

“Education is a liberating force, and in our age it is also a democratizing force, cutting across the barriers of caste and class, smoothing out inequalities imposed by birth and other circumstances.”

— Indira Gandhi



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“शिक्षा मानव को बन्धनों से मुक्त करती है और आज के युग में तो यह लोकतंत्र की भावना का आधार भी है। जन्म तथा अन्य कारणों से उत्पन्न जाति एवं वर्तगत विषमताओं को दूर करते हुए मनुष्य को इन सबसे ऊपर उठाती है।”

- इन्दिरा गांधी

Block

3**NEWS AND NON-NEWS WRITING**

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INTRODUCTION TO THE BLOCK

You got a bird's eye view of the various dimensions of mass media in the first block. In the second we paid attention to certain skills required of journalists in the various media, reporting, editing, preparing layouts and designs.

In this block we first of all examine the importance of the 'intro' in the various media and their different types. We also offer you a few tips for writing headlines effectively.

Internet journalism has today become an important channel that engages our young men and women. Unit 10 introduces you to internet journalism.

In Unit 11 you would learn the various do's and don'ts of interviews. Why are interviews important; what preparations are required for successful interviews for the various media? These are the questions that are addressed in Unit 11.

While preparing a feature we sometimes make use of interviews. However, much more goes into a feature depending on the feature which may be based on a personality, history, hobby, some industry business or medical science. We discuss these in the last unit i.e. Unit 12 of this block.

Hope, you will enjoy reading this block.

Amiya Bhushan Sharma





UNIT 9 INTRO WRITING

Structure

9.0 Objectives

9.1 Introduction

9.1.1 What is an intro or lead?

9.1.2 Parallels of intro in other media

9.1.3 Intro in a Radio story

9.1.4 Intro in the Television News story

9.1.5 Lead Writing for Internet stories

9.2 Size and structure of a lead

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9.4.1 News or report leads

9.4.2 Feature leads

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9.5 Headlines

9.5.1 Types of Headlines

9.5.2 Writing headlines

9.5.3 Finer points of headline writing

9.6 Glossary

9.7 Let us Sum Up

9.8 Suggested Reading

9.0 OBJECTIVES

After having read this unit you will be able to

- Understand the importance of an intro or lead in a write up.
- Appreciate the role of lead and its language in attracting the attention of the reader.
- Identify the various types of leads.
- Write different kinds of intros for the same story.
- Write a lead with continuity without waiting time.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

9.1.1 What is an intro or lead?

The first paragraph of a news story is a lead (pronounced LEED). It comes after the headline. The lead sets the outline and pace for the rest of the story. Many newspaper writers spend over half of their time on the lead alone. The outline, or structure of your writing, should help readers go from an idea to

idea with smoothness. Once you have established an angle to the topic 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, fact or a famous quote are all good examples of lead sentences. Leads can be colorful, disturbing, or thought – provoking.

The lead is where you start, which sounds simple enough, except that it isn't. More wastebaskets have been filled with crumpled paper because of the initial blues with writing leads than anything else in the newsrooms. Based on the content of the lead, a reader will either look into the story, or move on to the next one. Unfortunately there is no magic formula to tell you how to write a perfect lead. If its any consolation, you are in good company , because any experienced writer will admit , it never gets any easier to write a great lead.

9.1.2 Parallels of intro in other media

There are times when a lead just falls into your copy as per Barbara Alyson of Australian Broadcasting Corporation, when the French National Assembly voted to abolish death penalty . She wrote “The guillotine got the axe in the French National Assembly”.

The more complex broadcast stories have an introduction written by the reporter, read by the newsreader, followed by a package comprising a reporter's narration often wrapped in sound bites.

Lead of the print medium has parallels in the radio, television and internet. The first paragraph of the radio story which the newscaster presents , is the radio lead.

The television has the anchor's link at the beginning of the report , this first link introduces the story. This is the parallel of the print lead in the television.

In web journalism stories follow the pattern of print media. Hence individual stories have the first paragraphs as traditional leads. But in websites the first page has headline and summaries of individual stories. These summaries are parallels of leads of print media. They give information on the write up which opens at the click of a mouse.

9.1.3 Lead in a Radio story

Do you listen to the radio? If yes, then you would have observed that generally, radio news stories split their time evenly between narration and sound bites. As you continue listening, you will realize that the radio story has an introduction, a middle and an end, like any other form of writing.

Listen to a typical three minutes radio story and you will find that it is built around 30 seconds sound bytes. The most important part of your story will be the lead. It needs to grab the listener's attention and make them want to listen to everything that follows.

1. Do a quick summary of the 5Ws & 1H.
2. Throw out a piece of information that you'll go on to explain.
3. Pose a question the story will answer.

The lead must give the listener a sense of what the rest of the story will be about, and make them want to listen.

The best method to help yourself learn lead writing is to listen to more and more radio news. The best is the All India Radio. When you do this, you begin to pick up on patterns and approaches. Know as much about your assigned topic as possible - as much as time permits you to research.

Now start wording your lead.

Each broadcast lead must have the following:

- a) A latest information angle included. People want to know FIRST what's going on now, not yesterday or in the past. You could also look ahead and set the stage for somewhere in the future. Make sure that the information sounds fresh, new and happening now.
- b) Try NEVER to use past or past perfect tense verbs in broadcast leads. That makes your lead sound like old information. Always use present tense.
- c) Write a simple sentence lead. All leads should flow off the tongue easily. It is a high stress environment on air. Wordy leads make you have to stop and breathe while trying to speak loud.
- d) Be Conversational – sound like you talk to people. NOT how you write in newspapers.

If the assignment slug is : US Election update, you must provide fresh and timely information.

Remember, in Broadcast Style :

TYPE EVERYTHING, ALL CAPITAL LETTERS & DOUBLE SPACE BETWEEN LINES OF COPIES.

Original lead: For use on-an on Tuesday February 19th before voting ends.

HILLARY CLINTON'S CAMPAIGN WANTS TO STOP BARACK OBAMA'S PRIMARY

WINNING STREAK IN WISCONSIN

You could suggest this because PRE-election polls had Clinton leading in Wisconsin. But Obama leading in hometown Hawaii.

1st Re-Write Lead

THE DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE FRONTRUNNER IS LOOKING TO RACK-UP

MORE PRIMARY WINS TODAY

Try not to say the names of the candidates and make it more conversational. This is a challenge of broadcast news writing.

2nd Re-Write Lead

A WIN TONIGHT IN THE HAWAII AND WISCONSIN COULD MAKE 'THE' OBAMA.

Notice the same information but different way to look at it in each lead.

9.1.4 Lead in the Television News Story

Every story begins with a lead. The lead is the most important of the written elements of the story. If the lead does not work, the listener or viewer is unlikely to pay attention to what follows.

The lead therefore needs to

- Contain the most important news element of the story
- Signal to the audience why the story should matter to them
- Set up the rest of the story to be succinct

If reporting can be reduced to who? What? When? Where? And how?, then the lead will usually deal with what? And perhaps when? And where? The who? will usually be left to a subsequent sentence unless it's someone well known and the why? And how? are likely to belong in later sentences.

- Unless those news are well known, their names will mean nothing to most of the audience and should be left until further down the item
- A good lead is short and sharp. It is self-defeating to pack details into the lead

Choosing the essence of handwriting.

Somewhere in any complicated story there are elements that lend themselves to simple, direct explanation. The job is to find them. It might sound obvious to say that the intro should be written first, since it is the beginning of the story, and the part that audience will hear first. But the intro is that part of the story the reporter gives away to the presenter to tell and it can be very tempting for reporters to pay more attention to the part of the story they will be narrating themselves.

The problem with writing the narration first and the intro second is that almost inevitably, the reporter will put their best material into their narration, leaving nothing for the intro. In this case the news caster has no option but to repeat in the intro things covered in the narration and this sounds odd.

In the television story intro is written in the end by the script writer, for the news reader. In television an attribution proceeding a statement makes the worst common type of lead.

9.1.5 Lead Writing for Internet Stories

Online journalism is a new and evolving industry and journalists working on web editions and sites are writing the rules as we go along. Writing for the web is not the same as for print or broadcast. But like radio and television, the web is "24x7" and web writers for news websites often emphasize the "up to the minute" aspect of stories.

Nearly all web stories lead off with the most information at the top or on the 1st page with the rest of the story a click away. Thus in the web the lead is this summary, which gives an introduction to the story inside.

Should the summary risk giving away too much? Or should it tease the reader to enter, and risk not telling enough? Also should the stories be newspaper stories punched in?

An efficient on-line editor should write fresh and functional headlines and lead summaries.

The e-edition or e-papers have reports like the newspaper. So the lead is written exactly as in the print media stories. The page design is not the same as the print copy. The front page has summaries and each has to be clicked to read the story, which is designed as one story on one page with a few one paragraph each highlights and advertisements.

Web leads can be narrative, summary, question, straight, quote, anecdotal blind, delayed identification or naming types, (Explanations of these types is in section 9.5)

An important tip is that never bury your lead. Web users are very impatient. Don't make people wade through a bunch of background to eventually arrive at your point – most of the time they will never click for the full story.

News at a click is no longer exotic, it is a part of our daily life. More and more people are referring to the net for information. Hence the lead is the most important part of a web story.

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Ahmedabad blasts: Bashir confesses involvement, claims police
- Woman RAW official attempts suicide outside PMO** (20 August 06:24)
Woman RAW official attempts suicide outside PMO
- Extend stay on SIMI ban, Centre to SC** (20 August 06:24)
Extend stay on SIMI ban, Centre to SC
- Top SIMI leader Nagori was a 'key conspirator' in Ahmedad blasts** (20 August 06:24)
Top SIMI leader Nagori was a 'key conspirator' in Ahmedad blasts

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- ✓ **India to brief NSG troika today** (20 August 12:00)
The 45-nation cartel will meet tomorrow

- ✓ **Pakistan's ruling coalition wrangles over judges** (20 August 12:00)
25 killed as suicide bomber strikes at government hospital in NWFP

- ✓ **OMCs told to clear LPG waitlist** (20 August 12:00)
NEW DELHI: The Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry on Tuesday firmly told oil marketing companies (OMCs) to clear the waiting list of new domestic LPG connections within 60 days and restore n...

- ✓ **For nuclear club, it's decision time on India** (20 August 12:00)
Proposal to bend rules brings angst, and the opportunity of business for some

NRI Finance
Best of
investment
opportunities
More



As you can see, the front pages of both the newspapers in online editions are different. Hindu has headline followed by a lead summary, whereas New Indian Express has headlines with the headline repeated in the place of summary.

9.2 SIZE AND STRUCTURE OF A LEAD

Do Indian newspapers adhere to the principle of writing short, active-voice leads? Leads in a large sample of staff-written articles average 34 to 30 words. While the lead word length meets guidelines set in journalism text book, it defies readability standards print and raises concern for online newspapers.

A cursory look at the front page of a single day's issues of Times of India & The Hindu have shown leads of variable lengths.

A 64 word lead in The Hindu was :

NOIDA: *Even as the post-mortem reports revealed that both Arushi Talwar and her domestic help Hemraj were murdered with the same weapon, the State Government transferred Superintendent of Police (Noida City) Mahesh Kumar Mishra to the Special Task Force in Allahabad and sent the Sector 20 Station House Officer Datta Ram*

Nauneria to the lines for the “glaring lapses” in investigation of the crime scene.

A 64 word lead is The Times of India was :

NEW DELHI: *Platform No. 12 at the New Delhi Railway Station, one of the busiest in the country, would soon have a new security system. The Central Electronics Limited, a public sector undertaking under the Union Ministry of Science and Technology, would install the system using software and hardware acquired from a firm in the United States.*

The average lead lengths in most Indian dailies is 36 words. Most of the leads are single sentence leads, but these sentences are compound lengthy leads longer than 30 words are considered “deviations” in lead length, as per journalism text book.

An ideal 24-word lead in The Hindu was :

NEW DELHI: *Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit has said that water supply in the Capital has started showing improvement with release of more water by Haryana.*

Self check exercise 3

Write a lead of 25-30 words for a newspaper story on a terrorist bomb blast.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

9.3 LANGUAGE OF A LEAD

When the subject is leads, there is no shortage of opinions about their role, their preferred length, the rules they should follow or break. So let us see if all this means that lead has a language which should attract attention. What is this language?

A lead should be simple, easy to understand and be natural extensions of the story. Vocabulary used in a lead should be common. Would you enjoy reading the newspaper, if you had to open the dictionary every two minutes? Then don't write one like that.

9.4 TYPES OF LEAD

In this section let's try to identify the different types of leads seen in the Indian newspapers. Some have captivated our attention whereas others have not.

We are going to take a look at variety of ways to start the story. Lead writing styles are different for reports and features. Let's list the types under both the categories.

9.4.1 News or report leads

- Basic summary lead
- Naming lead
- Delayed Identification lead
- Blind lead
- Quote lead
- Question lead
- Anecdotal lead
- Narrative lead
- Straight news lead

There are many kinds of leads, but they all fall into two basic categories “hard leads” and “soft leads”. The choice depends on the nature of the story and determines the form of the rest of the story. A hard lead is suited for an urgent, breaking event, while a soft lead is more indirect and suited to feature writing.

A hard lead

MUZAMIL JALEEL

SRINAGAR, AUGUST 10

THE Amarnath shrine land transfer row, which has paralysed Jammu and Kashmir for two months, today seemed to have moved a step towards a possible resolution. One way out, already being called the most viable, has incidentally come from a BJP national leader—a solution which calls for adherence to the Shri Amarnath Shrine Board Act and court interpretations of the Act outlining the powers and functions of the Board.

A soft lead

Parvathi Menon

In what used to be the dungeons of the Potala Palace, once the winter palace of the Dalai Lamas in Lhasa and now a religious and tourist site, is an unusual museum. The Zhol jail, a place where disobedient or rebellious serfs and labourers were subject to horrific forms of torture, was once located here. Today, photographs, paintings, models, and sound effects are used to recreate the brutality of the *ancien regime* against those classes whose labour created and sustained the splendid monument that soars above.

Now lets try and define the various types of leads.

Basic summary lead

The basic summary lead is a brief statement of what the story is all about. It answers most of the important WHOs, WHENs, WHATs, WHEREs, WHYs and HOWs.

VIENNA: Foreign Secretary Shiv Shankar Menon will meet the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) 'troika' late Wednesday evening in the run-up to the August 21 meeting of the 45-nation cartel, where the fate of the American proposal to allow nuclear commerce with India will be decided.

Naming lead

Naming lead identifies people, organization, concepts and names. The problem with this type is that it can lead to a long paragraph, especially if the person, organisation or concept you are talking about has a long life or description.

MANOJ PRASAD

RANCHI, AUGUST 19

EVEN though the Madhu Koda Government was reduced to a minority after Jharkhand Mukti Morcha withdrew support to it on Sunday, the state Cabinet on Monday decided to create as many as 36 blocks, including East Tundi in Dhanbad and Kukru in Saraikela, and two sub-divisions — Ranka in Garhwa and Jagannathpur — represented by Koda in West Singhbhum district.

Delayed Identification lead

This is a lead which shuns detail. The subject organization, concept is named in the first sentence but the identification is withheld until the second or third paragraph.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 19

STATISTICS say more than three snatchings take place on the Capital's streets every day. Statistics say 603 such incidents were reported till this June-end. Statistics also say women are what in police lingo is dubbed as "soft targets" for snatchers, most of whom prowl around on motorbikes. Delhi Police spokesperson Rajan Bhagat said snatching is "one crime that keeps hitting the top and going down like a see-saw".

Blind Lead

This is a lead in which the subject, organisation or concept is identified in the first sentence, but is not actually named until the second or third paragraph.

AMITAV RANJAN

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 19

WHILE the ban on export of non-basmati rice by private firms will continue for another three months, government-run public sector undertakings will export 2.25 lakh tonne of broken rice to African nations in the coming months.

The Empowered Group of Ministers (EGoM) on Food-grain decided on August 5 to honour commitment approved by its chairman — external affairs minister Pranab Mukherjee — to African nations for "diplomatic and strategic reasons" even though food ministry officials said that it would reduce domestic availability of cattle and poultry feed.

Quote lead

The quote lead starts off immediately with an interesting quote whether from a key source or a famous quote..... as the first sentence or paragraph. The problem with such a lead is that you usually then have to explain the quote to the reader, who has no idea yet what the story is about. Use quote lead sparingly and only if you have a dynamite quote. That makes sense without explanation.

NEW DELHI: "My father believed in the people of India and he saw empowerment of these people as his mission." Congress MP Rahul Gandhi said here on Tuesday.

Question lead

It is the type of lead which starts the story with a question and then usually answers it.

Kounteya Sinha | TNN

How fast will man run? Will he ever dash through 100 metres in five seconds flat? Not impossible, says one of the world's best known authorities on physiology and biomechanics.

Anecdotal lead

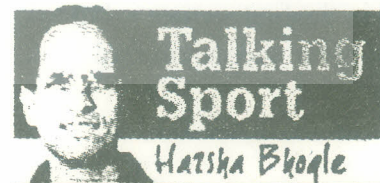
The anecdotal lead is also sometimes called the descriptive lead. It starts off with being a little story about an individual associated with the story. An anecdote is used to set up a scene, mood etc.

New York: A talkative barber asks a customer, "How shall I cut your hair?" "In silence!" is the response.

That two-liner from ancient Greece is one of the many jokes writer Jim Holt found as he traced the evolution of jokes in his new book 'Stop Me If You've Heard This: A History and Philosophy of Jokes'

Narrative lead

This is a very descriptive and creative type of lead. It may use a real person to illustrate the issue to be discussed in the story.



IT seems at the moment that India is like a ship that needs a storm to sail. India seem a fighting side when behind and an ordinary team when they are either ahead or begin favourites. It is worrying because you shouldn't have to lose to win but if you are an optimist you'll say 'hang on, it means they can win'. Sadly, this is a hypothesis I have long held and one for which no solution has yet presented itself.

It is a type of lead which states new findings, but not too packed with facts or easily dated.

New Delhi: A 42-year-old woman committed suicide at her Pashchim Vihar residence in west Delhi late Tuesday night. Rambha Devi, jumped off the fourth floor of her building in A block around 11.30 pm. Police said her husband, Sheetal Prasad, a driver at Saraswati Vidya Mandir School, wasn't home when the incident took place. Her husband claims that she was depressed past few days.

Self check Exercise 2

1. Identify the various types of news leads from the news papers you read.
2. Cut, paste and label them on sheets.
3. Read the papers for one we and out the numbers of each type of news lead is the stories. Fill in the chat below:

S. No.	Types of news lead	Numbers
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

9.4.2 Feature leads

As you know, writing a feature is different from writing a report. So why should there be no difference in the lead styles and types? A look at feature stories will confirm that feature leads have nothing is common with news leads. They are novel, attractive and interesting. Let us take a look at the various types of leads seen in the features published in newspapers.

- Literary allusion
- Historical allusion
- Punch lead
- PARODY Lead
- STACCATO Lead

- Contrast lead
- Whammy lead
- Pun lead
- Sequence lead
- Analytical lead
- Direct address lead

Literary Allusion

LAURA YAO

THIS IS ALL sounding a little too familiar. Here's how the story goes: A mother with no writing experience is struck by inspiration. She sits down one morning and starts to jot down a story. She creates characters and sketches out a whole world for them, full of magic and danger and dramatic rescues. Her characters are almost ordinary, except for the fact that they are (fill in the blank: wizards or vampires). She sends the story to a publisher, not expecting much, but finds herself writing a successful multi-book series and earning millions of dollars.

It is a lead which relates a person or event to some character or event in literature.

Historical Allusion

I WAS born in a Beijing that has vanished. The way my mother tells it, I forced my way into the world a month early so my birthday would be associated with the biggest political festival of the year. It was the early autumn of 1968, and as revelers shouted "Long live Chairman Mao," my parents raced to a hospital during a parade commemorating the birth of communist China. As my mother screamed in pain, fireworks lighted the sky over Tiananmen Square.

In this type the lead relates a person or event to some character or event in history.

Punch Lead

It is a type of lead which uses a blunt, explosive statement to summarise the most newsworthy statement.



**THOMAS
FRIEDMAN**

IF THE conflict in Georgia were an Olympic event, the gold medal for brutish stupidity would go to the Russian prime minister, Vladimir Putin. The silver medal for bone-headed recklessness would go to Georgia's president, Mikheil Saakashvili, and the bronze medal for rank short-sightedness would go to the Clinton and Bush foreign policy teams.

"Apparel oft proclaimeth the man," observed Shakespeare and so it was for several centuries. The nobleman, the trader, the knight, the farmer could all be distinguished by the clothes they wore. This was true of both the Occident and the Orient.

This lead mimics a well-known proverb, quotation or phrase.

Staccato Lead

SINGER Isaac Hayes died on [August 10] at the age of 65. Hayes was [a] dedicated Scientologist. According to his religious beliefs, what happens to Hayes now that he's passed away? His soul will be "born again into the flesh of another body" ... [S]ome core beliefs of Scientology are that every human being is really an immortal spiritual being known as a thetan and that the "meat bodies" we inhabit are merely vessels we shed upon death...



It is a lead type which consists of a series of jerky, exciting phrases, separated by dashes or dots.

Contrast Lead

SUKANYA SHETTY &
SAGNIK CHOWDHURY
MUMBAI, AUGUST 19

WHILE investigators step up efforts to trace the Mumbai IT professional and alleged SIMI member Abdul Subhan Qureshi alias Tauqeer in connection with the Ahmedabad serial blasts, *The Indian Express* has found that two years ago, his family had complained that some of their members were "tortured" by the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) during a probe into Qureshi's suspected links with the 7/11 Mumbai train serial blasts.

It is a lead type which compares extremes – the big with the little or the comedy with the tragedy.

RUKMINI CALLIMACHI

KAOLACK, SENEGAL,

AUGUST 17

IT HURTS too much to lie on his back, so the 7-year-old has spent the past month stretched out on his stomach. His two grandmothers sit on the hospital bed beside him, fanning the pink flesh left exposed by his teacher's whip.

It is a lead which gives a single fact that makes the story unique.

Pun Lead

LONDON: Nils Olav already has medals for good conduct and long service. He made honorary Colonel-in-Chief of the elite Norwegian King's Guard in 2005. And on Friday he was knighted. Not bad for a 3-foot-tall penguin — actually, three of them.

A lead that uses a pun to quirk the reader's attention, is a pun lead.

Direct address lead

Ted Corbett

LONDON: We all guessed that life with Kevin Pietersen in charge might be exciting, different, and idiosyncratic so it was no surprise that on the first day of the fourth and final Test South Africa was all out for 194 in 64.5 overs in English conditions of cloud, swing and seam. It was far from clear that England had lost the series as it replied with 49 for one. We wait to see what the batsman Pietersen can offer on day two.

It is a lead which speaks directly to the reader on a subject of widespread interest.

Sequence lead

Nina Bernstein

He was 17 when he came to New York from Hong Kong in 1992 with his parents and younger sister, eyeing the skyline like any newcomer. Fifteen years later, Hiu Lui Ng was a New Yorker: a computer engineer with a job in the Empire State Building, a house in Queens, a wife who is a U.S. citizen and two American-born sons.

It is a lead which explains the event as a sequence unfolding like a story. It places the reader in the midst of action.

Analytical lead

S. Ram Mahesh

COLOMBO: Having broken gaol in the second Test, escaping the restraining order Sri Lanka had served at the SSC, India will look for a clean getaway in the third — perhaps not as fancy as the ones that involve cars careening around corners, sirens in tow, but a sound one all the same.

As the name suggests it is a lead type which analyses the situation for the reader and the details follow in the body of the story.

9.4.3 Types of Broadcast Leads

While listening to the radio you must have realized that constraints of time and the need for simplicity. Broadcast leads do not have the variety found in print leads. Three of the most common kinds of leads are the single-act lead, the umbrella or comprehensive lead and chronological narrative lead.

Single Act Lead

It is probably the most common of broadcast news leads. It relates to who did what or what happened.

Umbrella Lead

It is a lead which gives complete information. It leaves no details for later paragraphs.

Chronological narrative Lead

It is the type of lead in which the events are stated date wise and explained as a narrative.

Writing A Lead

Six rules for writing a lead

Rule 1: A straight news lead should be a single paragraph consisting of a single sentence, should contain no more than 30 words, and should summarise, at minimum, the most newsworthy “what” “when” and “where” of the story.

Rule 2: The lead’s first verb should express the main “what” of the story and should be placed among the lead’s first seven words.

Rule 3: The lead’s first verb..... the same one that expresses the main “what” of the story..... should be active voice, not passive voice. A verb is active voice if the verb’s subject did, is doing, or will do something. A verb is passive voice if the verb’s subject had, is having or will have something done to it.

Rule 4: If there's a "who" involved in the story, the lead should give some indication of who the "who" is.

Rule 5: The lead should summarize the "why" and "how" of the story, but only if there is room.

Rule 6: If what's in the lead needs to be attributed, place the attribution at the end of the lead.

How you start your lead is important too. The best way to help yourself learn any writing style is to expose yourself to it as much as possible. This means read the paper in details every day.

9.5 HEADLINES

When you read the newspaper every morning, what catches the eye instantly are the bold, large fonts of the sentence at the start of the story. In a layman's vocabulary we call them headings. In journalistic parlance these are the headlines.

Newspapers and magazines have had headlines since the days of Ben Franklin, and the ability to write clever, accurate headlines has long been admired in newsrooms. So why have most headlines been written as an after thought?

The study found that 85 percent of headlines were "processed" by the readers. "Processed" meant that the subject's eyes stopped on that headline. By contrast, only 25 percent of the story leads were processed and many fewer were read in depth.

Headlines are an important tool for communicating with readers. Today, editors must be skilled in writing complex headline combinations that are clever, direct and informative. Gone are the days of using the headline to "tease" the reader into looking at the story. For most readers, the headline is the story.

9.5.1 Types of Headlines

The headline combinations being used in today's news environment are almost limitless. Today's publication designers seek out innovative ways to mingle headline type with pictures and graphics to create a layered, integrated look. Even so, we can break headline combinations down into several broad categories.

Headline still has to do the main job of answering the reader's number-one question: What's this story about?

Kickers

Kickers are small headlines of two to four words, usually about half the size of the main head. The role of the kicker is to provide contrast, introduce white space above the story and give the reader a quick, clever take on the story.

The hammer is sometimes called the reverse kicker. Instead of two to four words set in small type, the hammer is at least twice as big as the main headline and often much bigger. Hammers are bold. Sometimes special heavy-faced fonts are used. Hammers introduce white space and provide contrast. Hammers sum up a story in a word or in a phrase.

'Pakistan, Khuda Hafiz'

Readouts

Readouts, sometimes called drop heads or decks, are smaller than the main headline, usually about half as big. Headlines are in a contrasting type, usually a lighter face or in italics. In writing a readout, look for a secondary element or theme that provides elaboration on the main head. Readouts get a separate headline order and must fit the column width. Readouts provide a visual transition; they take the reader from the big type of a main head to body type. Readouts direct the eye, serve as a buffer and provide contrast.

Life sentence suggested for acid attack

Section 326 of the IPC insufficient to deal with issue: Law Commission report

Jump Headlines

A jump line, a line of type that tells the reader where the story continues on an inside page. Jump heads help the reader find the rest of the story inside. Jump heads usually are smaller than the page one headline. If possible, the jump head should not be the lead headline on the page.

Abhinav India Bindra

Sidebar Headlines

Sidebar headlines are related stories that run with a main story and take a separate headline order. Sometimes sidebar headlines are set in a box, so the headline is on an odd measure. Sidebar headlines usually are set in a typeface that contrasts with the main head, through size, weight, or typeface.

AFTER MUSHARRAF

► What does his exit mean for an embattled Pakistan



► How US dumped its most-trusted ally

► What does it mean for New Delhi given Afghanistan and I&K

► First test: how they find his successor

► He was a good friend but need to secure Pak future: chorus from West

► Why Army holds the keys

► In the Valley, he was a friend

► After 8 years, in general: Editorial

PAGES 10, 11, 1

Tripod Heads

The tripod headline is a variation of the hammer-main headline combination. Like the three-legged stool, the tripod head rests on three elements: a main headline, a hammer and a special treatment given to a key word or phrase of the hammer.

Abhinav India Bindra

■ Shoots his way to country's first individual Olympic gold ■ 'Find me a way to go back home today'

9.5.2 Writing Headlines

Writing headlines is something of an art. The headline "artist" must create a picture of an entire story in just a few words – and make it appealing to readers. A good headline not only tells the story but also sells the story. Much of the time, the headline is the key factor in a reader's decision to read a story or skip it. Hours of work by the reporter and assignment editor will be wasted if the headline writer doesn't come up with the right eight or ten words.

SIX STEPS FOR BEGINNERS

Knocking out heads is second nature to the subeditor-something they don't even think about, like swimming or riding a bike. But headline writing involves some definite steps. If you're a beginner, you'll have an easier time if you follow suggestions made by the late Martin Gibson, a journalism professor at the University of Texas:

1. Read and understand the story before you start to write the headline.
2. Write a rough headline, experimenting with word combinations that will form one or more lines of the headline.
3. Choose specific, precise words.
4. Make each word count.
5. Use action verbs – and some creativity.
6. Start over if you're stuck.

Sounds easy enough, right? Maybe; maybe not. Some of these steps are easier said than done. Let's look at them more closely.

9.5.3 Fine Points of Headline Writing

Now we can move from the traditional rules to more straightforward concerns: the tense, punctuation, capitalization and grammar of headlines.

VERB TENSE

Most headlines are written in the present tense, which lends an air of urgency and freshness to the news: “Ship hits iceberg.” Past tense headlines are used when you’re writing about events that aren’t current: “Titanic missed iceberg, new study finds.”

The infinitive form (to debate) is probably the most common. “Will” might be best if there’s been some question about whether an event will actually happen. The third option is used when you want to specify when the action will take place.

PUNCTUATION PROBLEMS

Punctuation rules change a bit when we get to headlines. Here are the most common departures:

1. You don’t put periods at the end of headlines.
2. Commas can be used to replace the word “and.” Here are some examples:
3. Most newspapers, but not all, use semicolons rather than commas to separate clauses in headlines:
4. Single quotation marks are used instead of double quotation marks because the single marks take up less space.
5. Dashes and colons can replace “said.” A common pattern is to use a dash when the speaker’s name comes at the end of the head and a colon when the name is first in the head:
6. Dashes also can be used for emphasis:
7. Colons sometimes can replace verbs:

CAPITALIZATION

At one time it was common for newspapers to capitalize the first letter of every word in a headline. The approach was called up style. Many papers switched to modified up style and capitalized all words except short prepositions. Up style and modified up style are still popular at many papers. But about 30 years ago, a few adventurous papers decided to capitalize only the first word of a headline and, of course, any proper nouns. They called it down style.

ABBREVIATIONS

Because space in headlines is tight, newspapers allow headline writers some leeway in using abbreviations.

9.6 GLOSSARY

Lead Time : the time between getting the query or article and publishing the article. Vital for seasonal articles and stories.

- Lead** : journalism - the beginning of a story.
- Logline** : one sentence description of a screen or TV play
- Slug Line** : (1) a line in a screenplay describing a new scene. (2) in journalism the identifying tag for a story
- Head or
Headline** : A line or lines of copy set in a larger face than the body copy. Usually intended to be the title of piece.
- News feed** : The stream of USENET news articles flowing into a news server from another news server. News feeds are made by agreement between the administrators of news servers. Servers, such as news.znet.com, may have arrangements for multiple news feeds, as most servers do not carry all available USENET news groups. If one news feed goes down, some news groups will often continue to be received from a feed not affected by the particular outage.
- Subhead** : A secondary phrase usually following a headline. Display line(s) of lesser size and importance than the main headline(s).
- Byline** : your name, which is printed before or after an article.
- Leading questions** : These questions try to lead an interviewee in a certain direction.

9.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you read about the importance of the first paragraph in any form of writing. You also examined clippings from various newspapers and magazines and identified the various types of leads.

You must have realized that the intros written for reports can vary from those of features, and editorials in style and content. From the newspapers and magazines identify all the different types of intros, cut and paste them in a file under the individual categories. Do this with your counselor at the study centre.

You have seen how the first paragraph attracts and beckons you to read the rest of the story. It can also repel and not compel you to read the remaining write up. You must have observed this also in the given clippings. Identify good and bad intros from the write ups published in the newspaper and magazine you read regularly. Cut and paste them in your clippings file under the categories good leads and bad leads.

This unit would also have made clear, the differences styles and content in writing leads for television and radio scripts and internet stories.

We hope now you will try to read the newspaper with a critical eye and while writing keep the nuances in mind.

9.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

There is a good survey of intros and complete guide to writing leads in 'Writing News : A Guide for Print Journalists' by Walter Fox (Kindle Books) 2001.

Some other books which give an insight into nuances of intro writing are A Journalistic Approach to Good Writing : The Draft of Clarity by Robert M. Knight (Iowa State Press) 1998.

Associated Press Guide to News Writing : The Resource for professional Journalists By Cappon (AP) 1998. Basic News Writing by Malvin Mencher (Columbia University) 1990 and News Reporting and Editing by K. M. Srivastava (Sterling) 1994.

These will help you in writing leads and understanding the unit better.



UNIT 10 THE INTERNET AND JOURNALISM

Structure

- 10.0 Objectives
- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 A brief History of the Internet
- 10.3 Journalists and the Internet
- 10.4 E-mail
- 10.5 Internet addresses or URLs (Universal Resource Locators)
- 10.6 Operating Systems, Web Browsers and Search Engines
- 10.7 Blogs
- 10.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 10.9 Hints to Activities

10.0 OBJECTIVE

This unit is to familiarize you with the role of the Internet in writing and media.

After having read this unit you should be able to

- Understand the niceties of the Internet
- Its role in the Media
- Blogging/New Media/ Participatory Journalism

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Writing paper, pen, a dictionary, thesaurus and encyclopedia or an almanac are the basic tools of a writer. The latest but most effective addition to this list is the Internet, almost encompassing all other mentioned tools. It can be described as a worldwide system of computers connected to one another, allowing the transfer of information in seconds. Most people think the Internet and the World Wide Web (WWW) are the same thing, but the Web is a subset of the Internet. And, like such systems as e-mail, Usenet, FTP (file transfer protocol), the Web requires certain software for Internet users or surfers or netizens (citizens who are net savvy) to access it.

10.2 A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE INTERNET

The Internet was the brainchild of scientists who wanted to build computer networks so that researchers worldwide could share ideas. This project was

named ARPANET, in honour of the agency that paid for it – The Advanced Research Projects Agency, a unit of the Department of Defense of the United States of America. In 1969, the network connected four computer sites only. When the World Wide Web (WWW) was developed in 1993, interest in the Internet exploded. The Web uses HTML (hypertext markup language), which enables a person to find information on any subject worldwide by simply clicking the mouse on a word that leads to another document in a different computer. By the end of 2008, as many as 8.1 crore Indians were using the Internet. The number is increasing fast day by day.

Activity 1

What is APRANET?

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Activity 2

What for the term “HTML” stands?

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Activity 3

When was the World Wide Web (WWW) developed?

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Activity 4

How many Indians use the Internet?

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10.3 JOURNALISTS AND THE INTERNET

Journalists use the Internet daily as a tool for reporting events and issues comprehensively to viewers and readers. The Internet helps every stage of the reporting process from thinking of a story idea to presenting the story. Reporters also go to the Internet to find story topics, identify experts and monitor a subject. They use it to check names, addresses and other facts. The Internet helps journalists tackle broad themes, find background information on unfamiliar people or issues and keep up with the developments.

The Internet saves journalists' time and news organisation money. Only a few years ago, journalists found information only by visiting libraries. Many towns

lack good libraries with reference materials, so reporters had to travel to nearby cities or settle for incomplete information. Even with the telephone, journalists had to make many calls, leave messages and wait for return calls before finding the information they needed. With the Internet, reporters can find diverse voices and up-to-date information quickly, and at their fingertips. The Internet enables reporters to write more stories and better stories.

The Internet also has some disadvantages. The users may have a hard time sifting through the mountains of information on the Internet. And some of the information may be questionable. Furthermore, journalists should not solely depend on online sources as many important documents are not online. In spite of the drawbacks, the Internet gives reporters new choices for finding information. They can use e-mail, go directly to a Web site, browse the Internet, explore a search engine, read newspapers and magazines online or on 'blogs'.

Activity 5

Why journalists depend so much on the Internet these days?

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Activity 6

What are the disadvantages of the Internet?

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10.4 E-MAIL

The advent of telephone service in the 19th century revolutionized newsgathering. Electronic mail (e-mail) is doing the same thing at the dawn of the 21st century. Reporters use e-mail to contact hard-to-reach or reluctant sources. Even people who travel a lot make time to check their e-mail. In fact e-mail is a way of keeping in contact with sources, exchanging ideas with colleagues or communicating with readers or viewers. There are several free e-mail sites such as gmail.com, aol.com, rediffmail.com, hotmail.com, yahoo.com, etc. to feed the increasing demand of email service seekers in the world. But the romance with emails has its pitfalls too.

Keep in mind what Eliot Spitzer, the former New York's governor said on the subject: "Never talk when you can nod. And never write when you can talk. My only addendum is never put it in email."

However, in this age of web, it is not possible to avoid email communication. Emails have become an integral part of our daily life, whether we like it or not. Is it not better to understand the niceties of this boon of technology?

E-mail Etiquettes

Abbreviations one should use in sending e-mails:

1. **FYI** – For your information
2. **ÔTD** – Things to Do.
3. **CC** – Carbon Copy
4. **BCC** – Blind Carbon Copy
5. **CMIIW** - Correct me if I'm wrong

There are some golden rules for the e-mail communication.

Rule 1: MOST IMPORTANT - Replying

If a mail is sent to you by your supervisor, team lead manager or just a senior. You have to reply him. Examples of some simple replies are:

1. "Thanks, got it".
2. "OK"

Even in the case when people who are reporting to you email you, a prompt reply or even acknowledgement is highly recommended.

Rule 2: Using Cc and Bcc field

To: Your actual main recipient (to whom this email is a must read)

Cc: (send a Carbon copy) of the email to the parties whom you want to inform.

Bcc: (send a Blind Carbon copy) of the email to some other party that you think needs to know about the subject, without letting other parties (i.e. the To and Cc recipients) know about this person's knowledge.

Rule 3: Attachments, use sparingly

Only include attachments when it is absolutely necessary that the receiver should have original file. Instead paste the entire content of excel or word document in the mail body itself.

1. PDF and PPT can be sent as attachments, as they can't be copied entirely in the body.
2. Larger excel and word files which can't be copied should be send as attachments.
3. Ôse JPG instead of GIF format while sending an image as an attachment.

Rule 4: Include clues in the "Subject" field

- Action Required,
- Please Respond by xx/xx/xx,
- As Requested,
- Time sensitive,

- Your Thoughts Please, etc.... These will help your recipient prioritize as they scan incoming messages.
- Feel free to change the title in a response or forward if it will clarify your expectations for the recipient

Rule 5: All Capital letters/words in your email.

Never use capital letters while typing and email message to anyone. For starters, caps are considered impolite and resemble shouting in speech.

Activity 7

What do you understand by the term “E-mail”?

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Activity 8

Give the names of some E-mail sites?

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Activity 9

What are golden rules for E-mail communication?

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Activity 10

What do you understand by the term ‘Bcc’ and ‘Cc’?

Bcc

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Cc

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Activity 11

What are the etiquettes of E-mail?

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10.5 INTERNET ADDRESSES OR URLS (UNIVERSAL RESOURCE LOCATORS)

The amount of information on the Internet is hard to imagine. Some experts say that Internet volume doubles every 90 days. Everyone has a reason to put information on the Internet. Because so many people use the Web for so many reasons, journalists must question the reliability of Web-delivered information. Reporters need to find out who put the information on the Web and why, and then verify any information they use.

Every screen of information on the Internet has an address, called its URL or universal resource locator. The “http” (hypertext transfer protocol) is the protocol or computer scheme used to access information. This protocol allows computers to move information (text, graphics, audio and video) around the Web. It allows a person to click on words to find another document residing in another computer. The “www” is part of the host computer’s name. But keep in mind, that not every address on the World Wide Web has “www” as its prefix.

Activity 12

Explain what do you understand by terms Internet address and URL (Universal Resource Locator)?

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Activity 13

Why is an internet address or URL important for an Internet user?

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10.6 OPERATING SYSTEMS, WEB BROWSERS AND SEARCH ENGINES

The Internet is a repository or mine of information. Internet users depend on operating systems, web browsers and search engines for finding information.

The commonly used operating systems belong to the family of Windows operating systems having different versions such as Windows 98, Windows XP (2000) or Windows Vista (2007). Linux, a new entrant, is successfully challenging the monopoly of the Windows family.

It is hard to imagine how the usage of Internet resources would be possible without web browsers. A web browser is a software application which enables a user to display and interact with text, images, videos, music and other information typically located on a Web page at a website on the World Wide Web or a local area network. Web browsers format HTML information for display. Therefore, the appearance of a Web page may differ between browsers.

Some of the Web browsers currently available for personal computers (PC) include Internet Explorer (with several versions; the latest IE8), Mozilla Firefox (also with several version, the latest is 3.0), Safari (developed by the Apple and used in the iphone), Netscape and Opera etc. The latest to join them is the Chrome, developed by the Google. It has unleashed a browser war.

The process of surfing on the Internet and finding information is facilitated by search engines. At present there is a variety of search engines but the most popular one is Google, which is used by the record number of Internet visitors. Indian search engines are not popular. A very small proportion of Internet visitors use the Yahoo and MSN search engines. Microsoft has also introduced “Bing”, a search engine. Internet surfers depend on web search engines for searching information on the World Wide Web.

Search engines are not thinking people. Unlike librarians, they cannot ask a journalist to tell them more about the topic or ascertain what way the journalist is using a keyword. The search engine identifies all web sites containing that keyword, no matter the definition or context. It then lists the Web sites containing the keyword, according to how pertinent the Web site is to the journalist’s keyword search. This is called relevancy ranking.

But do not forget the Wikipedia, the biggest single mine of information on any subject or prominent individual. However, the web space does not only contain mine of information but it is also full of misinformation. The internet users are expected to use their discretion while navigating the web world in search of information.

Activity 14

Why are search engines important for journalists or writers?

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Activity 15

Give the name of some search engines.

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Activity 16

Why is a browser important for Internet surfers?

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Activity 17

Give the name of some browsers.

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10.7 BLOGS

Blog term is a mash up or blend of website-logging. It is a shortened term of Weblog. It is not something new. Comments are what make blogs really different from a web site as interaction is unique with blogs. Jorn Barger coined the term Weblog on Dec. 17, 1997. It entered into lexicon – Webster’s word of the year -2004. The entry says “*Blog noun (1999, a web site that contains an online personal journal with reflections, comments, and other hyperlinks provided by the writer*”. It was in 1999 Peter Merholz shortened it to blog.

By mid-2001 blogging as an activity was gaining momentum but blogs still represented an extremely small slice of the internet pie. Blogging has come a long way from its modest beginnings. These days, there is money to be made, fame to be earned and influence to be gained.

In 2002, US Senate Majority leader Senator Trent Lott approved racial segregation in a centenary function. It was overlooked by mainstream media (traditional) but a political crisis brew and resulted in Lott stepping down as majority leader when blogs took up the matter. In April 2003, Howell Rainee, Executive Editor of the NBC stepped down along with Managing Editor Gerald Boyd over errors in quotes, coverage and content as the leaked memos and emails from the New York Times employees appeared in blogs. In September 2004, CBS journalist Dan Rather in his famous TV News Programme “60 minutes” challenged the then US President George W. Bush’s military service record on the basis of documents. Bloggers challenged it and Dan had to resign.

Jason Calacania, founder of Weblogs Inc. estimates that less than 10 per cent of blogs are updated regularly. Many blogs are started, briefly loved and summarily abandoned. But it will rise. Half of email-users will have a blog and it will increase. Like a colony of bacteria, the blogosphere continued to post a doubling rate through 2005 (15 millions blog a day) and 2006 (57 millions in October). TECHNORATI is tracking 112 million blogs. But it is also a fact that majority will never grab more than a few readers. In fact, it is the techcult. In late 2006, the most common language for blogs was actually not English. It was Japanese (37 per cent); English (at that time) was a close second at 36 per cent; eight per cent Chinese and One per cent in Persian.

BLOG HOSTS: Starting a basic blog is no more difficult than registering for an email address. Within a few minutes you can start blogging. All you have to do is to sign up with a blog host, pick a name and you are ready to start posting. If you are new to blogging or not particularly computer-savvy, the best way to start blogging is to begin simply - and that means signing up with a blog host. The host will provide a web address for your blog, various ready-made page template and easy-to-use online tools for adding or updating posts. You won't have to worry about anything vaguely technical such as registering and managing a domain name, learning HTML, or installing special software. Blogger allows you to use your own domain name. Blogger was started in August 1999. It was acquired by Google in 2003.

TRIAL PACKAGE: no risks/no commitment; within five minutes, spellcheck is there, buttons you can return and update it any time – from any computer connected to the Internet

THE DOWNSIDE: You may not have precise control; limited to whatever features are provided

Some other ready-made blogger hosts are also there with (Hosted Blog Software) such as

- Typepad
- Livejournal
- Xanga
- Wordpress

There are also server-based blog softwares. They charge you though not more than \$ 10 a year. You have to renew it every year. They give you space also. They include gogaddy.com; movable type.com; greymatter.com. One can resort to goggling to know more server based blog software.

What makes a good Blog Title

- Be clear
- Be short
- Stand out

No need to tell you that the blogosphere is crowded. A catchy title in blogroll will attract traffic to your blog.

WHY BLOGGING?

1. Exploring a hobby or passion
2. Sharing information
3. Making money (Advertising on blogs reached \$ 283 millions in 2007)
4. To avoid the loony bin
5. To fight injustice
6. As a substitute for therapy
7. To know you are not alone
8. To tap the creative inner spirit

BUT

- A. Choose a subject that genuinely interests you
- B. Decide whether any topics are off limits.
- C. Think about your potential readers. (Choosing what to blog about when you start)

SETTING GOALS:

- Writing Well
- Posting frequently
- Interacting with comments

Bloggers speak truth to power and are starting to fill the checks and balances role formerly performed by the conventional press. The best in blogging pursues the truth, with fact-checking comparable to the best of the press. Phile Meyer, a journalism professor claims in “The Vanishing Newspaper: Saving Journalism in the Information Age” that the last print edition of a newspaper will be published some morning in April 2043. MSM (Mainstream Media, like newspapers, New channels) has been described as dinosaur



media by some of the Web enthusiasts. But its extinction is not imminent. Lots of bloggers comment on MSM stories. If the dinosaur media disappears like giant lizards after an asteroid strike, these bloggers could be bound for a similar fate. Fascinating hybrid of old-style news and blogging Newspapers are picking up on blogs. Everyone can be a reporter. It is a sort of "court of appeals in news judgement"

Activity 18

What is term 'Blog'?

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Activity 19

Give a brief history of development of 'Blog'?

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Activity 20

Why people do blogging?

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Activity 21

What do you understand by the term "Participatory Journalism"?

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Activity 22

What do you understand by the term “New Media”?

Activity 23

Start your own blog and select a catchy title.

Activity 24

What should you blog?

10.8 LET US SUM UP

Internet and Web have revolutionized journalism. In fact journalism has today become a multidirectional force field, rather than the one-way street of the traditional newspaper or television news bulletin. Moreover, today's newsrooms are essentially collections of networked personal computers.

At the same time, the Internet is something which everyone has access to these days. It is a crucial part of our society. It has changed how we communicate and interact with each other. In fact it has become the vital medium. People visit websites for information, entertainment and news.

Also, because the technology of news-making and distribution is much cheaper and simpler, almost everyone can join the journalistic melee. Every citizen can be a reporter and can take on the powers that be. The difference between the internet, television and radio, magazines, newspapers is the two-way communication.

Blogging, the new *avatar* of media known as the New Media or participatory journalism permits anyone to establish a real-time, on-line personal platform, for use as a public diary or pulpit to the world. But blogging is a gem which takes a minute to learn and a lifetime to master.

10.9 HINTS TO ACTIVITIES

Activity 1

The Advanced Research Projects Agency

Activity 2

Hypertext markup language

Activity 5

As an important tool

Activity 6

Questionable information

Activity 11

See Text

Activity 12

Address Bar on your PC screen



UNIT 11 INTERVIEW

Structure

- 11.0 Aims
- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Types of Interviews
- 11.3 Preparation for the interview
- 11.4 Arranging for the Interview
- 11.5 Homework and Questionnaire
- 11.6 Conducting Interviews
- 11.7 Taking Notes
- 11.8 Writing the Interview story
- 11.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 11.10 Suggested Reading
- 11.11 Aids to Activities

11.0 AIMS

This unit is aimed to introduce you to the art of interviews which is an integral part of media, print, broadcast and electronic. The typical notion of an interview is an exchange between two persons based on questions and answers but, an interview can be a powerful tool for a writer to collect information. Not all the details you want may be available in published sources. The finer points, the lesser known nuances will be obtained through talking to people who know about the issue or who have been affected in some way.

Not only are interviews the staple of television and radio talk shows and news, they are also the wellspring of myriad articles and most nonfiction books. Interviews vary from tightrope acts to prolonged in-depth conversations, and at their liveliest and most revealing, they are true collaborations between interviewer and interviewee. To borrow the observations of Harrison Salisbury “a good interview should have the character of a good novel”.

At the end of the unit, you should be able to

- understand the importance and uses of interviews in media;
- know how to choose a suitable person to interview;
- know how to prepare for the interview;
- know how to conduct the interview, and
- know how to put the interview in your respective medium

Here we are concerned only with the setting forth of interviews in the media. Such interviews should not be confused with ‘selection interview’ of which the purpose is to select people for jobs, admissions etc.

Activity 1

Why interviews are important for media – print, broadcasting and electronic?

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11.1 INTRODUCTION

Media persons interview people to gather newsworthy information and opinions. Some interviews provide facts about events media persons were unable to witness. Other interviews provide opinions or colourful quotations about people, problems or happenings. How successfully media persons obtain information depends on how well they have prepared. Just as every news story must answer six questions – Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How? and of course ‘in which channel (medium) – interviewers must answer similar questions for themselves as they prepare for and conduct interviews?

Activity 2

Write about the importance of Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? And Which channel in an interview.

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11.2 TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

Media persons beginning the process of gathering information for a news story should ask themselves, “Why am I conducting this interview? What kind of story will I write from this information?” Their answers will determine what kinds of questions they ask, what kinds of sources they seek and how they conduct themselves during an interview. The reasons for interviewing may be as varied as stories themselves, but most often the media person will be seeking information for one of the three types of stories:

a) News story: **Media persons need to interview sources who provide:**

- Facts and details, including dates, names, locations and costs;
- A chronology showing the unfolding of events;
- Relationship among the people or interests involved;
- Context and perspective, including the significance of the event or issue, its relationship to other issues and its historical significance;
- Anecdotes that illuminate the event or issue and make it more dramatic and understandable for readers, listeners or viewers.

(b) **Feature Story:** Media persons, interviewing sources to write a feature story,

such as personality profile, need everything they would need to write a news story plus descriptions of the following:

- The environment in which the subject lives or works;
- How the subject appears and dresses;
- The subject's mannerisms;
- Smells, sounds and textures associated with the subject's home or work, using every sense to create an image of the interview subject.

c) **Personality Profiles:** Interviews for personality profiles may consume many hours for media persons and subjects, but often they are enjoyable experiences for both. In-depth interviews conducted for investigative stories produce more tension. The purpose of the investigative story often is to expose wrongdoing, and sources may fear losing their careers and reputations. News persons working on the investigative story must obtain the following additional information besides the routine information for a news or feature story:

- The subject's version of events, which may differ from that of other sources and records;
- Explanations or contradictions. If the subject of the story tells a version of events that differs markedly from that of other sources, reporters must ask for an explanation. The subject's explanation may be reasonable and may resolve the conflict – or it may not.
- Replies to charges and allegations. During an investigation, news persons may gather charges and allegations against the subject of the story. Those charges and allegations should be presented to the subject, who should have the opportunity to reply to them.

Activity 3

How many types are of interviews?

A

B.

C.

11.3 PREPARATION FOR INTERVIEW

Once reporters know the purpose of the interviews, they must decide whom they should interview. Sometimes the answer is obvious. If reporters are preparing a personality profile of a prominent person, the subject of that profile and his or her friends, enemies and co-workers should be interviewed. How many sources news persons need for a story?

The answer depends on at least four factors: deadline pressure, the expertise of the sources, the degree of controversy raised by a topic and the complexity of a topic. Media persons must have a list of sources, possessing

knowledge, expertise or insight in respect to respective fields with phone numbers at their disposal.

When stories involve breaking news, which must be published or broadcast or telecast as soon as possible, news persons cannot afford the luxury of searching widely for sources and information. They have to construct a story from the materials readily available. Still, they should get as complete an account of the event and include as many points of view as possible. If they cannot interview a key source before the deadline, the story should say so clearly.

How many interviewees for an interview, other than a personality profile: There is no hard and fast rule in this regard. A reliable source, and that too available on phone only, is better than a number of easily available sources. The degree of controversy also affects the number of sources.

INTERVIEW

'The West's talk of madarsa reforms is very suspect'

At a time when madaras are portrayed as being out of touch with the modern world, Maulana Shah Muhammad Fazlur Rahman Nadwi (below) represents an alternative model of madarsa education. The Rector of the Jamiat-ul-Hidaya, a unique madarsa in Jaipur, Rajasthan which combines religious, modern and technical education, he talks to YOGINDER SIKAND about his work and the need for reforms in madarsa education.

You are considered to be a pioneer in seeking to combine religious and modern, including technical, education in madaras. How did it start?

The story goes back to my great-grandfather, Hazrat Shah Muhammad Hidayat Ali, a noted Naqshbandi Sufi and scholar who felt the need for reform in the madarsa system, for which purpose he set up the Madarsa Talim-ul-Islam in Jaipur. However, he died in 1951, and his dream was left unfulfilled. Following this, my father, Shah Muhammad Abdur Rahim, contacted various large madaras across India,

The reformer Madarsa Rector Maulana Nadwi (below) and Jamiat ul-Hidaya students (opposite page)



urging them to open departments of 'modern' and technical education so that their graduates could be economically self-sufficient instead of having to depend on others. Yet, his efforts met with almost no response. Some ulema argued that it was impossible to combine religious and other forms of education. Others said that while it might well be possible, it would serve no positive purpose. Yet others admitted that it was possible and a good thing but declined to act on my father's advice on the grounds that this would mean a departure from the tradition set by their predecessors. So, my father decided to himself set up a model madarsa providing religious, modern as well as technical education so that others could possibly emulate it. This took the form of the Jamiat ul-Hidaya, which began

'In not a single madarsa have standards improved under a State-appointed madarsa board'

functioning in 1985, which he managed till his death in 1994.

What is the course that students at Jamiat ul-Hidaya undergo?

In contrast to most other madaras, at the Jamiat ul-Hidaya students study the various Islamic disciplines till the graduation or alimiyat level, but alongside this they also have to study various modern subjects, for which we follow the syllabus prescribed by the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT). This

reporters should speak to. If a topic is not controversial - the cause of polio, for example — then one source may be sufficient. But, on the other hand, if the topic is global warming — about which experts disagree vigorously — then a news person must be sure the story includes all reasonable points of view. As a story becomes more complex, the number of sources needed will grow.

No matter how many sources news persons talk to, they must evaluate those sources. The obligation to evaluate information increases as the complexity of the story increases. Evaluating sources requires media persons to ask two questions: What is the basis of the source's knowledge? How credible or



year, our students appeared for the tenth grade examinations conducted by the National Institute of Open Schooling, and the results were quite impressive.

Our course of study begins at the sixth grade. After students finish the tenth grade examination, they do four years more of religious education while also learning a particular technical trade or craft, such as computers, draughtsmanship, accountancy and so on. In this way we are trying to bridge the enormous gap between madarasas and the regular system of education. Several of our students are now studying at regular universities, some work as ulema, and several others have taken up a range of other occupations.

Roughly half of our teachers are madarsa-trained ulema and the rest have studied in 'modern' colleges and universities. Likewise,

'Ulema should write in languages other than Urdu to express their concerns to non-Muslims'

our roughly 700 students come from families with different sectarian affiliations, which, again, is in contrast to most madarasas that select only those students whose parents subscribe to their particular school of thought. **What reforms would you suggest in the present madarsa system?**

The syllabus today followed in most South Asian madarasas is some variant or the other of the *dars-e-nizami*, a curriculum developed three hundred years ago by Mulla Nizamuddin of the Firangi Mahal in Lucknow. For its times, the *dars-e-nizami* was very appropriate and relevant. It was also job-oriented, helping train bureaucrats and officials for the royal courts. But today, the *dars-e-nizami* has largely lost its link with employment, and an institution that no longer has that sort of link cannot last long. Hence, I would urge, madarasas need to reform in accordance with modern needs, while still preserving their basic purpose of training would-be ulema. I think the only way this can happen is to incorporate and give a respectful place to basic modern subjects in the madarsa curriculum, as we have done in the Jamiat ul-Hidayah.

Some ulema see introducing modern education in the madarasas as an alleged

'anti-Islamic conspiracy'...

Some people are apprehensive that changes in the madarsa curriculum, even on the lines that I have suggested, might damage or destroy the religious identity of madarasas. I, however, beg to differ. I think this fear is baseless. At the same time, however, I must state that when certain dominant Western powers or anti-Muslim ideologues talk of the need for madarsa reforms, their intentions are certainly very suspect.

What's your view of madarasas that are linked to government-appointed madarsa boards in certain states?

With a few exceptions, I think the general experience of such madarasas has been that once they come under such boards their standards decline and teachers do not take their teaching work very seriously, being now assured of a regular salary from the government. I have not heard of a single madarsa whose standards have improved after coming under a government-appointed madarsa board. The State should instead open its own model madarasas that combine both religious as well as modern education. But it is much better if the managers of the madarasas themselves take up the task of madarsa reforms than let the State do so.

How do you see the ongoing propaganda offensive against madarasas in India, targeting them as 'dens of terror'?

This propaganda is completely wrong and baseless. Madarasas in our country do not preach hatred of other communities or engage in or encourage any illegal or unconstitutional activity. Anyone is welcome to visit madarasas to see things for himself. Besides those who are willfully engaged in seeking to defame madarasas, there are others who think of madarasas in stereotypically negative terms primarily because they have had no association with the ulema or even with ordinary Muslims. I think this is an issue that the ulema desperately need to address. Most ulema have very little interaction with people of other faiths. The ulema should also seek to write in languages other than Urdu to communicate their views and concerns to non-Muslims who cannot read Urdu. For this they need to learn other languages, and not consider that any language belongs to or is associated with only a particular community or that Urdu is somehow a Muslim language, which is not quite the case.

reliable is the source? The credibility and reliability of the source require asking about the source's credentials and cross-checking information from one source with that from others. The process is not simple or easy, but it is essential if media persons are going to produce sound, accurate news stories.

Activity 4

What preparations should you make while interviewing the subject?

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11.4 ARRANGING FOR THE INTERVIEW

All interviews, especially in-depth interviews, are more productive when reporters do their research before they interview the main source or subject of their stories. Thorough research gives media persons at least seven advantages:

- They will not waste time by asking about issues that have already been widely publicized.
- They will have leads for asking productive, interesting questions.
- They will not embarrass themselves by appearing ignorant. On the other hand, it is always productive to feign ignorance about a topic to elicit more-in-depth, revealing explanations.
- They are more likely to recognize newsworthy statements and ask intelligent follow-up questions about them.
- They are more likely to spot inconsistencies and evasions in a source's responses.
- They are likely to elicit all the relevant information in a single interview and need not seek a re-interview.
- They encourage their sources to speak more freely, because sources are more likely to trust media persons who seem knowledgeable.

On the other hand, media persons who fail to prepare for an interview will not know what to ask or how to report the information they get. Some sources will try to manipulate ignorant media persons or avoid unpleasant topics. Sometimes, sources will abruptly end an interview – and scold unprepared media persons.

When conducting the interview in person, media persons should arrive early for their appointments and keep the interview within the agreed-upon time. They should also ask when the source might be available to answer follow-up questions.

Activity 5

Is ground work equally important for conducting an interview?

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Activity 6

Give advantageous points to an interviewer for making ground work.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

11.5 HOMEWORK AND QUESTIONNAIRE

The prospect of being interviewed creates anxiety for some sources. Their nervousness will interfere with their ability to answer questions in a natural manner. To reduce the anxiety, media persons conduct interviews in places where sources are comfortable and will talk freely, usually their homes or offices. By asking about photos, items clipped from newspapers and magazines and other decorations, media persons may gain insights and anecdotes about their sources and at the same time win the confidence of the source.

Newsrooms are poor places for interviews. They are noisy and chaotic. Media persons should also avoid luncheon appointments. Although the idea of a leisurely interview over lunch sounds pleasant, restaurants have special drawbacks as interview locations. Crowd noise and interruptions from waiters may interfere with the conversation. Lunch itself will distract both media person and news source. Media persons should pay for lunch to avoid any appearance that they can be influenced by a generous source. Thus, the practice of interviewing people over lunch can become expensive for media persons.

Reporters conduct many interviews by telephone or cell phone. Calls save enormous time. Media persons should wear headsets, keeping their hands free to type notes directly into a computer or take notes quietly and quickly in longhand as they interview their sources. Despite their advantages, calls are an unsatisfactory means of conducting in-depth interviews about controversial or complex issues and personalities.

E-mail has opened up another way of interviewing sources. An advantage of email is that it provides the reporter with an accurate record of sources' responses. It also allows sources to develop their thoughts in more detail than they might on a telephone or even in a face-to-face interview. A drawback, however, is that e-mails do not convey sources' facial expressions or vocal inflections, which may help media persons understand what sources are trying to say.

The preparation of good questions is the most important step in the interviewing process. Every story has a unifying central point. Interviewers should have a tentative central point in mind as they plan their stories. That central point will help them decide whom they should interview and what questions they should ask. Once interviewers have selected a central point and have researched the topic, they should write their questions in advance.

The questions should be arranged in a logical order, so that a source's answer to one question leads into the next. Interviewers may structure interviews in a

variety of ways, depending on the nature of interviews and the media person's preference. Some organize their interviews to begin with general questions and gradually move to more specific issues. Others go in the opposite direction, starting with specifics and building to general matters. Interviewers usually ask their most important questions first so that if they run out of time for the interview they will still be able to produce a good story.

Interviewers save their most embarrassing or difficult questions for the end of interviews. By then, their sources should be more comfortable answering questions. Moreover, if a source refuses to answer embarrassing questions and abruptly ends an interview, the media person will have already obtained most of the information needed for the story.

Regardless of how they organize the questions, news persons should craft all of them to elicit as much information as possible. This means asking open-ended rather than closed-ended questions. A close-end question is one that sources can answer with a yes or no: "Will the new tax hurt private schools?" If Media persons want more information, they have to ask follow-up questions. An open-ended question would be, "What will be the effect of the state's new tax on private schools?" The question pushes the source to provide an analysis of the problem with some supporting facts.

Activity 7

Why a questionnaire is important in an interview?

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Activity 8

What are the etiquettes one should follow while interviewing the subject?

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Activity 9

Why should an interview have a central point as a theme?

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Activity 10

Should difficult questions be asked at the end of an interview? If yes, why?

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11.6 CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

Live interviews with celebrities or important officials appear so often on television that you may think them typical of all journalistic interviews. Live interviews, however, have their limitations. They usually last just a few minutes and allow little chance for challenging questions. Even with these shows, viewers see only a few minutes of interviews that might have lasted hours. Also, some of the questions TV interviewers ask are calculated for dramatic effect, not for eliciting information.

Tips for successful interviewing:

- Start an interview with a clear statement of its purpose. For brief news interviews, media persons usually try to get right to the main questions. For longer interviews, they often begin with a few minutes of small talk to put a source at ease.
- Once the serious questioning begins, interviewers should take charge of the conversation, decide what questions to ask, keep the interview on track and make sure the source fully answers every question. If a source wanders or tries to evade questions, media persons should bring the conversation back to the central topic and politely but firmly ask the source to respond to the questions.
- For bringing the conversation back an interviewer should not adopt bullying tactics or engage in arguing or debating with the interviewees. Your opinions are irrelevant. You want to know what they think and feel.
- Remember, it is an interview not an interrogation, so avoid multiple questions, trick questions that force interviewees to answer in the way you want rather than the way an interviewee wants.
- Speak clearly, using a friendly, reassuring tone, and at a volume the interviewees can hear without straining or becoming deafened.
- Successful interviewers are good listeners. The principle of good listening means a media person does not interrupt, argue with or lecture the source. Sources do not want to be badgered, and media persons who do so are likely to find their sources reluctant to speak. Usually, the reason for interviewing sources is to let them tell a story in their own words.
- If you know someone is lying, allow the liar to spin his or her yarn. Don't interrupt except to ask for more details. Deceivers frequently provide extensive detail because they think a very complete story will add to their credibility. Listen and take good notes. When the lie has been fully constructed – down to the last nail — go back and logically de-construct it. Don't be impatient. The fabricator is now in a corner. Keep them there until they break.
- Don't be frightened of silences. Pauses between questions indicate that interviewees have more to say. Do not rush them and give them the chance to answer you in full.
- Keep eye contact, but do not stare in a threatening or intimate manner.
- Pay due attention to the gestures and facial expressions of the source. It helps you in weaving a good copy.

- Maintain a steady, unhurried pace, and be systematic in completing each sections of the interview before moving on to the next.
- If an outrageous question comes to mind, ask it, even if it is terribly personal. There are no embarrassing questions, just embarrassing answers. Your chisel-like questions should chip away at all sides of an issue.
- If the interviewees become hostile or emotional, don't lose your temper but maintain a calm detachment and try to distract them by concentrating on the facts rather than the feelings.
- If the interviewees become upset, do not be tempted to act the psychiatrist. Your role is to ask questions and, by listening to what they tell you, to help them to articulate their problems and find their own solutions.
- Interviewers should ask for clarification when they do not understand things sources say. Sometimes that means asking a question that might appear naïve or silly. Media persons should not be afraid to ask those questions, however.
- Media persons also must be alert to unexpected but newsworthy developments in an interview. Well-prepared media persons enter an in-depth interview with a list of questions and a central point they wish to develop. But sometimes sources reveal information or ideas reporters do not expect. When that happens, media persons must abandon their plans and pursue new angles.
- People aren't aware of how much they know. You must lead them through their memory. Visualise your source as a bucket full of information and empty it.
- Near the end of an interview, ask the person what else our readers might be interested in. Sometimes people have more than one newspaper-worthy story in them. Media persons should also ask sources for the names of other people to interview or for documents that might provide additional information or verification. They should also ask the best time to call sources back if they have follow-up questions.
- End the interview in the same friendly manner in which it began and, no matter what the nature of the interview, always try to leave your interviewees with their dignity and self-esteem intact.
- After the interview-based story or interview runs, call the subject for his or her reaction. You'll get additional stories and tips this way.

TELEVISION REPORTERS:

They need to plan their interviews in advance with the technicians who will be operating the cameras and sound equipment, especially if the interview needs to be shot quickly for broadcast that day or if the source does not want to appear on camera. They also may want to show the interview subject doing more than talking. Where possible, television reporters may want the subject to demonstrate an activity or respond to a video or another source.

Activity 11

How should an interview be conducted? Give five most important reasons.

1.

- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

11.7 TAKING NOTES

Media persons conducting interviews must balance the tasks of note-taking and questioning. Unless reporters take detailed notes, they probably will forget much of what is said. Most interviewers take copious notes, writing down much more information than they can possibly use. During an interview, media persons may not know which facts they will need or want to emphasize in their stories. If they record as much as possible, they are less likely to forget an important point or make a factual error. They can easily ignore notes that later prove to be unimportant or irrelevant.

Few media persons know shorthand, but most develop their own shortcuts for taking notes. They leave out some words, abbreviate others, and jot down names, numbers, good quotations and key ideas. When sources speak too rapidly, media persons can request them to slow down or repeat important statements. Note-taking makes some sources nervous. Media persons should explain that the notes will help them write more accurate and thorough stories.

After completing interviews, media persons should review their notes immediately, while everything is fresh in their minds. They may want to fill in some gaps or be certain that they understand everything a source said. Media persons should write their stories as soon as possible after their interviews. The longer they wait, the more likely they are to forget some facts or distort others.

Tape-recording interviews frees reporters to concentrate on the questions they want to ask and sources' responses to those questions. Tapes also provide verbatim and permanent records, so media persons make fewer factual errors, and sources are less likely to claim that they were misquoted. And when media persons replay the tapes, they often find important statements they failed to notice during the interviews.

Tape-recording has drawbacks, too. After recording a one-hour interview, media persons may have to replay the entire tape at least once, and perhaps two or three times, before writing the story. They may also have difficulty locating a particular fact or quotation on the tape. By comparison, media persons may need a minute or less to find a fact or a quotation in their handwritten notes from a one-hour interview.

As a third possibility, media persons may record major interviews but augment tapes with written notes. The media persons can consult their notes to write the stories, then use the tape recordings to verify the accuracy of important facts and quotations. If a tape recorder has a counter that indicates how much tape has played, media persons can use that to note the location of important and interesting quotations.

Although tape recorders have become commonplace, some sources still refuse to be taped. Recorders are small enough now that media persons can easily hide them in their pockets or handbags, but taping a conversation without the other party's consent is unethical and sometimes illegal too.

Activity 12

Should notes be taken while interviewing the subject or the interview should be tape-recorded?

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Activity 13

Is it compulsory for a news person to know shorthand?

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Activity 14

What are the advantages of tape-recording an interview?

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11.8 WRITING THE INTERVIEW STORY

Writing a story based on an in-depth interview, such as a personality profile, is little different from writing any other news story.

One option media persons have when writing an interview story is to use a question-and-answer format. But it requires too much space and makes it difficult for readers and viewers to grasp quickly a story's highlights. Instead, media persons begin most interview stories with a summary lead that presents the story's central point. They then present the highlights in the following paragraphs. Media persons also use an alternative lead, such as an anecdote or description that introduces a nut paragraph containing the central point. Information in the body of the story usually is organized by topic, and facts and quotations are presented in the order of their importance, not the order in which the source provided them.

Media persons must be sure, however, that in rearranging information they keep every direct and indirect quotation in its proper context. Background information is kept to a minimum and usually presented in later paragraphs. Also, media persons vary their style of writing so that sentences and paragraphs do not always begin with a source's name.

An interview story may or may not adhere to its central point in its presentation. Another problem is the overuse of quotations. Some writers

think that they have done their job simply by stringing together quotations from their sources. Quotations should be used only for emphasis and impact. Media persons should tell most of the story in their own words and use only those quotations that show strong emotions or phrase a point in a particularly effective way.

Activity 15

Is writing the copy/text of an interview is most important activity of an interview?

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11.9 LET US SUM UP

To Conduct a good interview, you must “converse like a talk show host, think like a writer, understand subtext like a psychiatrist, have an ear like a musician, be able to select the best parts like a book editor and know how to piece it together dramatically like a playwright.” This is the sound advice of famed playboy interviewer Grobel.

You should not forget the golden rule of the interviewing. Respect the “Off-the-record” remark by the source at any cost though the temptations to break this rule for a good copy may be there for you.

As a last ditch method with a reluctant source, say, “Look, whether you talk to me or not, I’m going to do a story on this. So you can have it one of two ways: Either I do a story that says that you refused to cooperate, or I do a fair story that has your point of view in it. Now which do you want”. Sources usually chose the second option. But this attempt should be whole-hearted and convincing one.

Activity 16

Comment on the comment “converse like a talk show host, think like a writer, understand subtext like a psychiatrist, have an ear like a musician, be able to select the best parts like a book editor and know how to piece it together dramatically like a playwright.”

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11.10 SUGGESTED READING

Interview with History by Oriana Fallaci

In these interviews, Oriana Fallaci, one of the most well-known journalists of the last half of the twentieth century confronted a whole host of powerful

figures, including Henry Kissinger (USA), Indira Gandhi, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, The Shah of Iran, Col. Gaddafi of Libya, Yasar Arafat (Palestine), Golda Meir (Israel), Deng Xiaoping (China) and Ayatollah Khomeini (Iran) of course. The book was published in 1976 and almost all of these leaders are no longer on the world - scene. The interesting part is that every one of these leaders regretted later for having granted an interview to her. It was her triumph, a triumph of a journalist worth salt. It is a must reading for anyone interested in the art of interviewing.

11.11 AIDS TO ACTIVITIES

Activity 1

Hint: Interviews are staple of TV and radio talk and soul of a newspaper/periodical.

Activity 2

Read 11.1 again.

Activity 3

News Story, Feature Story and Personality Profiles: Elaborate upon them.

Activity 4

Read 11.3 again.

Activity 5

Read 11.4 again.

Activity 6

Hint: Seven points.

Activities 7, 8, 9 and 10

Read 11.5 again.

Activity 11

Hint: Conducting an interview is the most important aspect.

Activity 12, 13 and 14

Read 11.7 again.

Activity 15

Hint: Try to understand it by writing an interview text yourself.

Activity 16

Hint: Read interviews in newspapers/ periodicals; watch on TVs.

UNIT 12 FEATURES

Structure

- 12.0 Aims
- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Types of Feature Stories
- 12.3 Feature Writing Tips
- 12.4 The Introduction of a Feature story
- 12.5 The Body of a Feature Story
- 12.6 The Ending of a Feature story
- 12.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 12.8 Aids to Activities

12.0 AIMS

This unit introduces you to feature writing in general and discuss how a feature differs from other items printed in newspapers and magazines and features in the print media vis-à-vis broadcast and electronic media.

At the end of this unit you should be able to

- Describe the special characteristics of a feature story
- List ideas that could be developed into a feature story
- Describe what makes a good feature writer
- Write a polished feature story for publication

12.1 INTRODUCTION

News stories describe recent events – political developments in the country and abroad, meetings, crimes, fires or accidents, business & economy news, sports event etc. Feature stories, by contrast, not only inform readers and viewers but also amuse, entertain, inspire or stimulate. That is why some of them are also described as ‘human interest’ stories.

Feature story ideas are everywhere. Almost everything one sees or does has a story behind it – you just have to open your eyes and ears. The most crucial step in writing a good feature story is making the topic fresh, dramatic, colourful and exciting. You should use all your sense – seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and sometimes tasting. You should record how people move, speak and dress. You should use descriptive verbs instead of adjectives and adverbs. Your job as a feature writer is to give audience members a reason to care about the subject. An earthquake, plane crash, international incident or other news events can speak human-interest stories about the reactions of victims, heroism in crises and other ‘people’ angles that bring the event into sharper focus.

Features describe a person, place, process or idea rather than an event. Their topics may be less timely, less vocal and less earthshaking than those of news stories, but producers and editors find time and space to run them because they are newsworthy and appeal to audience members.

Writing a feature story, you may borrow techniques from fiction writers, often using description, sensory details, quotations, anecdotes and even personification. You may use characterization, scene setting, plot structure and other novelistic elements to dramatise a story's theme and to add more details. Feature stories often close with a 'kicker' rather than simply petering out.

But, note that feature stories are journalism, not fiction or 'creative writing'. Nothing is made up. Like news stories, features must be factual and original. They must be fair and balanced, based on verifiable information. They also must be objective – they are not essays or editorials.

Activity 1

List the difference between news stories and feature stories.

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Activity 2

Why feature stories differ from fiction?.

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12.2 TYPES OF FEATURE STORIES

Feature stories come in a wide variety. Here are a few of the most common types.

Profiles or Personality Features:

Profiles describe interesting people. These people may have overcome a disability, had an interesting hobby, pursued an unusual career or become famous because of their colourful personalities. To be effective, profiles must do more than list an individual's achievements or important dates in the individual's life. They must reveal the person's character. To gather the necessary information, feature writers often watch their subjects at work; visit them at home; and interview their friends, relatives and business associates. Some profile subjects may surprise media persons by revealing their most personal and embarrassing secrets. Completed profiles quote and describe their subjects. The best profiles are so revealing that readers and viewers feel as though they have actually talked to the people.

Not every subject of a personality profile is a celebrity. Often media persons profile people who are involved in a newsworthy situations or confronting problems readers and viewers might share.

Historical Features:

Historical features commemorate the dates of important events, such as the Independence Day. They are also tied to current events that generate interest in their topics. If a flood or earthquake strikes a city or region, media would like to present stories about earlier floods or earthquakes. Historical features may also describe famous landmarks, pioneers and philosophies;

engagedcircle

INSIDE
At a time when madarsas are attracting critics' ire, a 'madarsa with a difference' in Jaipur
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ALMOST TWO years ago, Alfred Ford, American business tycoon and great-grandson of Henry Ford, announced his plans to set up the "world-class" Rs 1500 crore Himalayan Ski Village (HSV) in Kullu District of Himachal Pradesh. The project quickly ran into opposition from an unlikely quarter – the village deities of Kullu valley. In a *dev sautsad*, or 'conference of the gods' called by community elders, 164 local deities assembled, who, speaking through their oracles, rejected the project outright. This 'divine intervention' eventually led to a full-fledged campaign against the project, briefly making it the centre of controversy in Himachal Pradesh.

The Ski Village is now once again back in the news, after a Public Interest Litigation filed by local organisation Jan Jagran Vikas Samiti (JjVS) demanding the scrapping of the project on environmental and other grounds, was dismissed by the High Court of Himachal this

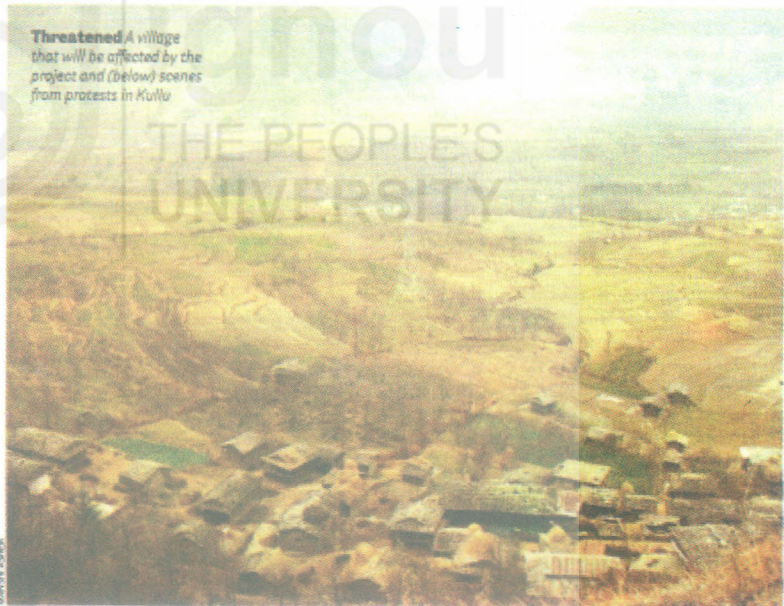
'How can rights over common properties be handed over to a private company?' ask residents

April. The court instead supported the state government's proposal to setup a six-member committee under the chairmanship of the state tourism secretary, to look into the issues surrounding the project. JjVS has now made a submission to the committee detailing why the project should not be sanctioned, but has received no response, except that the committee is planning a site visit soon.

It's the sheer magnitude of the project that has convinced local residents that it deserves to be scrapped altogether. Their concerns have been articulated in a memorandum submitted to the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) under the banner of the Jan Hit Sangarsh Samiti, a network of 24 organisations in the valley. "From the information available about the project, our estimate is that a total of 12 panchayats with a population of 40,000

A HIMALAYAN BLUNDER?

A giant ski resort project in Kullu is facing stiff opposition, including from local deities, reports **MANSHI ASHER**



Threatened A village that will be affected by the project and (below) scenes from protests in Kullu



improvements in educational, entertainment, medical and transportation facilities; and changes in an area's demography, housing patterns, food, industries, growth, religions and wealth.

will be directly and indirectly affected by the project" states the letter to the Ministry.

The foremost concern seems to be of construction activity in the alpine areas and high forested slopes leading to destruction of temperate forests of cedar and alpine grassland meadows in these areas. "The alpine meadows are home to many medicinal plants and rare wild life like the monal pheasant, goral, musk deer and even leopards," says Lal Chand Thakur, leader of Jan Hit Sangarsh Samiti. "Soil erosion is the first fallout of any construction on a mountain side. This leads to problems like slope destabilisation, flooding and landslides. In the long run, the topography disturbance will result in change of glacial flows," adds Pashpal Thakur, resident of Hallan Panchayat and one of the petitioners in the HL.

Himalayan Ski Village managing director Ajay Dabra, who is also a share holder in the project, is not too perturbed by these concerns. "We have a whole team of environmental experts at work and we will follow the due process to obtain all the clearances. Even the arguments raised in the petitions filed against us are too weak and they do not stand much chance," he says. With reputed institutions like The Energy Research Institute (TERI) and Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM) Bhopal hired as environment consultants, Dabra's confidence does not seem misplaced.

There is little information about the project in the public domain barring the MoU that was signed between the government of Himachal and the company in December 2005. But the terms of the MoU itself have been enough to irk the local population. Some of the obligations of the government include - granting irrevocable license to the company for use of ski trails; allowing the company and its invitees full access to public and private roads; permission to build tracks, ropeways or gondolas wherever required; and full water rights in the project area, including tapping of unused nallas and ground water. Residents of the region are enraged by these terms. How can the government grant rights over common properties to a private company whose sole aim is to earn profit?

The most critical livelihood concern is of ac-

ski village stats

Proposed Rs 1,500 crore investment

Spread over 130 acres, with access to another 6,000 acres

Includes multiple star hotels, malls and entertainment facilities

Promises employment for 4,000 people, 70 percent for Himachalis

Located between 7,500 and 14,000 ft above sea level



Playground The site for the proposed US\$ 300 million Himachal Ski Village

cess to the forests surrounding the Ski Village, on which the locals depend for firewood and fodder. The users of the forests are not only the residents of the valley. Gulars and Gaddis, livestock rearers from 6 districts in the state migrate to this area to graze their animals, rights for which have been recognised traditionally, in return for royalties paid to local panchayats. "The streams here are the main source of drinking and irrigation water in the villages downstream. If it's diverted, the local economy would be hit" states Inawati Devi, a vocal elderly woman from the area.

The threat to the local environment and livelihoods in the Kullu valley is more over arching today and comes from the developments that have been taking place in the region for almost three decades now. Apart from the ceaseless tourist traffic, hotels and other concrete structures, hydropower projects like the Parbati and Allian Duhangan have altered the landscape significantly. As the memorandum to the MoU rightly states "There is a need to assess the Ski Village project in terms of the cumulative impact it will result in considering that the area is already facing severe environmental pressures".

Interestingly, the MoU gives permission to the company to sell or sublease to any person the commercial residential buildings or sites within the project area, under a special exemption from the HP Land Reforms Act (HPLEA). "This is not tourism - it is real estate

business" retorts Lal Chand Katoch of the Jan Jagran Evam Vikas Sansthan. "While the HPLRA has been known to be flouted openly, especially for VIPs and influential persons, most Himachalis admit that it still has restricted the large-scale takeover of land by land sharks from the plains. But it looks like that is about to change with the government subtly chang-

The government is subtly changing land policy to boost private investment in tourism and other projects

ing the land policy to boost private investments in tourism and other projects.

While the locals have dismissed the claim that the project can be ecologically friendly, it may be harder to overlook the fact that the company is promising direct and indirect employment for about 4000 persons and that 70 percent of these would be for Himachalis. But local skepticism extends to this offer as well. "These are empty promises. Most of the existing tourism is controlled by outsiders. Besides, our perception is that the number of livelihoods lost will be more than those created," states Mahinder, a young lawyer in Kullu. The crux of the issue was lucidly summed up by a young woman of the Katrain Mahila Mandal "We are the owners of the land we tend, we do not want to be turned to servants." ●

Adventure Features:

Adventure features describe unusual and exciting experiences - perhaps the story of someone who survived a train accident, an airplane crash, climbed a mountain, sailed around the world, served in a UN Peace Mission abroad. In this type of feature story, quotations and descriptions are especially important. After a catastrophe such as Tsunami, for example, feature writers often use the survivors' accounts to recreate the scene.

Seasonal Features:

Newspapers, magazines, radio stations and TV channels often carry feature stories about seasons and holidays: Deepawali, Holi, Idd, Christmas, Janmashmi as well as Bal Diwas (November 14: on the birth anniversary of the First Indian Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru), Teachers Day (September 5; on the birth anniversary of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan) Sir Syed Day etc. Feature stories on them look simple but are rather difficult to write because, to make them interesting, you must find a new angle.

Explanatory Features:

These are interpretive features or 'sidebars'. (A sidebar is a linked article that accompanies and appears beside the main news or feature story.) In these, media persons provide more detailed descriptions of organizations, activities, trends or ideas in the news. After a bank robbery, an explanatory feature may describe the steps taken by the bank to face such an eventuality; training imparted to the bank staff to face such a situation etc. In a mine tragedy, features may be carried in respect to steps to improve mine safety; what would be done to help the miners' families; who was responsible for the tragedy; and were they likely to be punished for it?

How-to-Do-It Features:

Such type of features tells readers and viewers how to perform some task. They may describe a tangible project like building a house, planting a garden or training a puppy. Good feature writers divide the task into simple, clear, easy-to-follow steps. They tell viewers and readers what materials are needed and the cost in money in time. Often they conclude such stories with a list or summary of the process, such as 'eight ways to build self-confidence in children'.

Occupation or Hobby Features:

You may prepare feature stories about occupations that are hazardous (fire-fighter), highly specialized (Oil well drilling) or glamorous (personal fitness trainer to movie stars). Collectors and crafts enthusiasts often make good subjects for feature stories because they are passionately involved and often eccentric, quotable and entertaining.

Personal Experience Features:

News stories are usually written in the third person, with the media person as an observer or outsider. Feature stories can be written in the first person, with the media person appearing in the story. Feature stories can also be written in the second person, addressing audience members directly. Each style can be effective. But feature writers use the first person technique cautiously as it is the most difficult one.

Behind-the Scenes Features:

Behind-the-scenes stories take readers and viewers backstage for an inside view of some event. Media persons often find such ventures fascinating and are able to convey the excitement. The police ride-along story, in which Ms.

Chandrika Mago, Chief Reporter, The Times of India Delhi edition accompanied the Deputy Commissioner (Traffic) of Delhi Police on a bus ride to experience the functioning of the traffic cops first hand and then described her experience in a feature story.

Media persons look for people who perform jobs out of the public eye but essential to many citizens. They interview sources, visit them on location and use the source's own words to tell the story. They also include details they observe, such as atmosphere, working conditions, physical appearance of people and their workspace, specialized terms and conversations between workers. Behind-the-scenes features convey a sense of immediacy, allowing readers to see, feel, taste, touch, smell and understand the 'backstage' work that goes into a public event.

Participatory Features:

Such features give another kind or inside view, this time through the senses of a reporter who is actually experiencing an event or situation. Media persons will shadow a government clerk, a school teacher to write a feature story on the basis of his first hand information. Undercover, cloak-and-dagger approaches, like getting arrested in order to expose jail conditions, are ethically questionable and expose media persons and their organizations to civil and criminal liabilities. But Ashwani Sarin, as a reporter of The Indian Express once landed himself in the police lock-up and ultimately to the Tihar Jail by involving himself in a brawl for the sake of writing a news feature story.

Medical Features:

A few media organizations have medical correspondents. However, general-assignment media persons can find good medical features in any community. Illness and health are vitally interesting to the public, and subjects abound: the cost of devastating illnesses, new and radical treatments for common ailments, ethical issues surrounding medical advances, pregnancy, mental illness, new equipment and what it does. Ms. Kalpana Jain frequently does such stories in the columns of The Times of India.

Business Features:

A wealth of business stories exists in any town. Stories on old, established firms, perhaps focusing on the personality of a founder or dynamic leader, are also of perennial interest. Business features, often in the business pages of a newspaper or business section of a magazine may have a side effect of promoting a particular business, service or product, but media persons should be sure that each story has enough news value to justify its inclusion in a newspaper or news broadcast or telecast.

Activity 3

List common type of feature stories.

1.
2.

3.	.....
4.	.....
5.	.....
6.	.....
7.	.....
8.	.....
9.	.....
10.	.....
11.	.....
12.	.....

12.3 FEATURE WRITING TIPS

Prof. Bryan Denham of Clemson University (U.S.A.) says that the following qualities make one a top-notch features writer:

- **Descriptive writing skills:** The features writer should be able to ‘paint a picture’ and capture the essence of a subject.
- **Good reporting skills:** Without the ability to gather information in an efficient manner, the writer will have nothing to discuss.
- **Good interviewing skills:** It’s one thing to conduct a basic interview; it’s quite another to draw from a source sensitive or controversial information.
- **Good research skills:** What, if anything, has been written about the subject you are addressing?
- **Respect for sources:** Treat people with respect and dignity.
- **Ethics:** Always use good judgement and attribute quotes carefully.
- **Persistence:** Good writers don’t give up on a story if its gets off to a slow start.
- **Confidence:** Sources have faith in people who appear confident and professional.
- **Experience:** The more experiences you have in life, the more perspective you will bring to your writing.
- **Curiosity:** Great writers are curious about the social world and can distinguish good story ideas from bad ones.
- **Eagerness to explore:** The best writers crave ‘small adventures’.
- **Broad-mindedness:** Keep your mind open to new perspectives.
- **Appreciation for cultural diversity:** Embrace individuals who can offer you insight into different cultural values, traditions.
- **Familiarity with trends in popular culture:** Always keep ‘an ear to the ground’ and stay attuned with what’s going on around you.
- **Vision:** Great writers can picture how their stories will look in print, and they create them to fit in the space allotted for newspaper features.

Besides these qualities, a successful features writer should

- **Know your reader or viewer:** Writing for an audience of medical students is going to be different again from writing for qualified doctors, readers of women's magazines, or the readers of the Hindustan Times.
- **You have many voices:** You speak to your friends differently than you do your parents or teachers. If you are employed, you have a voice for your boss and another voice for your subordinates. When you write a story, you take on a persona, or character. You must choose a voice that best imparts the information in that story. The choice you make becomes the tone, or mood of the story, and it should always match the content. For instance, you would not humour to write about a tragic auto accident.
- **The Style of Feature:** Make sure you know what type of feature you are writing. If you are pitching an idea to a magazine that you do not read, buy a copy first to get an idea of the style of its various features.

Activity 4

Which are the top four qualities of a feature? Give justification for your choices in not more than five lines.

1.
2.
3.
4.

12.4 THE INTRODUCTION OF A FEATURE STORY

An anecdote, or an interesting observation, or even a clever play on words will often make a good introduction. Sometimes a direct quote will do the trick. Try to avoid the plodding "once upon a time" style.

One of the other classic pitfalls is to make a sweeping generalization that does not, in fact, stand up to scrutiny. The last thing you want is for your reader to start taking issue with you in your first paragraph.

It is worth spending time on your introductory paragraph. Play around with ideas and images until you hit on one that works. But do not wait for the perfect intro before you start writing. Sometimes you just need to get it down on paper, then hone the introduction later.

Activity 5

Why 'intro' para is important for a feature story?

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12.5 THE BODY OF A FEATURE STORY

Keep it coming: Your reader has a thousand and one reasons to do something other than spend the next 10 minutes reading your article. Why should they bother?

This is where your art as a writer comes in. Unlike news stories, where there is a standard formula to follow, features can, and should, be more creative if they are to keep the reader's attention.

A well written news feature can be described as an interesting but well signposted walk through a wood. Firstly, your reader chooses to go on it with you. You lead them through the argument, pointing out useful pieces of information about the trees and scenery along the way. You will answer questions in the reader's mind about where you are taking them next, and vary the pace every so often, so that they do not get bored or tired.

The golden rule is not to lose them in a fog of confusing information, nor to take them on a long, arduous ramble they weren't prepared for. And you should never waste their time by leading them up a blind alley.

Good feature writers such as K.S. Duggal of the United News of India (UNI) used to bring characters to life. Instead of saying a person is generous or humourous, writers give specific examples of the subject's generosity and humour. Successful writers also use elements such as characterization, setting, plot and subplot, conflict, time, dialogue and narrative. Feature stories need dialogue. Writers use dialogue to show temperament, plot, events, time, customs, colour or continuity,

Sometimes when you start writing, you find you can't see the wood for the trees – a common problem with complex features. Whether or not this happens, it is a good idea before you start to jot down the main message, then the other points you want to make, almost like an essay plan. Work out how you get from one point to another – and decide which bits are unnecessary and can be cut.

Writers use narrative to weave a story together. It summarises, arranges, creates flow and transitions and links one idea to the next. Narrative should be unobtrusive and subtle.

Activity 6

Why should a reader of a feature story spend 10 minutes in reading the story?

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12.6 THE ENDING OF A FEATURE STORY

A good ending is almost as difficult as a good beginning. Unlike news stories, where the ending is cut if space is short, a good feature should end on a positive, or uplifting, note.

It may reiterate a theme in the introduction, or return to an analogy which runs throughout the feature. But it should not – unlike for an essay – be a summary of your feature story.

It should, rather like taking an exciting trip abroad, leave the reader with a sense of having traveled successfully from A to B, of having been returned home safely, but better informed as a result – all without ever having moved from their chair.

Activity 7

Is the concluding para of a feature story equally important? If yes, why?

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12.7 LET US SUM UP

After finishing a feature, a successful writer is likely to edit and rewrite it many times. A professional will also angle the feature for a particular audience, publication or news programme, emphasising the story's relevance and importance to it.

12.8 AIDS TO ACTIVITIES

Activity 1 and 2

Read 12.1 again

Activity 3

Hints: Profiles, explanatory etc.

Activity 4

Hint: Read available newspapers/ periodicals regularly and try to find these characteristics in the feature stories.

Activity 5

Hint: Intro para is a window of a story –news or feature.

Activity 6

Read 12.5 again

Activity 7

Hint: One cannot leave the feature story in a lurch. One has to draw a conclusion.

Now please revise your answers in the manner as you are expected to do after writing a feature story.

NOTES



