

## Chapter 9

# Broadcast Journalism



### Professional Terms

beat	package
evergreen	patter
extended package	personality feature
feature	reader
feature package	rundown
hard news	soft news
IFB	SOT
live shot	sound bite
mainstream media	stand-up
news	tabloid media
news feature package	TRT
news package	VO
non-mainstream media	VO-SOT
outro	

### Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

- Explain the responsibility broadcast journalists have to the viewing public.
- Identify news programs as mainstream, non-mainstream, or tabloid.
- Recall the news elements used to judge the newsworthiness of a story.
- Recognize the different story types broadcast during a newscast.
- Explain the elements of a package.
- Identify the various abbreviations used on a newscast script.
- Recall the workflow and responsibilities involved in a typical day in a newsroom.

### Introduction

The general public turns on the television and watches the news, typically without considering everything involved in creating that news program. The audience merely sees and hears the news program and usually accepts what they see and hear as *fact*. News programs have an awesome responsibility to the public.

Broadcast journalism is the profession that brings television news to the public. “Broadcast” refers to the television production necessary to technically bring the video and audio to the viewers’ television screens. “Journalism” refers to the careful determination of facts included in the stories presented during the newscast.

This chapter introduces the broad area of journalism in “broadcast journalism.” Many schools that offer courses in broadcast journalism also assign that class the task of producing a news-type program. This program may then be sent throughout the school building on a regular basis—as often as once a day, several times a week, or several times a month. The student-produced news program should not only be a presentation of school appropriate news, but also a practical demonstration of the skills students learn in the broadcast journalism course. For this reason, many broadcast journalism courses are modeled after a newsroom in the real world of broadcast journalism. In mirroring the operation of a professional newsroom, many students in broadcast journalism classes are actually participating in career training to enter the field of broadcast journalism.

# The News Media

**news:** Information people want to know, information they should know, or information they need to know.

*News* is information people want to know, information they should know, or information they need to know. Television news may be classified as one of three basic types: mainstream media, non-mainstream media, and tabloid media. There are subdivisions of these categories, but this section concentrates on the three basic areas.

In carefully examining the characteristics of the three types of news media, the gray nature of some television “news” programs is easily recognized. In the past, it was easy for the public to identify news that was biased and that clearly presented a particular point of view. These opinion pieces represent only the speaker’s point of view and were clearly labeled and announced as “commentary.” Unfortunately, the practice of announcing “The following is commentary” before airing an opinion piece has become inconsistent or nonexistent. As a result, the public may be unaware when a news story is biased or unbiased, unless they switch between various news programs to see how several different reporters report on the same story.

Good journalism requires that every effort be made to present stories factually and allow the audience to form their own opinions based on the facts they are given. Ethically, any commentary should be labeled or noted as such.

## Mainstream Media

**mainstream media:** Television news programming that is expected to provide a fair and unbiased presentation of facts, without any particular viewpoint.

*Mainstream media* is programming that is expected to provide a fair and unbiased presentation of facts, without any particular viewpoint. Mainstream media is the most highly respected form of broadcast journalism. This type of news programming includes 24-hour cable news networks, the network-level news programs broadcast on major television networks, and local news programs broadcast by network affiliates. Therefore, the early morning news, news at noon, evening news (airing between 5 and 7 p.m.), and the 11 p.m. news are all considered mainstream media.

### PRODUCTION NOTE

The public has two absolute expectations of the news media:

- The public expects the news media to report on what is happening in the world around them.
- The public expects that they will not be told what to think about what is happening in the world around them. If the audience is told what to think, or facts are presented in a way intended to influence the opinions of viewers, it is no longer news—it is propaganda. Always be wary when television news begins to tell viewers what they should think.



24-hour cable news networks, such as FoxNews, CNN, and MSNBC, do not always provide news 24 hours a day. Scheduled hard news broadcasts are separated by extended commentary and news/talk programming, which may be described as current event discussion and opinion. In times of crisis or breaking news, these networks interrupt the regularly

scheduled programming to provide extended news programming. It is important for viewers to recognize that opinion and discussion programming is not news programming. Hard facts and truth are often diminished when opinion is the focus of a program.

## Non-Mainstream Media

*Non-mainstream media* is programming that is expected to report news from a particular point of view. For example, the news presented on a religious-oriented cable station is expected to examine the news from a religious perspective. Additionally, news on a sports channel is expected to provide sports-oriented news programming.

**non-mainstream media:** Television news programming that is expected to express a particular point of view.

## Tabloid Media

*Tabloid media* stretches and exaggerates facts by dealing with sensational stories. The news stories presented on tabloid media programs are often so far removed from unbiased truth, that they are nearly fiction stories using real people's names. These programs can be found on fringe cable stations and even on local broadcast stations during non-network programming hours. However, tabloid programs are usually not network-provided programming. Tabloid media is generally considered more entertainment than news. Tabloid media is sometimes derogatorily called "gotcha journalism." Print versions of tabloid media can often be found near grocery store checkout counters and often include sightings of UFOs and Elvis, and stories about celebrities who have gained or lost weight.

**tabloid media:** Television news programming that stretches and exaggerates facts by dealing with sensational stories; generally considered more entertainment than news.

# Ethics and News Judgment

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution guarantees the freedom of the press, **Figure 9-1**. At first glance, many falsely interpret this to mean that journalists can do anything they want to do. In reality, all rights come with responsibilities.

## Ethics in Journalism

While the law covers many situations, other content and production decisions are guided by ethics. Technology provides the incredible ability to capture reality, and modern editing equipment gives journalists tools to alter reality. Recording in almost any environment (openly or secretly) is quite easy, as is sharing the recording with a worldwide audience.

*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble; and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.*

*The Constitution of The United States of America,  
Bill of Rights—Amendment I*

**Figure 9-1.** The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America provides for five freedoms: speech, press, religion, assembly, and petitioning the government.

## PRODUCTION NOTE

Just because you have the *right* to do a story does not mean you *should* do the story.



Journalists, both professional and student, capture reality, process information, and prepare a valid, edited story for their viewers. The viewing public demonstrates trust in broadcast media and expects truth and reliability. Journalists must meet viewers' expectations and serve the viewers by making the "right" decision in tough call situations. Sometimes the "right" thing to do is complicated, given the legal freedom journalists have and all the technological tools at their disposal. Even student journalists must make judgment calls in deciding *what* to cover and *how* to cover it. Following established guidelines for ethical journalism is a basic step in learning the skills to become a credible journalist, **Figure 9-2**. Following a strong industry code of ethics early in your education sets a beneficial pattern of behavior for your professional career.

## VISUALIZE THIS

The negative ramifications of making the story public may far outweigh the "glory" a reporter would receive for getting the "scoop." In a time of war, for example, a reporter discovers a story that would reveal classified information if broadcast. The classified information would be harmful to national security and helpful to the enemy. Should the reporter do the story? The line between what news organizations have the right to do and what is right for them to do has become blurred in recent years. A good reporter is willing and able to make ethical decisions based on the "greater good."




## News Judgment

News programs have a finite and unmovable amount of time to report on the most important stories of the day. To conform to the time frame of a newscast, some stories do not make it to broadcast. Sometimes, a story idea may be rejected or postponed because it is deemed not as newsworthy as other available stories. Other well-produced stories do not make the newscast simply due to the run time constraints of a newscast. Unlike a newspaper, which may add additional pages or use a condensed font to squeeze a story in, minutes cannot be added to a television news program.

In a professional broadcast journalism environment, the producer and news director make decisions about which stories will be covered by journalists. The producer and news director positions are typically held by long-time industry professionals with many years of experience in reporting. Most professional journalists are required by their superiors to produce a mandatory number of sources to verify a story before it can be broadcast. Appropriate sources must be trustworthy and knowledgeable about the story topic. Multiple sources (at least two) should be required in an academic broadcast journalism environment, as well.

**Figure 9-2.** The Student Television Network adopted a code of ethics appropriate for use in school broadcast journalism programs; it is reprinted here with their permission. The STN code of ethics was adapted from the Radio and Television Digital News Association and the Student Press Law Center's codes of ethics.



**STN**  
Student Television Network

## Student Television Network Code of Ethics

**Preamble**

Members of the Student Television Network believe in the importance of a free news media in a democratic society, including the academic/school setting. We believe the duty of student journalists is to seek truth and report it fairly and thoroughly to their audience, both in school and in the community. We understand that journalistic integrity is the basis of public trust and is developed and maintained by adherence to ethical principles. As members of STN, we adopt this code as the statement and evidence of our principles and our commitment to them.

**Seek Truth and Report It**

STN journalists should search for the truth. Student Journalists should:

- Be accurate in reporting information.
- Make every effort to avoid distortion of information.
- Identify sources of information as accurately as possible.
- Be objective in reporting both sides of a story.
- Avoid stereotyping.
- Never plagiarize.

**Minimize Harm**

STN journalists should value news subjects and news as topics and people who deserve respect. Student journalists should:

- Be compassionate when covering stories that may be painful to subjects.
- Be sensitive to those in grief or affected with tragedy.
- Be cautious and aware of the law in identifying minors involved in crime or victims of crime.
- Recognize the privacy of individuals.
- Avoid reporting that is libelous or slanderous.
- Avoid reporting that may endanger students or school personnel.
- Show good taste in reporting, avoiding vulgarity or obscenity.

**Act Independently**

STN journalists should aspire at all times to fulfill their obligation to their audience and the public, and maintain their independence of any attempts to obstruct or hinder these efforts. Student journalists should:

- Avoid conflicts of interest, and disclose any unavoidable conflicts.
- Hold those in power accountable.
- Resist pressure from individuals or groups to influence coverage.
- Seek to maintain the integrity and credibility of themselves and the organizations they represent.

**Be Accountable**

STN journalists are accountable to their audience and to their peers. Student journalists should:

- Understand they are a supervised group, just as their counterparts in the business world are.
- Seek and encourage open dialogue with the public about their coverage and conduct.
- Admit and correct any mistakes, promptly and publicly.
- Follow the highest standards of integrity and ethical behavior.

Adapted from the Radio and Television News Directors Foundation (RTNDF) and SPLC codes of ethics.  
Adopted June 2006

In an academic broadcast journalism environment, the instructor often fills the role of producer and/or news director in the classroom. As the producer or news director, the instructor makes programming decisions and helps students understand the basis for these decisions, which assists students in developing a sense of news judgment. Modeling and teaching these skills may lead to increased student involvement in decisions, but a teacher functioning as the news director maintains authority for final story approval.

In judging the newsworthiness of a story, various news elements must be considered. It is critical that a reporter recognize these news elements to effectively develop a news story.

- **Proximity.** Is the story important to viewers because it concerns their immediate environment? Building a new freeway in Washington, DC might be very important to residents of Washington, DC and its suburbs, but the story means very little to residents of Phoenix, AZ.
- **Timeliness.** Does the story report an event that just happened, which viewers need to know about right now? Such as, the “just-in” election results of the town’s mayoral race or a breaking news report of an Amber alert for a missing child.
- **Prominence.** Is the principal character in the story a well-known (prominent) individual, making the story newsworthy? The town mayor has decided to run for governor. A celebrity quits Hollywood to enlist in military service.
- **Consequences.** Does the story directly affect a significant number of viewers? If taxes are not raised by the city council, the salaries of all public workers (including firefighters, police officers, teachers, and city employees) will be reduced next year. Do the consequences of the story require the public to act or react in a specific way? Tornadoes have been sighted five miles outside of town. Schools are closing three hours early due to inclement weather.
- **Conflict.** Does the story contain a controversy, struggle, or issue with two or more sides? Is the final outcome of interest to the public? For example, political campaigns, crime stories, governmental votes, and sporting events.
- **Unusualness.** Is there a particular aspect that makes the entire story unusual? A four-year-old boy is a piano prodigy and has been asked to perform at Carnegie Hall. Someone in the community celebrating a birthday is ordinary, but someone celebrating her 105th birthday is unusual and interesting.
- **Emotion.** Will the story “pull at the heartstrings” of the public? A young soldier endured a two-year tour of duty in a war-ravaged land and finally returned to his hometown. He was crossing the street at the bus station to greet his wife and infant son, and was killed by a drunk driver who ran a red light.
- **Achievement.** Does the story involve an amazing effort that leads to an outstanding achievement? The story of a young athlete who suffered a devastating injury and was told he would never be able to play his sport again. Sheer determination and training brought him back from his injuries to win a spot on the US Olympic Team.
- **Contrast.** Does the contrast of two elements in the story create general interest? A story of two very different families celebrating the

same religious holiday. A story detailing the life of a carnival worker 30 years ago, in contrast with the life of a carnival worker today.

Determining which of these news elements is the strongest helps establish the angle needed for the story. (A story's "angle" is discussed in Chapter 10, *Newswriting for Broadcast*.) When more news elements are included in a single story, the bigger the story becomes. The first five news elements listed (proximity, timeliness, prominence, consequences, and conflict) are *usually* associated with hard news. The last four news elements (unusualness, emotion, achievement, and contrast) are *usually* associated with soft news. However, there are no firm and fast rules dictating which news elements define hard and soft news. Hard news stories and soft news stories are two classifications of content in a newscast.

**Hard news** is characterized by seriousness and timeliness. These stories may address politics, economics, war, crime, health crises, weather crises, and governmental messages to the public. Hard news stories contain information that viewers need to have immediately. "Breaking news" bulletins and stories are examples of hard news.

**Soft news** is characterized by information that may be interesting, but is not necessarily something viewers *need* to know—these stories may focus less on timeliness. Soft news often consists of human interest stories and may include sports, updates on celebrities, entertainment, consumer tips, and gardening hints. In many cases, these stories may be appropriate to be told any time there is room in the news program. A story that may be broadcast at any time is called an **evergreen** story. However, soft news stories may also have a degree of timeliness. For example, a story about a friendly competition between two neighbors for the most extravagant holiday lights display is appropriate for broadcasting only in December.

## Ethically Funding the News

The news is not a fund-raiser for a television station. A news operation requires many paid employees, whose salaries and equipment must be funded by some revenue source at the station (**Figure 9-3**). Most television stations have a studio in the building. The sole purpose of the studio is often to present the news. Revenue earned by airing local ads throughout the entire day must fund the operation of the studio. Most ads for local car dealerships or restaurants are produced by advertising production companies or by a television station's production department. The ad is then aired by the station according to the contract held with the advertiser. Sometimes, the television station's studio may produce ads for clients as a way of increasing revenue. Each time the ad airs on the station, even more funds are generated.

To ethically fund a news operation, the news cannot have any relationship to the station's advertisers and cannot be influenced by advertisers. Advertisers cannot be given special treatment merely because they have purchased a substantial amount of ad time on the station. If a scandal was uncovered, for example, involving the owner of a local restaurant bribing a health inspector, the newsroom must not be unduly influenced to avoid covering the story because the restaurant advertises on the television station. The news operation must be kept separate from the advertising department to maintain the untarnished appearance of unbiased news.

**hard news:** Type of news story that contains information that viewers need to have immediately; characterized by seriousness and timeliness.

**soft news:** Type of news story that contains information viewers may find interesting, but not necessarily information they *need* to know.

**evergreen:** A story that is appropriate to be broadcast at any time, regardless of season or time of day.

**Figure 9-3.** From the control room to the studio floor, all the staff and equipment require funding to operate. (Countryside High School, Clearwater, FL)



## Airing Stories

**IFB:** Interrupted feedback; a line of communication between the anchors and the producer in the control room. An earpiece worn by the anchor is connected to the producer's headset, allowing the producer to speak directly to an anchor while the anchor is on the air live.

A topic can be covered, from a technical standpoint, in a variety of ways. The type of coverage often depends on how quickly a story needs to be aired, how big the story is, and how much information/footage is available to work with.

The fastest way to get a story to the public is through an **IFB** (interrupted feedback), **Figure 9-4**. The anchors on a news broadcast wear an earpiece with a wire that runs behind their ear and down their back (typically under the anchor's shirt or jacket). This earpiece is particularly noticeable if a camera shoots the anchor from a side angle. In the news industry, the earpiece worn by an anchor is the IFB. The IFB is connected to the headset worn by the producer in the control room of the studio. Under normal conditions, the anchor's earpiece carries the audio of the news program as

**Figure 9-4.** An IFB fits snugly in the ear and provides a direct line of communication from the producer to the talent/anchor.





heard by the television audience. However, the producer can break into the IFB feed and speak directly to the anchor who is on the air live. The anchor immediately repeats what the producer is saying without embellishment. It may be challenging to maintain composure on camera when “channeling” the words of the producer. The producer must speak clearly and concisely because there is no filter between the producer’s words and the words the anchor broadcasts.

## PRODUCTION NOTE

Footage of newscasts from any of the major networks on September 11, 2001 and the following three days provide excellent examples of news covered as it happens and anchors relying solely on the words fed to them by producers through the IFB.



## ASSISTANT ACTIVITY

Sit in front of a mirror and call a friend on the phone. Ask your friend to read a newspaper or magazine article aloud to you. Try to repeat what your friend is saying to you *while* they are saying it. Maintain a normal facial expression and repeat your friend’s words accurately.



## Types of Stories

Many different types of story formats are used in a single newscast. Each type has unique characteristics and complexities, which allows stories to be told in different ways and with varying depth.

### Reader

A *reader* is a story that an anchor simply reads aloud from the teleprompter for the viewing audience to hear, **Figure 9-5**. A reader does not include video to support the story.

**reader:** A story, written by a reporter or anchor, that does not have video to accompany the story. The anchor simply reads the text on the teleprompter aloud for the viewing audience to hear.

### VO

A *VO* (voiceover) is a type of story that incorporates B-roll video rolled-in from the control room, in addition to the script read by the anchor. The audience hears the nat sound on the B-roll behind the anchor’s voice, **Figure 9-6**. A VO takes the reader story one step further with the addition of supporting video.

**VO:** Voiceover; a type of story that incorporates B-roll video rolled-in from the control room, in addition to the script read by the anchor.

## Talk the Talk

When speaking the term *VO* aloud, simply say the letters “V-O,” just as you might say “OK” in response to the question, “How are you?”



**Figure 9-5.** A—An example of a reader script in two-column format. B—The audio portion of the reader script is uploaded to the teleprompter and read by the anchor during the newscast. (*South County Secondary School, Lorton, VA*)

Video	Audio
Cam 2—Med shot Anchor 1 CG—Lower third super identifying anchor 1	Anchor 1: The Randolph Community Theater is now in rehearsal for their spring musical. This year’s production is “Murder by Lottery.” It is a dark comedy and with a cast of 23 locals. Karen Telesco will play the lead—a 70-year-old eccentric millionaire. The director is Jim Smythers. Opening night is set for April 15 in the Randolph Auditorium.

A



B

**Figure 9-6.** A sample VO script that an anchor reads as the audience sees B-roll footage.

Video	Audio
Med shot Anchor 1	Anchor 1: The Randolph Community Theater is now in rehearsal for their spring musical.
Wide shot of several actors on stage in rehearsal with nat sound in background	This year’s production is “Murder by Lottery.” The three-act play is a dark comedy with a touch of suspense. All of the 23 cast members are local—some with experience and some totally new to the stage.
Full shot of Karen Telesco on stage with nat sound	Karen Telesco will play the lead—a 70-year-old eccentric millionaire. In reality, Karen is a much younger lady who will have a complete makeover to play the role.
Med shot of Jim Smythers sitting with director’s notebook in lap	The director is Jim Smythers. Smythers has directed several community theater productions, but this will be his first with The Randolph Group.
Med shot Anchor 1	Opening night is set for April 15 in the Randolph Auditorium.

## VO-SOT

**VO-SOT** (voiceover–sound on tape) is a type of story that is one step higher in complexity than a VO. The audience sees B-roll video and hears the anchor reading from the teleprompter, followed by footage of a comment from a principal player in the story. The B-roll is one file and the comment (SOT) is another. **SOT**, also called a *sound bite*, is footage of a principal player connected to the story and includes voice that supports the reporter’s story. This footage is often the answer to a reporter’s question and should be a reliable source that is connected to the story in some way, such as an official person from the event or an eyewitness to the event. SOT footage is usually between 5 and 10 seconds in length, but rarely more than 15 seconds. The B-roll is seen by the viewers as the anchor reads and, at the appropriate time, the switch is made to the comment footage, **Figure 9-7**.

**VO-SOT:** Voiceover–sound on tape; a type of story in which the audience sees B-roll video and hears both the anchor reading from the teleprompter and footage of a comment from a principal player in the story.

**SOT:** Sound on tape; footage of a principal player connected to a story, which includes voice/audio that supports the story. Also called *sound bite*.

## Talk the Talk

When speaking the term **SOT**, pronounce the letters as a word (“sot”)—rhymes with “got” and “not.”

When speaking the term **VO-SOT**, pronounce the letters “VO” as a word (rhymes with “toe”) and “SOT” as described above—“voe-sot.”



Video	Audio
Med shot Anchor 1	Anchor 1: The Randolph Community Theater is now in rehearsal for their spring musical.
Wide shot of several actors on stage in rehearsal with nat sound in background	This year’s production is “Murder by Lottery.” The three-act play is a dark comedy with a touch of suspense. All of the 23 cast members are local—some with experience and some totally new to the stage.
Full shot of Karen Telesco on stage with nat sound	Karen Telesco will play the lead—a 70-year-old eccentric millionaire. In reality, Karen is a much younger lady who will have a complete makeover to play the role.
Med shot of Jim Smythers sitting with director’s notebook in lap	The director is Jim Smythers. Smythers has directed several community theater productions, but this will be his first with The Randolph Group.
Med shot of Jim Smythers (talking head) CG: Lower third super identifying Jim Smythers as director	SOT Jim Smythers: “The challenge of this production is that three different locations must be used, which calls for creative set building and quick changes. I guarantee the audience will enjoy the fast pace of this show.”
Med shot Anchor 1	Anchor 1: Opening night is set for April 15 in the Randolph Auditorium.

**Figure 9-7.** This sample VO-SOT script includes scripted anchor lines, B-roll footage, and recorded comment footage.

**package:** A story that is about 1 1/2–2 minutes in length, contains its own intro and outro, is edited, and can be inserted into a live program at any time the producer chooses.

### Packages

If a story is shot and edited prior to the newscast, the story is called a **package**. A package is a complete unit that can be inserted into a live program at any time the producer chooses; it is simply rolled-in after the anchor introduces it. A package is fully thought-through, usually 1 1/2–2 minutes in length, contains its own intro and outro, and is edited, **Figure 9-8**. It is called a “package” because the beginning, middle, and end of the story are neatly tied together to create a complete packet—the story can stand alone. The topic and content of packages range from in-depth news stories to human interest

**Figure 9-8.** A package script contains an intro, body of the story, and the outro, in addition to all of the shots, lines, and footage.

Video	Audio
Wide shot of two actors on stage choreographing a fight with nat sound	Reporter VO: The Randolph Community Theater is now in rehearsal for their spring musical.
Wide shot of several actors on stage in rehearsal with nat sound in background	This year’s production is “Murder by Lottery.” The three-act play is a dark comedy with a touch of suspense. All of the 23 cast members are local—some with experience and some totally new to the stage.
Full shot of Karen Telesco on stage with nat sound	Karen Telesco will play the lead Karen Telesco: “I’ll be playing a 70-year-old eccentric millionaire.
Med Shot Karen Telesco (talking head from interview) CG: Lower third identifying Karen Telesco as female lead.	Just getting the makeover will be a challenge, but I also have to become arthritic and grumpy. I’m sure my high school English students will be glad I’m not REALLY like that when they see me.”
Med shot of Jim Smythers sitting with director’s notebook in lap	Reporter: The director is Jim Smythers. Smythers has directed several community theater productions, but this will be his first with The Randolph Group.
Med shot of Jim Smythers (talking head) CG: Lower third super identifying Jim Smythers as director	Jim Smythers: “The challenge of this production is that three different locations must be used, which calls for creative set building and quick changes. I guarantee the audience will enjoy the fast pace of this show. AND I guarantee most of them won’t identify the murderer until the very end of the show.”
Full shot of reporter on set holding a prop gun and a heavy candlestick	Reporter Stand-up: Was THIS the murder weapon? Or was it THIS? Only the cast knows, and they’re not telling. If you want to know, you’ll have to buy a ticket. Opening night is set for April 15 here in the Randolph Auditorium.

to sports. A package includes a reporter's audio track, one or more sound bites, and may have a stand-up by a reporter. An *extended package* may be 2–4 minutes in length and typically provides more in-depth coverage of a specific story. A documentary, 6–10 minutes in length, may also be considered a type of package.

A package that covers hard news/current events is often called a *news package*. For example, a local reporter might produce a package about a fire that occurred this morning in the town. The package shows the damage, includes comments from owners of some damaged buildings, and comments from firefighters on the scene. This type of package is produced very quickly—the reporter and camera operator get to the scene, shoot, write, and edit the package so it can air while the event is still current. Another example is a recall issued by a toy manufacturing company. The news package shows the toy, a demonstration of the danger, and tells the audience how to return it for refund.

A *news feature package*, also called a *feature package* or *feature*, covers soft news stories that are connected to current events. For example, a news feature on the celebration events taking place for the fifth anniversary of a local food bank may be included in the day's newscast. The story may include comments on the center's growth from the director of the food bank, as well as comments from people who have donated to the food bank and people who have benefitted from the food bank. Another example may be the rebuilding efforts of a family business destroyed by a fire last spring. This would be a follow-up type of story. After being in operation for three generations, the family is rebuilding—bigger and better. The news feature has the "now factor" because rebuilding is in progress, but also addresses the decision to rebuild, changes being made, and the emotions associated with starting over.

Other packages may not be related to current events and may not have any relevant consequences for the viewer. These are human interest stories, which may simply be interesting and entertaining. News elements typical of human interest stories include unusualness, emotion, achievement, or contrast. One type of human interest story is a *personality feature*, which focuses on one person. A personality feature introduces viewers to a person and explains why that person is newsworthy. Stories about people being honored for service, accomplishment, overcoming adversity, or having an unusual job or home are examples of personality features.

Packages are often roughly outlined before the crew arrives at a location to begin shooting based on research and previous knowledge of the story topic. The outline provides a list of the video and audio to obtain at the location, and may include some preplanned interview questions. With this rough outline, the crew is more likely to return to the studio with usable footage for the story. Once the required footage is obtained, the crew may gather additional footage and record other things of interest at the location. In post-production all the footage is examined. It may be determined that the footage supporting the original story outline is not very compelling, but some of the other footage reveals a different and interesting angle on the story. In this case, a new story is written to match the new footage.

A *stand-up* is footage in a package that depicts a reporter standing in front of the camera, speaking directly to the viewers from the location of a

**extended package:** A 2–4 minute story that is shot and edited before a newscast and typically provides more in-depth coverage of a specific story.

**news package:** A package that covers hard news/current events.

**news feature package:** A package covering soft news stories that are connected to current events. Also called a *feature package* or *feature*.

**personality feature:** Type of human interest story that focuses on one person and why that person is newsworthy.

**stand-up:** Footage in a package that depicts a reporter standing in front of the camera, speaking directly to the viewers from the location of a story.

story, **Figure 9-9**. The stand-up is shot at a location connected to the story topic, and may be used at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of a package story. The purpose of the stand-up is to establish for the audience that the news team was actually at the location to cover the story or to demonstrate action relevant to the story. A stand-up is a story-telling tool.

The stand-up is a very common element of a package and allows the audience to see what is happening with their own eyes. For example, a story on severe winter weather has greater impact with a shot of a snow plow truck stuck in the snow. In some soft news stories, the reporter actually takes part in the story, which effectively allows the audience to take part in the story. A reporter that takes a test-drive in a NASCAR racing vehicle, for example, can take the audience on the ride by shooting from inside the vehicle while driving. Another use of a stand-up is to demonstrate a particular aspect of the story or to show the inner workings of an object or event.

If a reporter includes a stand-up in the report, there must be a reason for the shot. It should not be used simply because there is not enough B-roll to fill the package. Never do a stand-up from a location that is not linked to the story. Including footage from an unrelated location will confuse the audience or raise doubts about the reporter's integrity. A reporter's credibility will disappear in an instant if the audience realizes the reporter tried to "fool" them.

**Editing Packages.** A reporter needs a strong ethical standard when editing a package that contains sound bites. In a package story about a campaign speech made by a political candidate, for example, the sound bites must be edited extensively to complete the story and keep it to a **TRT** (total running time) of 2 minutes. The context of the candidate's speech must not be altered in the process of editing, regardless of the reporter's personal political views. The news media must remain truthful in all the stories reported.

**TRT:** Total running time; industry abbreviation.

**Figure 9-9.** A stand-up places the reporter at a location related to the story.



## VISUALIZE THIS

A reporter is assigned to cover the speech of a political candidate. The candidate says, “I do not support giving consideration of any kind to drug dealers. These parasites feed on the innocence of our youth and we should place them behind bars and throw the key away” (the audience erupts in thunderous applause). An unscrupulous reporter could edit the footage so the candidate says, “I [edit here] support giving consideration [edit here] to drug dealers [edit out the rest of the speech]” and cut to audio of thunderous applause and shots of young people shouting approval. In distorting what the candidate said and broadcasting what the reporter knows is blatantly untrue, the reporter has breached ethical standards. That breach of ethics may ultimately cause the defeat of the candidate.



## Live Shot

A *live shot* is a story that is introduced by the anchor and delivered through a live feed by a reporter on location. Typically, the word “Live” is displayed somewhere on the screen or someone will mention that the reporter is “Live from the scene.” The reporter tells the story and delivers a standard *outro*, the closing at the end of a story. Lines such as “Back to you, Jim” or “This is Lisa Thompson, EyeWitness News,” are commonly used to send the viewers back to the anchor in the studio. The anchor in the studio and the reporter in the field may have a live conversation on the air before the anchor continues to the next story. This conversation between anchor and reporter is usually set up in advance of the live shot and is often scripted. The live shot is more complex than other story types because the reporter must deliver a report live using notes on the spot, usually without a teleprompter. Sometimes, live shots include live interviews and may even include action happening as the report is delivered. An extreme example of a live shot is war correspondents giving live reports from the battle front.

**live shot:** A news story that is introduced by an anchor and delivered through a live feed by a reporter on location.

**outro:** The salutation at the end of a story; opposite of an intro.

## PRODUCTION NOTE

High school journalists rarely broadcast a live shot story due to lack of technical ability. However, students can produce a live shot *style* story. This type of story is called “look-live.” The footage is taped on location and a reporter speaks from notes. The footage is then edited to look like it is a live feed. When this type of story is included in a newscast, the audience should not be led to believe that it is an actual live feed.



## Investigative Reporting

Investigative reporting is a difficult and complex type of reporting. It often involves a reporter digging into a topic, searching for wrongdoing by an individual or organization. This type of reporting may be viewed as exciting, particularly by students, but is typically both physically and legally dangerous. Investigative reporting (and the defamation of character that possibly results) is the foundation for many lawsuits. The National

Television Academy recommends there be executive-level approval (above the level of news director) before a reporter pursues an investigative story. The primary concern is to determine if the story will expose something of significant public concern, reveal a wrongdoing by a head official, or if the investigative report will profoundly harm the reputation of an innocent individual or group. These are very serious and significant issues.

Investigative reporting is sometimes associated with hidden-camera footage. To be justified, a compelling case must be made that there is no other possible means of acquiring the necessary video and that no laws will be broken in obtaining the video. Hidden-camera journalism typically involves many legal issues, the most notable being privacy rights. (See Chapter 12, *Legalities: Releases, Copyright, and Forums*.) This is not to say that journalists cannot cover controversial topics, analyze statistics to draw conclusions, and gain access to information of public record in order to develop stories. The level of investigation should be commensurate with the reporter's experience, skill, and position.

### VISUALIZE THIS

You have come to the conclusion that local police drive too fast for no apparent reason and set out to prove your theory. You cruise the streets of your town with a friend in the backseat of your car. Your friend has a video camera and is ready to start shooting. You find a police car on the road, pull behind it, and follow, maintaining the same speed. Your friend shoots video of your speedometer in the foreground, and the police car you're following in the background. You feel this is your "proof" that the local police regularly speed in non-emergency, normal driving. The problem with your investigation is that you have broken the law by speeding yourself and have made a video of yourself breaking the law! If you use that video in your story, you publicly admit to the community and local law enforcement officials that you broke the law. Your story about local police driving too fast will be lost in the uproar caused by a reporter who put the community in danger by driving recklessly to get a story. Also, you can certainly expect a visit from the local police concerning your illegal activity.



## The Newscast Script

Most television stations use scripting software that prints the script in different formats for different members of the production team. For example, the lighting director may receive a script that contains only lighting cues instead of the all-encompassing script generated for the technical director. Some newscasts also include portions that are not fully scripted. The *patter*, spontaneous conversation or small talk, between an anchor and a reporter on location is an example of unscripted dialog in a newscast.

For student newscasts, a two-column script with all the directions noted helps students see the "big picture" and understand how all actions are synchronized, **Figure 9-10**. The text in the right column of the script is displayed on the teleprompter. When a script is set up in a two-column table, each row indicates a change in video source—either a different camera or switching to a pre-recorded piece. A change in audio source may or

**patter:** The spontaneous on-air conversation or small talk between anchors or anchors and reporters.



**Figure 9-10.** A script sample of a fully-scripted newscast.

Video	Audio
VPB—Show Open	SOT
Cam 2: 2 shot	SOT soft light in background Anchor 1: Good Morning! Thanks for joining us. I'm Andrew Kendall. Anchor 2: And I'm Sandra Bailey. One Roane County football player has an artistic side and we've found a student that YOU might want to hire. Anchor 1: Raider Television starts right NOW.
VPB Show Open	SOT
Cam 1: MED shot Anchor 2 CG: Lower third super with name of Anchor 2	SOT fade Anchor 2: There have been some changes made to the Writing Assessment. The Writing Assessment will take place March 31st through April 10th. The BIG change this year is that Juniors and Freshmen will be taking the test, in addition to Sophomores. Yes, you heard right. Grades 9, 10, and 11 will take the state Writing Assessment right after spring break. The test will be administered online in the library computer lab. So, the lab will be closed to other classes during testing time.
Cam 3: MED shot Anchor 1 CG: Lower third super with name of Anchor 1	Anchor 1: While we're on the topic of writing, we have the winners of this year's Young Writers' competition.
FSG (still pictures and text) Amanda Jackson  Miriam Hottle	VO Anchor 1 Freshman Amanda Jackson took first place for Grades 9 and 10. The title of her short story is "Lady". The story is about an older woman who is dying, but has a great impact on her granddaughter. Senior Miriam Hottle took first place for grades 11 and 12 with her story about a middle-aged man who has lost his factory job and faces traumatic changes.
Cam 2: 2 shot	Anchor 1: Congratulations and good luck to the winners. They will represent Roane County at the state competition in mid-May.
Cam 1: MED shot Anchor 2 (left of center) CG: OSG (FFA logo)	Anchor 2: While some students are competing indoors, others are gearing up for a national competition outside. The FFA land judging team has qualified for the national competition in Oklahoma. Students on the team are Justin Braddon, Chad Macklin, and Logan Philips.
Cam 3: 2 shot	Anchor 2: Another group of students has been preparing to entertain an audience.
Cam 3: Med shot Anchor 2	Anchor 2: The Roane Arts and Humanities Council is sponsoring a comedy play titled "Marriage by Indecision." The play will take place April 3rd through the 6th at the Spencer Middle School auditorium. The play has 28 cast members, including some high school students that you'll recognize. Rick Bradley has the story.
VPB—Community Theater	SOT Outcue—"...director says no one will want to miss "Marriage by Indecision" coming to this stage in April. This is Rick Bradley reporting for Raider Television."

may not accompany the change in video source. Cues, like SOT, VO, and Outcue, may or may not be included, depending on the preference of the crew. There are many abbreviations that may be used in a newscast script.

Newscast Script Abbreviations	
Abbreviation	Meaning
VPB	Video playback. Indicates that a pre-recorded, edited piece should be inserted into the show. The words following “VPB” on a script identify the filename of the piece to be played at that time.
SOT	Sound on tape. Instructs the audio technician to get audio feed from the pre-recorded, edited piece. “Tape” is still used in the term even though the material is on a computer—this has carried over from the days of tape technology.
CG	Character generator. Directions to the person responsible for displaying graphics at the appropriate time.
FSG	Full screen graphic. Directions to the person responsible for displaying graphics. FSGs may be a colored background with still pictures, text, graphs, maps, or diagrams.
VO	Voiceover. Lets the audio technician know to keep anchor mics open for audio, even though the anchors are not seen on-screen.
OSG	Over the shoulder graphic. Directions to the person responsible for displaying graphics. An OSG may be a box or a design with text overlaying about 1/3 of the screen. The shot of the anchor is moved to the side of the screen to allow room for the OSG.
Outcue	When audio comes from a pre-recorded piece, the last few words of the piece are noted in the script so the director can give a stand-by to the anchors and crew.

## On-Air Appearance

The familiar phrase, “You can’t judge a book by its cover” is generally a true statement. However, a newscaster’s appearance and behavior directly affect their credibility, as perceived by the viewing public. Therefore, management judges these qualities quite critically. Newscasters’ ability to speak correctly, clearly, and intelligently also affects their credibility.

### ASSISTANT ACTIVITY

Flip around from one newscast to another on both broadcast and cable network channels. What do you notice about the appearance of newscasters and reporters?



Newscasters diligently work to make themselves as visually attractive as possible by remaining physically fit and maintaining a mainstream appearance, which includes makeup, hair style, and clothing. A mainstream appearance does not include visible body piercings, tattoos, and radical hair styles and colors. Nothing about the on-air talent should distract from the news being reported. It is important that on-air talent does not alienate any segment of the viewing audience by appearing extreme in any direction. Alienated viewers will tune into a rival news program, which results in lost revenue for the entire television station. Presenting an appropriate and acceptable image is so important that some stations provide consultants and expense accounts for makeup and clothing for the on-air news talent.

Newscasters must dress professionally when on camera. Mainstream business attire that is neat, clean, and pressed is generally appropriate. A coat and tie is common for male newscasters. Conservative business attire is acceptable for women, which does not include plunging necklines, short skirts, or tight-fitting clothing. A short skirt, gym shorts, or torn jeans worn by talent seated behind an anchor desk is never seen on camera, **Figure 9-11**. However, skirt length on female talent becomes very critical if she is sitting on a chair, sofa, or stool for an interview with knees and legs included in the shot. In addition to a professional appearance, business attire offers many options for unobtrusive placement of a lapel-style microphone.

There are some situations when the requirement for professional attire may be relaxed slightly. A reporter interviewing a champion swimmer poolside in the heat of summer, for example, may dress more casually than when reporting from the studio set. Appropriate clothing is still required—the reporter would not wear swim apparel to conduct the interview. Brief, playful moments may also be reason for more casual dress. For example, an anchor may wear gag glasses with long, springy eyes to introduce a light, human interest story about the Halloween festival sponsored by local merchants.



**Figure 9-11.** When seated behind a desk, the anchor's waist and legs are not visible to viewers. Whether the anchor is wearing swim trunks or pajama pants, it won't be seen on camera. (*South County Secondary School, Lorton, VA*)

## A Day in a Television Newsroom

The assignment editor arrives early in the morning to review potential stories. These stories come from several sources—wire feeds from national news organizations, stories the graveyard shift reporters have been working throughout the night, press releases for events happening during the day or in the near future, listening to police radio scanners, reputable Internet sites, and other sources.

The morning meeting is held with all early evening anchors, reporters, producers, news directors, and, often, photogs are also present. At this meeting, everyone offers story ideas and participates in the discussions. Prior to the morning meeting, reporters do their own research and know what is happening in their own beats. A *beat* is an area that a reporter is assigned to cover regularly, and may include a police beat, a city council beat, an education beat, etc. A beat may also be a specific geographic section of the viewing area. At the end of the meeting, the news directors and producers make decisions on which stories will be covered for the newscast. The assignment editor hands out assignments to the reporters and, if necessary, pairs them up with photogs.

**beat:** A specific area (topics or geographic location) regularly covered by a reporter.

### PRODUCTION NOTE

In an academic broadcast journalism class, typical beats might include the English department, Guidance department, Student Government Association, sports, student activities, theater, co-op, cafeteria, school administration, music, etc.



After the morning meeting, reporters usually begin to “work” their stories by making phone calls to arrange interviews. They complete the research necessary to effectively interact with their interviewees. Meanwhile, the producer begins to organize the newscast with the assumption that the assigned stories will be complete before air time. The organization of the newscast script is called the *rundown*, and is extremely general in its first draft. The rundown is a constantly changing outline of time slots in the news program. A common, but not universal, sequence for a local news program is:

**rundown:** The organization of stories and sequence of a newscast in written form.

1. Hard local news
2. Hard national news
3. Lighter news
4. Sports
5. Weather
6. Arts, entertainment, and evergreen filler

As reporters head into the field to shoot their stories, they keep in communication with producers at the station. The producers continuously update the rundowns and begin to determine the TRT necessary for each story. They must also consider the amount of time consumed by ads that run during the newscast. The early evening anchors work with the rundowns and constantly update and revise the script for their part of the

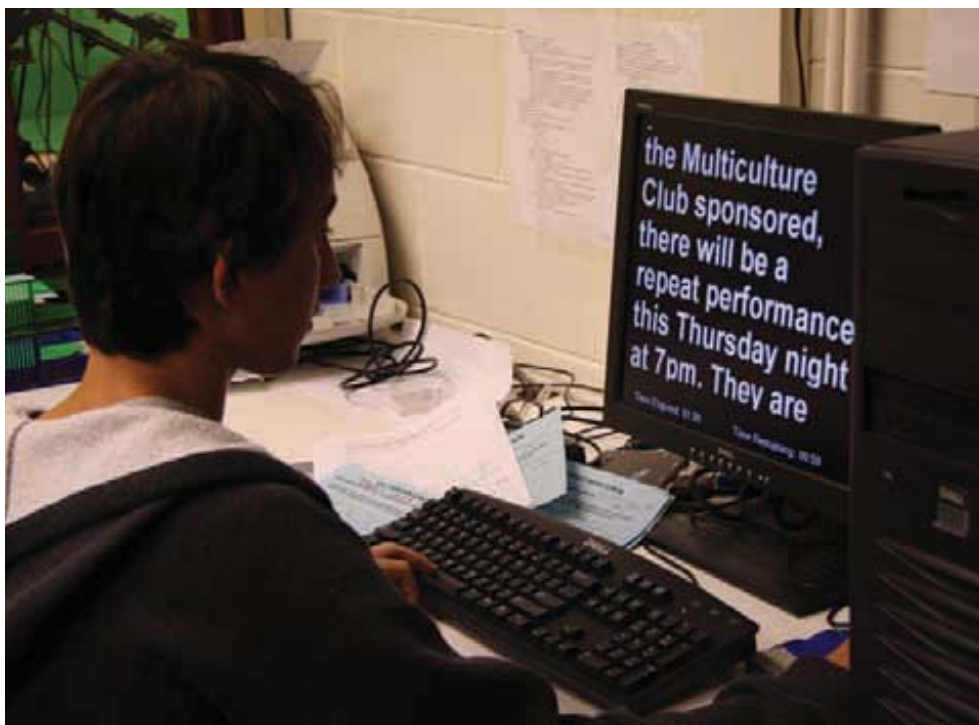
early evening newscast. The entire newscast must fit into the allotted block of time.

Reporters commonly work at least two stories each day. This is a critical issue. If reporters are required to produce more stories each day, the amount of time available to work carefully and accurately is directly affected. Even so, attention to detail and accuracy must be consistently represented in a reporter's work in order to remain employed.

During the afternoon, late evening anchors arrive at the studio and begin planning for the late evening newscast. At this time, reporters from the morning meeting are coming back into the station to write up their stories, record narration, and begin editing their packages. As the afternoon progresses, the packages are viewed and approved or tweaked, as necessary, to fit into the story's allotted time. The anchors and producers pull the script together for the early evening telecast, and the teleprompter is loaded with necessary text (**Figure 9-12**). The anchors rehearse with the teleprompter, if there is time.

The early evening newscast is broadcast while the daytime newsroom staff ends their workday, and the late evening shift takes over to prepare for the late night news. The same process begins during the late evening news broadcast, as the overnight shift comes in to prepare for the next day's early morning newscast.

As a result of the media convergence taking place in the broadcast news industry, most newsroom staff have the additional responsibility to place news content on the station's website. This means that a reporter must learn to write audio for TV, as well as text for the Web. The station's website may include graphics, maps, or footage related to a story, but not used in the original newscast. The reporter may even blog on the website about the development of the story. Many consumers have their personal electronic devices (cell phones, computers, etc.) set up to receive news



**Figure 9-12.** The scripted lines for the anchor(s) are entered into a computer to be displayed on a teleprompter. (South County Secondary School, Lorton, VA)

alerts and updates 24 hours a day. While the day in a newsroom is spent preparing for the next newscast, the website is updated continuously.

The previous information is a general plan for a normal day, but days in the television news business are rarely normal. Breaking news stories can throw any normal schedule into chaos. The television news business constantly adapts to the news of the world. This continuous state of change is part of the allure and excitement that surrounds the television news business, but is also the cause of high stress levels. Working in the broadcast journalism business is not a 9-to-5 job. The hours industry professionals work are the hours necessary to get the job done, regardless of when or how many hours that may be.

## Wrapping Up

Broadcast journalism professionals have an awesome responsibility. Most of the viewing public believes that if they see something on the news, it must be true. Every member of the television newscast team must contribute to telling the truth in its most unbiased form. They must determine what the audience needs to know and wants to know, without expressing what the audience should think about any topic. A good reporter can tell a story without revealing how he personally feels about the story or individuals in the story. This unbiased approach extends even further to the entire news program. Fair coverage of a wide variety of stories and providing balanced coverage (presenting different sides of a story) is important to maintain credibility. The news media has the public's trust and must do everything in its power to maintain that trust, because once lost, it is nearly impossible to regain.

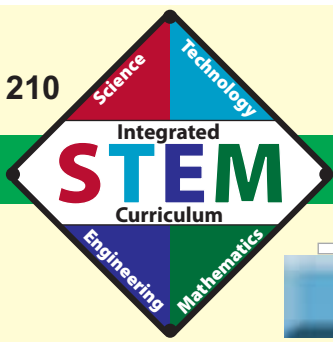
## Review Questions

Please answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper. Do not write in this book.

1. What is *broadcast journalism*?
2. Define *mainstream media*. Give examples of mainstream media programming.
3. What are characteristics of an appropriate story source?
4. Explain how “consequences” factors into judging the newsworthiness of a story.
5. Which news elements are usually associated with soft news?
6. What is an *evergreen* story?
7. What is the function of an IFB?
8. How is a reader different from a VO story?
9. What is an *outro*? Give examples of typical outro lines.
10. What is the purpose of a stand-up?
11. What are the characteristics of a package?
12. Identify the challenges in investigative reporting.
13. List and define some of the common abbreviations used in newscast scripts.
14. What is a *beat*?

## Activities

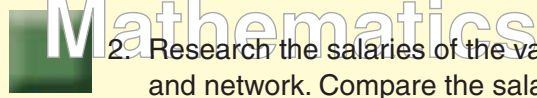
1. View several different types of news programs and identify which of the three basic categories (mainstream media, non-mainstream media, and tabloid media) the program falls into. List at least one program for each of the categories and be prepared to share your list with the class.



## STEM and Academic Activities



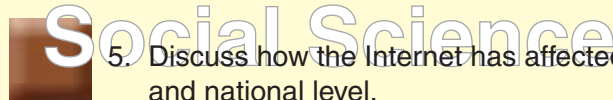
1. Explain how satellite communication has changed how the news media covers stories.



2. Research the salaries of the various broadcast journalists, both cable and network. Compare the salaries to determine if there is a connection between the journalist's salary and the program's rating.

3. If reporters commonly work two stories a day and work six days per week, how many stories will a reporter have worked on after a year on the job?

4. Record three local news programs and compare the number of hard news stories to the number of soft news stories each program airs. What is the average number of hard news stories aired? What is the average number of soft news stories aired?



5. Discuss how the Internet has affected broadcast journalism on a local and national level.