass media requires a special relationship between the world of science and news media, which is still just beginning to form.

The first task of a science journalist is to render the very detailed, specific, and often jargon-laden information produced by scientists into a form that the average media purchaser can understand and appreciate, while still communicating the information accurately. Science journalists often, but not always, have advanced training in the particular scientific disciplines that they cover — they may have been scientists or, for example, medical doctors, before becoming journalists — or have at least exhibited talent in writing about science subjects.

In recent years, the amount of scientific news has grown rapidly with science playing an increasingly central role in society, and interaction between the scientific community and news

media has increased. The differences between the methodologies of these two "pillars" of modern society, foremost their distinct ways of developing their realities, have led to some difficulties. Journalism tends to have a stronger bias towards truth and speculative theories than science, whereas science focuses more on fact and empirical measurement.

The age of science is the age of reason, and it is by reasoning that human beings have unlocked the secrets of nature. Technology is the application of science in the day-to-day living, and it is by technology that advanced nations have made a great leap forward.

Know your Facts: Half-truths, bluffs and blisters are not part of science reporting which is based on verifiable technological facts. Verify your facts from other sources, reference books and journals before you report. Credibility and clarity are the catchwords in science reporting.

Glossary of Terms and Phrases: Specialists speak in technical language popularly called jargons. Novices to the field of science reporting are advised to prepare a glossary of technical terms and their equivalent in common man's parlance so that the story could be better explained.

Befriend the leading scientists and engineers of your town and ask them about the latest developments in their fields - inventions, applications and research. Attend seminars and conferences regularly and write interpretative reports for the knowledge-hungry readers. Publishing interviews of eminent scientists not enhances the prestige of your newspaper/magazine but promotes science awareness in society.

Where does the News come from? The age of computers is rapidly changing the way we live. Computers are installed in banks, railway stations, airports, operation theatres of hospitals, public health, and water supply and electricity departments and real estate agencies. Then there is Internet and a host of other new technologies.

How do people cope with new technologies and what are their relative merits and demerits? Is there any goof-up or bungling in the purchase of computers or any shady deal in government departments in the purchase? These are material that falls within the purview of science and technology reporting.

Who's Who of Scientists: As important as the glossary is a who's who of eminent scientist, Nobel laureate scientists or scientists of international fame, those of outstanding national stature

and those distinguished Indian scientists living abroad. A science reporter must instantly be able to recall the names of the galaxy or recognize them when they are in the news.

Creating environmental awareness is one of the cardinal duties of the science reporter. There is marked environmental degradation - air and water pollution, choked traffic, spiraling slums, appalling civic amenities and so on. Crusading for a better environment is the hallmark of a dedicated science reporter.

Social Transformation: On the science beat, your social perceptions will be sharpened. You will observe the holistic picture of technology-infused changes on society, especially the problems faced by the people due to poor implementation of policies. Your reports will help policy makers take corrective measures.

Language in Science and Technology Reporting: Science reporting calls for greater precision and logical progression of ideas. The popular science writers have amazing clarity of thought and expression and an irresistibly fascinating manner of presentation.

The English language retains its primacy as the global language of science and technology. People the world over are looking for reading something that concerns them directly. So interpret news in terms of what it means to the people. Exaggeration and sensationalism do not belong to science reporting which is basically an exercise in precision writing.

3.3 SUMMARY:

- Investigative reporting is exposing and reporting corruption. It calls for exceptional courage, a sense of justice and a commitment to the higher values of life. All news stories require some kind of investigation by the reporter; but investigative journalists dig hard and deep into the realm of the powers that be, which in itself is a dangerous enterprise.
- Business reporting deals with the state of business, depending on the country's economic climate. The stock market, capital market, the wholesale and consumer price indices, metals and gold prices, industrial and agricultural production, consumer behaviour, inflation, money supply, foreign and Indian investments, unemployment, wages and labour disaffection, all are areas of interest to the Business Reporter.
- The dramatic success of the public interest litigations has captured media attention, and judiciary today gets better coverage than ever before. Even so, it is the Supreme Court, the

High Courts and Criminal Courts that get media attention while Civil Courts are seldom covered. One reason for it is they are slow-moving with thousands of cases pending for several years.

3.4 KEY WORDS:

Business Reporting: Business reporting deals with the state of business, depending on the country's economic climate. The stock market, capital market, the wholesale and consumer price indices, metals and gold prices, industrial and agricultural production, consumer behaviour, inflation, money supply, foreign and Indian investments, unemployment, wages and labour disaffection, all are areas of interest to the Business Reporter.

Legislative Reporting: Legislature reporting focuses on the day-to-day proceedings of Parliament as well as state legislature (Vidhan Sabha and Vidhan Parishad). Normally, seasoned special Correspondents are assigned to cover parliamentary proceedings, to ensure accuracy and maturity in reporting. Legislature reporting often involves taking copious notes of speeches made by ministers and members of the legislature, for which knowledge of shorthand is an advantage.

Event Reporting: The dramatic success of the public interest litigations has captured media attention, and judiciary today gets better coverage than ever before. Even so, it is the Supreme Court, the High Courts and Criminal Courts that get media attention while Civil Courts are seldom covered. One reason for it is they are slow moving with thousands of cases pending for several years.

3.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

1. Discuss in brief the various types of reporting.
2. Write in detail about crime reporting.
3. Write in detail about political reporting.
4. Write in detail about business reporting.
5. Write in detail about legal reporting.
6. Write in detail about science and technological reporting.
7. Write in detail about sports reporting.

3.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED READING:

Reporting by Charnley

Active Reporter by James Lewis

Professional Journalist by John Hohenberg

Professional Journalism by Patanjali Sethi

Professional Journalism by M.V. Kamath

News Writing by George Hough

REPORTING FUNCTIONS

(MEETINGS, SEMINARS, CONFERENCES, ETC)

Writer: Sh. Mahesh Kumar

Vetter: Sh. Sushil K. Singh

LESSON STRUCTURE:

This lesson shall discuss about reporters, correspondents, and stringers. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Presentation of Content
 - 8.2.1 Event Reporting
 - 8.2.2 Investigative Reporting
 - 8.2.3 Interpretative Reporting
- 8.3 Summary
- 8.4 Key Words
- 8.5 Self-Assessment-Questions (SAQs)
- 8.6 References/Suggested Reading

8.0 OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of this lesson are:

- *To Study About Reporting Event*
- *To Study About Investigative Reporting*
- *To Study About Interpretative Reporting*

8.1 INTRODUCTION:

Depending on the nature of job, reporting could be classified into three groups: Event reporting, Interpretative reporting, and Investigative reporting. We shall discuss about all the above-mentioned types of reporting in this lesson.

8.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- *Event Reporting*
- *Interpretative Reporting*
- *Investigative Reporting*

8.2.1 EVENT REPORTING:

It is also called *beat reporting* and is the most common kind of reporting. Here reporters are placed at the most strategic-news-breaking points like hospitals, courtrooms, police headquarters, airports, railway stations, universities, government and corporate offices, and health and recreation centers, etc.

Unlike editorial writing, reporting is impersonal. A reporter is essentially an honest storyteller, who tries to rise above his prejudices and subjectivity. He is fair and impartial and presents all aspects of the story. Complete objectivity may be a mere ideal since human beings are not robots; but working objectivity is certainly possible.

The notorious example of an American journalist, Janet Cooke, who won the prestigious Pulitzer Prize in 1980 for a story about drugs, which was later, proved to be fictitious should serve as a warning to the beginners. Ms. Cooke committed a deliberate fraud by dramatizing a fake scene in which an eight year-old boy is injected with heroin supplied by the lover of the boy's mother.

An Indian newspaper made mountains out of mole hill when it reported "mass rape" at a student function in a Madhya Pradesh town, which on investigation turned out to be the collapsing of a portion of the shamiana and the electricity cutoff subsequently and a few students entering the women's enclosure and molesting some of the girls.

Remember the dictum facts are sacred but comment is free. Check and crosscheck your facts from different sources till you are sure of them. The primary job of a reporter is to tell the truth.

8.2.2 INTERPRETATIVE REPORTING:

Interpretative reporting puts news in perspective to bring out its significance. It is a demanding discipline calling for thorough knowledge of the subject and proficiency in reporting.

The Interpretative reporter gives the reader the background of an event and explains the possible consequences. Besides his own knowledge and research, he often relies on the opinion authorities on the subject.

In his book Interpretative Reporting Curtis D. MacDongall writes that when the First World War broke out, most Americans were taken by surprise. They were utterly unable to explain its causes. This led to changes in the style of reporting and the result was that when in 1939 the Second World War began, an overwhelming majority of the Americans expected it or at least knew it was possible.

For an intelligent newspaper reader, there are few surprises, because the interpretative reports keeps him informed of the consequence of events.

The Interpretative reporter must be well read-his reading of history, economics, sociology, political science and other academic subjects equips him to be an intelligent interpretative reporter, aware that a news item is not an isolated incident, but a inevitable link to a chain of events. Remember that prejudices of and kind and stereotype attitudes hamper intelligent perception and professional credibility.

8.2.3 INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING:

Scoffed at by some, Investigative reporting is exposing and reporting corruption. It calls for exceptional courage, a sense of justice and a commitment to the higher values of life. All news stories require some kind of investigation by the reporter; but investigative journalists dig hard and deep into the realm of the powers that be, which in itself is a dangerous enterprise.

They dig weeks and months to get one story, but that one story gets national attention because it tells how the government bungles, how ministers squander funds, promote nepotism, conspire and deny promotions to the meritorious, and, above all, suppress facts.

Power attracts a lot of vested interests and even honest people; surrounded by the corrupt, act in less worthy manner. The cloak of secrecy under which governments operate seldom promotes transparency, leaving a gold mine for potential investigative reporters to explore and become heroes- like Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein of the Watergate story. In summary, the investigative journalists are the conscience-keeper of society.

In his book Investigative Reporting, Clark R Mollevhogg highlights three elements:

- * *It has to be the own work of a reporter. Under no circumstances should it be of others;*
- * *The subject of the reporting should be such that it is of importance for the readers to know;*
- and*
- * *There must not be any attempt made to hide the truth from the people.*

While Investigative reporting is much advanced in the US, it is still in the infancy in India. Most Indian newspapers do not allocate talent or funds necessary for a first-rate investigative job. Investigative reporting at its international best comes from the Watergate story, which led to the disgrace and downfall of the then US President Richard Nixon.

When the two young reporters of The Washington Post, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, started investigating the arrest of four men for a burglary at Watergate, the Democratic Party's national headquarters on June 17, 1972, they had no idea that their inquiry would culminate in the resignation of the President.

The remarkable thing about their investigation was that it kept to the highest standards of professional journalism. The reporters merely pursued the burglary attempt only to come up with startling facts linking the White House with it. "We did not go after the President, we went after the story," is how they explained later.

The same Washington Post got involved in the most celebrated case of journalistic fraud in modern times in Janet Cooke's story. The story got into the Post because the editors who were white do not want to appear racist because Ms. Cooke was black and failed to scrutinize the story.

Investigative reporting in India got a filip at the end of the Emergency in 1977 through the reports published in The Indian Express. Investigative reports have brought to light a number scandals like the Bhagalpur blindings by the police, Kuet oil deal, A R Antulay's private trusts, the securities scam involving Indian and foreign banks and stock brokers, etc.

An enterprising reporter once got himself arrested so that he could give a first-hand account in life in Delhi's Tihar Jail.

To set professional standards, the investigative reporter must draw a line between candid reporting and muck-racking, mudslinging, character assassination or blackmail. He should be wary of lobbies and lobbyists, political or commercial, trying to misguide him. And he should not behave like a Peeping Tom or a prosecutor.

The best kind of Investigative reporting is that which keeps the public interest in mind. It may highlight an injustice, expose corrupt practices or unmask dishonest politicians and bureaucrats. Nevertheless, without the support of the judiciary, the executive or the legislature, the investigative reporter cannot bring his reports to logical ends. The Bhagalpur blinding report would have ended like any other report had a public interest litigation not been filed against the police.

8.3 SUMMARY:

- Event Reporting is the most common kind of reporting. It is also called *beat reporting*. Here reporters are placed at the most strategic-news-breaking points like hospitals, courtrooms, police headquarters, airports, railway stations, universities, government and corporate offices, and health and recreation centers, etc.
- The Interpretative reporter gives the reader the background of an event and explains the possible consequences. Besides his own knowledge and research, he often relies on the opinion authorities on the subject.
- Investigative reporting is exposing and reporting corruption. It calls for exceptional courage, a sense of justice and a commitment to the higher values of life. All news stories require some kind of investigation by the reporter; but investigative journalists dig hard and deep into the realm of the powers that be, which in itself is a dangerous enterprise.
- Development reporting creates an awareness of the rapid transformation of the society from a poor agrarian economy to a highly developed economy by informing the people of the various programmes of development charted out by the Government and development agencies and to bring to the notice of the Government the problems some of these poorly implemented schemes create so that it can take quick remedial measures.

8.4 KEY WORDS:

Event Reporting: Event Reporting is also called *beat reporting* and is the most common kind of reporting. Here reporters are placed at the most strategic-news-breaking points like hospitals, courtrooms, police headquarters, airports, railway stations, universities, government and corporate offices, and health and recreation centers, etc.

Interpretative Reporting: The Interpretative reporter gives the reader the background of an event and explains the possible consequences. Besides his own knowledge and research, he often relies on the opinion authorities on the subject.

Investigative Reporting: Investigative reporting is exposing and reporting corruption. It calls for exceptional courage, a sense of justice and a commitment to the higher values of life. All news stories require some kind of investigation by the reporter; but investigative journalists dig hard and deep into the realm of corruption. They dig weeks and months to get one story, but that one story gets national attention because it tells how the government bungles, how ministers squander funds, promote nepotism, conspire and deny promotions to the meritorious, and, above all, suppress facts.

Event Reporting: The dramatic success of the public interest litigations has captured media attention, and judiciary today gets better coverage than ever before. Even so, it is the Supreme Court, the High Courts and Criminal Courts that get media attention while Civil Courts are seldom covered. One reason for it is they are slow moving with thousands of cases pending for several years.

8.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

8. Discuss in brief the various types of reporting.
9. Write in detail about investigative reporting.
10. Write in detail about interpretative reporting.

8.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED READING:

Reporting by Charnley

Active Reporter by James Lewis

Professional Journalist by John Hohenberg

Professional Journalism by Patanjali Sethi

Professional Journalism by M.V. Kamath

News Writing by George Hough

Bachelor of Mass Communication (3rd year)

REPORTING (Paper: I)

Block: E

Unit: II

Lesson: 10

REPORTING FOR TELEVISION

Writer: Sh. Mahesh Kumar

Vetter: Sh. Sushil K. Singh

LESSON STRUCTURE:

This lesson shall discuss about reporting for television. The lesson structure shall be as follows:

- 10.0 Objectives
- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Presentation of Content
 - 10.2.1 Electronic Journalism
 - 10.2.2 Writing Broadcast Copy
 - 10.2.3 Structure of Broadcast Copy
 - 10.2.4 Tips for Broadcast Journalists
 - 10.2.5 Television Reporting and its Rewards
 - 10.2.6 Getting Ready for Television Reporting
- 10.3 Summary
- 10.4 Key Words
- 10.5 Self-Assessment-Questions (SAQs)
- 10.6 References/Suggested Reading

10.0 OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of this lesson are as follows:

- To Know About Electronic Journalism
- To Know About Writing Broadcast Copy
- To Know About Structure of Broadcast Copy
- To Know About Tips for Broadcast Journalists

- To Know About Television reporting and its rewards
- To Know About How to Get Ready for Television Reporting

10.1 INTRODUCTION:

News on television is seen daily by millions of people around the world. Some of the typical uses include interviews, panel discussions, press conferences and speeches. Live and pre-recorded video is also used in news coverage of accidents, natural disasters and war coverage.

It is often fascinating how events are covered from far and wide places, and often live. In this lesson, we shall discuss about television reporting.

10.2 PRESENTATION OF CONTENT:

The content of this lesson shall be presented as follows:

- *Electronic Journalism*
- *Writing Broadcast Copy*
- *Structure of Broadcast Copy*
- *Tips for Broadcast Journalists*
- *Television reporting and its rewards*
- *Getting Ready for Television Reporting*

10.2.1 ELECTRONIC JOURNALISM:

Electronic journalism -- known as "EJ" or "ENG" for electronic news gathering - is most associated with broadcast news where producers, reporters and editors make use of electronic recording devices for gathering and presenting information in telecasts reaching the public. Today the choices are characterized by a variety of competing types or "formats" of videotape. Sound recording and editing offer a large number of analogue and digital systems. Still images, graphics and animation have their own sets of tools. The editorial systems available provide journalists with tools for fast and flexible assembly and delivery of electronically gathered and edited news reports.

From the earliest days of the medium's existence, film cameras have been used for the acquisition of news elements and documentary footage. Film remained important in daily news operations until the late 1960s when news outlets turned to portable video cameras, portable recorders, wireless microphones and joined those with various microwave and satellite linked

delivery systems. By the mid 1980s film had all but disappeared from used in television journalism.

The 1962 arrival of the "Handy-Looky", a portable videotape camera from Ikegami announced a revolution in journalism. This Handy Looky provided a self-contained system of camera with lens and video recorder, the precursor of today's hand held cameras.

As systems have improved, components have been made smaller and lighter and performance has greatly improved. Improvements have been made in image quality, colorimetry, lenses, and videotape technology. The following is a small list of improvements related to television news production.

- *Early formats of videotape included 2 inch Quadruplex videotape, 1 inch videotape, MII videotape and 3/4 inch U-matic videotape. None of these are widely used today.*
- *Betacam Tape was popular from the mid 1980's until early 2000s. It is still used by some television stations today, but is being overtaken by digital videotape such as DVC Pro and MiniDV.*
- *1080i/720p High Definition Video*
- *CCD Camera Technology*
- *Editing Systems, Avid, Final Cut Pro, Video Vegas*

Apart from moving images and sound recording, electronic journalism makes liberal use of still images, graphics and animation in reports.

In television, still photographs, may be used when no video camera can reach a correspondent or interview subject. A still photograph may also be used to show historically notable person and event or in any place where it aids the report. Photos may be recorded with a standard video camera or the photos can be placed on a special motion control device, which allows precise computer controlled positioning. Whether shot in the field or in the studio, the camera operator might zoom, pan or tilt while recording the images. The director may use portions of this video or may digitally store some selected frames for insertion into the final report.

Graphics are used to report on financial markets, labor statistics, crop reports, municipal budgets and other instances where tabular data or charts are the best choice for explaining a story element. In electronic journalism, graphics are displayed while the reporter continues to read the script. The graphics, including fonts and titles, convey news worthy information, names

and titles. The use of graphics also supports a station or network's image. Graphics, in some cases, may open up some revenue generating opportunities to the content delivery channel.

Animation is an effective tool for communicating views of a natural disaster or a tragic accident like a plain crash. Producers might turn to animation to explain a complex scientific process, economic or political polling trends; to illustrate news about space flights and many other appropriate uses. Meteorologists make use of simple and complex animation to show the path of storms.

10.2.2 WRITING BROADCAST COPY:

Those who get their news from newspapers, or even on the Internet, can go back to a story and re-read it to check facts or increase their understanding. But viewers or listeners to broadcasts do not have this opportunity. When you write broadcast copy, you are "writing for the ear."

Use the following tips to help you write broadcast copy so that viewers and listeners can get the main points right away.

Did I write in the active voice?

One way to write for the ear is to use the active voice. In most cases, the active voice will make your story clearer and will force you to write in a linear order: subject, verb, and object. Often, the active voice will also make your story shorter. When precious airtime is involved, a few seconds really do matter. (Note: Sometimes writing in the active voice means you will need more information.)

Passive VOICE: The man was arrested.

Active VOICE: The Park Patrol officer arrested the man.

Did I write in my own voice or did I use the words of a wire service or officials?

Officials who are used as credible sources have their own jargon. These phrases can be meaningless to the average television viewer or radio listener. Translate the jargon. Make the words your own. Explain everything in terms that would make sense to a child.

Do I stick to one simple idea per sentence?

When "writing for the ear," keep sentences short. This takes practice, especially when you've been taught the inverted pyramid style with who, what, where, when and why in the first paragraph of a story. In a broadcast story, 5 W's (and maybe an H) will be sprinkled throughout the story from top to bottom. Good broadcast reporters and writers have far more information

than they can use in their stories. Good broadcast writing involves judicious editing. Lots of juicy details will be left by the wayside. If you've used a comma or an ellipsis in your sentence, you're probably trying to put too much in it.

Did I eliminate unnecessary information?

Just because you have lots of facts at your disposal doesn't necessarily mean they are essential or even relevant to your story. For example, when you're writing a story about something unusual that has occurred a great distance from your audience, you can leave out details like street names or surnames. Ages of people in stories are often irrelevant unless the subject of a story is very old or very young.

If I were telling this story to my mother or friend, how would I say it?

Broadcast writers often write the way they think they should in order to make a story sound more informative. Good broadcast writers work hard to figure out how they would tell the story in casual conversation. Then, they clean up the story to get rid of bad grammar or inappropriate slang. So, I probably wouldn't say, "Hey Mom, a Peoria man was found in the woods!" Perhaps, I'd say, "They found that guy from Peoria. You know, he was lost in the woods for a couple of days!"

Did I attribute important facts to appropriate authorities? And did I make sure to put the attribution first?

In your effort for brevity, did you forget a basic tenet of journalism? It's easy to get caught up in the quest for short and snappy and leave out who provided this information.

Also, naïve writers often lead with an outrageous or catchy statement and then attribute it in the next sentence. This leads to confusion for a listener or viewer. Remember linear order: subject, verb, object.

Have I used a sophisticated or intellectual word, when a common word or phrase would do?

Hopefully, you're not in broadcast to impress people with the breadth of your vocabulary. When you're writing a story about a fire, you don't need to "mix it up" by changing the word to conflagration, blaze, spark or inferno. Likewise, you don't need to come up with other words for "says." The word is simple and unbiased. Stick to it.

Did I leave any unanswered questions?

All stories (broadcast or print) should have a beginning, a middle and an end. Sometimes reporters figure out a great way to start the story, add lots of facts and details to the middle, then find themselves with no space or time left at the end to wrap things up. In this scenario, you might be tempted to cut the story short and just stop writing, but that can lead to confusion and unanswered questions for the audience. Instead, you should know how you're going to end the story before you begin. If a story needs to be shortened, you can usually cut from soundbites or "extra" facts in the middle without hurting the story's essential structure or main points.

Was I fair, and did I tell the truth?

Truth is a funny thing. It changes significantly based on one's perspective. A journalist is trained to interpret events and characterize them for an audience. However, sometimes news writers stretch the truth to get a good lead. Was the mayor's victory really surprising? Did the event really shake up the quiet neighborhood? And was it really a parent's worst nightmare? If you stay away from the clichés, you'll probably be a lot closer to the truth.

10.2.3 STRUCTURE OF BROADCAST COPY:

Organize your elements in various ways to see which is most effective. Stories have beginnings, middles, endings and timelines. There are all kinds of different structures. If you want to be creative in journalism, and you want to tell a story well, look at the timeline or the sequence. There are three timelines:

- 1. The order of the events as they unfold.*
- 2. The order in which you record them.*
- 3. The order in which you present them in the story.*

The beginning of the event isn't necessarily the beginning of the story. You should find the most compelling way to adjust the timeline. You can begin a story at the ending, you can begin it at the middle, or you can split it. Endings leave impressions. No matter how strong the rest of your material may be, a weak ending guarantees a weak piece.

Then look for spontaneous "moments." If you're lucky, you'll find a spontaneous moment, and work off of that. It may be something as simple as a woman looking at the wreckage of her burned house. You take that moment and elaborate on it. The pictures and sound don't have to be perfect. Viewers like to be witnesses, seeing an event happen.

Also look for the simple truth. Use it to make the story relevant to viewers.

It's not enough to report the facts. You must make people feel something, and that's the challenge. Don't over-stuff the story with too many facts, figures, twists and turns. You risk obscuring the message.

Don't over-produce a story. It's easy to do too much simply because you have the technical capacity to do so. You want to do something a little different, but not to do something that calls attention to itself for the sake of calling attention to itself.

Report what you find, not what was imagined beforehand.

10.2.4 TIPS FOR BROADCAST JOURNALISTS:

DON'T OVER-SHOOT:

If you are going to multiple locations, do not shoot more than 60 seconds of raw video from any one place. Being conservative in the amount of tape you shoot saves time previewing and editing. Keep those interviews short and to the point. Discipline yourself to know what you want, get it, and move on.

VARY THE LOOK BY VARYING THE BACKGROUNDS DURING INTERVIEWS:

Change the scene. You don't need to overshoot. You can shoot one shot at a location and an interview, and move on, and it looks like you spent all day there.

SHOOTING STORIES THAT CAN'T BE SHOT:

The pressure of daily newsgathering - with finite resources (only so many photographers) - routinely produces situations where the people in the field will be lucky to get anything on tape, never mind something strong. So:

1. *Never give up.*
2. *Recognize opportunities.*
3. *Be willing to change plans at a moment's notice.*

AVOID CLICHÉS SPOKEN ONLY ON TV:

Television people should speak like real people. So speak normally.

10.2.5 TELEVISION REPORTING AND ITS REWARDS:

One of the hardest skills for journalists to master apart from how to interview and angle your stories is the art of clear news writing. To get a critical insight into the profession of journalism is very important.

Background research is essential to ensure that a story is not repeated. In television footage is crucial to a successful story as it determines if the story will be covered and how much time is given.

The lead is the most important part of a news story. "You've got to find out what the main crux of the story is because it's got to be in the lead ... it has got to sell the whole story. The second part is the icing on the cake to tell you what it's all about."

You've got to make your story entertaining, interesting and simple. This is because the audience reached by Television is so extensive and varies so greatly in background, education and interests.

Journalists can master the techniques of interviewing. He says a journalist must go into an interview with a plan but not follow it strictly but go with the flow. Don't get stuck with questions because you might miss a whole new fresh angle on a story. The best way to learn to be a good journalist is on the job and by watching the people around you."

Reporting sensitive issues such as accidents and the death of children has its own challenges. They're a nightmare, but it's news, it's a story so it's got to be covered. In dealing with such stories journalists should take care that families and friends of the victims are not hurt any more.

Yet there are negatives to this profession such as ethical issues, which sometimes must be compromised to get a good story. On covering "depressing stories" one feels guilty about taking advantage of other people's tragedy.

10.2.6 GETTING READY FOR TELEVISION REPORTING:

Here are a few tips on how to prepare for television reporting:

- *How to develop the skills employers are looking for in television reporters, including:*
- *How to interview people to get the true story*
- *How to prepare for "going live" from the scene of a story*
- *How to overcome common mistakes most beginners make when reading the news*
- *How to have the TV "look" (hair, clothes, make-up, etc.) that can help you get the job*
- *How to impress employers with your knowledge of the news*
- *How other reporters got their start, so you can get ideas for launching your own career*
- *What you need to know about internships, including:*

- *The biggest mistake most people make in applying for a TV internship*
- *How to get an internship even if you're not a student*
- *Which stations will give you the opportunity to get on-air most quickly*
- *Getting Hired as a Television Reporter*

10.3 SUMMARY:

10.4 KEY WORDS:

10.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs):

10.6 REFERENCES / SUGGESTED READING:

Reporting by Charnley

Active Reporter by James Lewis

Professional Journalist by John Hohenberg

Professional Journalism by Patanjali Sethi

Professional Journalism by M.V. Kamath

News Writing by George Hough

Advanced Journalism by A.K.Varma