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Writing for Electronic Media

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Writing for Electronic Media

WRITING FOR ELECTRONIC MEDIA

BRIAN CHAMPAGNE

Kiera Farrimond and Brianna Bodily



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Introduction

Welcome to *Writing for Electronic Media*, an OER textbook. OER stands for Open Educational Resource, which means it's free for all who access. Since it is electronic, I will do what I can to keep it updated with the changing media.

People's viewing habits are changing as they migrate to mobile sources, social media, and kitten videos. Television News is still a dominant #1 source, and radio is still the safest way to stay informed in your car. Hopefully, you already have some journalism background. This book does not teach the who, what, when, where, why, and how of reporting; its goal is to teach how to present the journalism you already know via electronic media, primarily television.

We Write Differently

A reporter who understands her medium knows she must write words to fit her video. In this book it is Rule #1: Write to Video. Write that on your hand, the wall, and your computer monitor. Needlepoint it onto fabric, etch it in metal, and carve it in wood.

Consider a scenario where I tell you some facts about a new cellphone app, all while showing you photos of bears

going through campers' garbage. You would be confused, and your brain wouldn't know whether to think about bears or the app. As a reporter you are doing the same thing when you show money-printing presses and tell me about the fight over federal budget. Words and pictures acting together give us the most powerful medium we have. Words and pictures deviated, if I may extrapolate on studies showing the dangers of multitasking, confuse people and damage their brains. Perhaps I'm getting extreme here, but just know that it's Rule #1 for a reason. And follow it. This will be repeated later in the book.

Rule #1 affects the stories we choose and how we tell them. We struggle with stories about future events: There's nothing to shoot. We might still do them, but they'll be shorter. We change our sentences around to fit the video we have.

We write our words to be read in a teleprompter, not a newspaper. We spell out certain numbers, like 18 MILLION. We don't use symbols like @, #, %, & for two reasons: First, they could trip up an anchor. How do we pronounce "#?" Is it "number" or "hashtag"? Second, our producing software automatically times the show, and "#" is one character, judged to be one syllable, but the word it represents it two.

We would write out acronyms for the same reasons. NAACP is five characters, good for about two syllables. But spoken aloud, N-DOUBLE-A-C-P, it is six. Also, when anchor sees N-DOUBLE-A-C-P in the teleprompter he is less likely to pronounce it NACKIP.

We avoid quotations, preferring a soundbite. If we can't get a sound bite, we'll paraphrase. We prefer contractions, but not if they sound strange when read aloud. We read everything we write aloud ahead of time to make sure it

sounds OK. We write in active voice, except where Rule #1 supersedes. Let's say you're writing to video of an armadillo walking in a crosswalk when a car suddenly comes into frame and hits it. The active voice way to write this is A WESTBOUND CAR HIT THE ARMADILLO AS IT CROSSED THE STREET. This is a good, active sentence, but the video follows the armadillo. To write to what we have, we say THE ARMADILLO WAS CROSSING THE STREET WHEN IT WAS HIT BY A WESTBOUND CAR. This sentence is passive voice, but while writing is active voice is high on the list, it is not Rule #1. The armadillo was not hurt in this scenario.

We will also use more words and a longer script to describe interesting video that is longer, and tighten up for shorter clips. If it takes six seconds for the kangaroo to hop up to the ball and kick it, we will describe the action in six seconds. When done right, it can be fun.

We write in present-tense; what is true at news time: A KANGAROO IS NOT HOPPING TONIGHT AFTER MISTAKENLY KICKING A ROCK IT THOUGHT WAS A BALL. This is true at news time and is real present-tense. Overworked news writers might write in false present: A KANGAROO KICKS A ROCK IT THOUGHT WAS A BALL AND BROKE ITS FOOT. This has the present tense verb KICKS but it is wrong, like the "A dinosaur walks into a bar..." joke. Dinosaurs are in the past just like the kicking is, and changing the verb to present tense does not make it real present tense. We also like future tense.

We like good verbs. Some anchors and writers drop verbs: A MAN...IN JAIL TONIGHT AFTER POLICE SAY HE REPLACED A KANGAROO'S BALL WITH A ROCK. This happens a lot because the verb "to be" is

considered weak. Rather than replacing it with a better one, or just attaching the smallest "S" sound to the end of MAN, which would give us a verb, the verb is just dropped altogether. Think of the children and come up with a real sentence: IT HURTS TO BE THE KANGAROO AND THE MAN WHO TRICKED IT TONIGHT... "Hurts" is the verb, and "tricked" rides along as it describes the man.

We write to be heard once and understood. Our sentences are short and clear. You can re-read a sentence in a newspaper or web story, and you can back up a YouTube video. Get it unclear on TV or radio and your audience is confused and lost. It takes us longer to write that way, and our newsrooms look funny when we're all reading aloud to ourselves, but it's worth it.

Audience

Television newscasts are targeted for specific audiences, which are researched and broken down into demographics and interests. Your writing and story selection should be influenced by who's watching. Many noon and early afternoon shows do not have sportscasts because they target women at home. Some of this audience data is very specific—like who as home workout equipment—and is also used by the sales department to sell advertising.

What Lies Ahead

This book will take you through the process in chapter-sized steps, but it is meant to accompany a class with lecture and lots of writing practice. As this is the first edition, any reasonable feedback is welcome.

1.

The Newsroom

Introduction

Welcome to the television newsroom. Around 3:30 p.m. crews are returning from the field, producers are getting their afternoon shows straightened up, reporters are writing scripts, and editors are hunting down video and getting it cut.

It's hard to find a place with more buzz and energy. But we're getting ahead of ourselves. Let's start your visit in the morning, and a take a look at the jobs in a typical newsroom. In a smaller market, one person might perform several of these jobs, while bigger-market stations may divide one job among several people.

Director

The newscast director runs the booth. He or she calls the shots when the newscast airs and is the one making commands like, "Ready camera one—take!" Hours before, and during, the newscast the director works with the

producer to make the producer's plan a technical reality. The director may also supervise, train and schedule the rest of the crew.

Technical Director: This person sits in front of the video switcher and punches the buttons to bring up the cameras, video, graphics, and other sources.

Audio Board Operator: This person turns on the microphone when an anchor talks (and hopefully off when the anchor is done), lets the video and live sources be heard, and brings in the music.

Teleprompter: When the anchor looks right into the lens and speaks, they're probably reading the script reflected over top of the lens. The prompter operator scrolls the words like movie credits (but much faster) keeping the lines in the right place to be read by the anchor. When you see an anchor suddenly stumble over their words and look down at their scripts a lot, something has gone wrong with the teleprompter.

Studio Camera: These are the people who move cameras around and set them up, mostly pointing at the anchors. The exceptions are close shots for things like cooking segments. Because the shots are consistent day after day, studio cameras are getting roboticized; this means one person can control several cameras remotely and automation may eliminate the controller position entirely.

Floor Director: This person is out in the studio with the anchors. He or she listens to the director's cues on their headsets and conveys the information to the anchors, often non-verbally. For instance, if the newscast is showing video and the next thing on the rundown is the anchor talking into Camera two, the floor director will put a ready sign above Camera two. When the director calls

"take" for Camera two, the floor director points to the lens purposefully, which lets the anchor know when and where to talk.

All of the above jobs fall under news production. They put the newscast on the air live from the studio. The following jobs originate from the newsroom, but may go far beyond it.

Assignment Desk

This is a place and a position. The desk can have 2-10 police and fire scanners on it, depending on your market's coverage area, all chattering all day long. This is also where incoming newsroom calls are answered. And if there's a programming problem after business hours, they'll answer questions about why some viewer's favorite show isn't on tonight. The two-way radio base station, paging, contact lists, maps and other information are also kept here.

"The desk" also refers to the person/people staffing it. If there are several, one is usually called the "Assignment Manager" and oversees the others. The desk listens to the police and fire scanners, answers phones, sets up interviews, reads press releases and monitors social media. Should they hear something interesting on a scanner, they would call the dispatch center to confirm and/or get more details. They would then tell a producer about it, and if the producer wanted the story checked out for the show, they would send a photographer or reporter/photographer team to drive to the scene. If all crews are already working on other stories, desk and producer would decide which crew to pull from a story. The original story might gets kicked down to a small version, held for another shift or

day, or maybe it is gets dropped altogether; it depends on the story and progress already made on it.

The assignment desk is not a glory position. They end up listening to whe whining from both viewers and crews, but it is the hub of activity in the newsroom — almost everything done in a day of news-gathering channels through it. Former KUTV assignment manager and KCAL assistant operations manager, Mark Biljanic, said the job requires "the willingness to learn what news is, and be able to multitask. Really have a brain...keeping track of reporters and photographers in the field, and move chess pieces around efficiently and know who to call when."

Director

Marks, programs, coordinates, schedules.

Photographers

These are the people with the cameras on their shoulders driving out to shoot the stories. Even though they shoot video on video cameras, they are called "photographers," often shortened to "photog." Possibly due to the weight of the early equipment, photography staffs run 90 percent male. Now that cameras, batteries and tripods are smaller, people not built like offensive linemen can handle the gear. Women are highly sought after for this position.

Photographers are typically paid less than reporters but can close the gap some if they have a take-home news vehicle and can work overtime.

On a typical day, a photographer arrives to work, and if not allowed a take-home vehicle, will load up his or her gear in a station vehicle as he or she checks batteries, memory cards and vehicle fuel to make sure they are ready

for the day. The assignment desk will then give them a list of assignments to shoot on their own or pair them with a reporter for the day. They may be asked to edit their own, or someone else's video, in a station edit bay or a laptop computer in the field. Photographers may also run live equipment including backpacks, microwave trucks, and if trained, the station's satellite truck.

NASA trained its astronauts how to run their own cameras, and scuba divers do the same; everything in between, from stunt planes to underground mining, a photographer has shot. Photographers go everywhere. This can be exciting and dreadful, depending on where you go.

Reporters

These are the people in the field. Working with photographers, they set up interviews, conduct them, log them (choose the best parts to use as "soundbites"), write a script, record their voice and often introduce the edited story live in the studio or the field.

Reporters must maintain a professional appearance since they represent the station on television and to those they seek to interview. They may be assigned stories but are expected to come up with their own ideas too.

Multi-Media Journalist (MMJs)

The term replaced "One-Man Band," which is a reporter who runs their own camera for their story. "MMJ" sounds more modern, but if they shoot just for TV, it's not "multi." Small starter markets use MMJs almost exclusively, but you can find MMJs in some large markets too. Doing the job of a reporter and photographer at the

same time gives you more freedom, but can also be hard work.

Producers

These staffers are assigned to a specific show and decide what stories, and how much of them, they will use to fill the show. They write the anchors' copy and time the entire show, live from in the control booth. They will work an eight-hour shift that ends with their show. There is a forthcoming chapter exclusively about producing.

Associate Producers

APs assist producers in writing the show. They may be assigned anchor packages, voice-overs, teases or anything else the producer asks. Most are trained to become producers themselves.

Executive Producers

Usually former producers themselves, they oversee producers. They coordinate between shows (if there's a major story, they might see that all shows don't use the exact same material), edit and approve scripts and may help with scheduling.

Assistant News Director

This position is between EP and news director, and so are its responsibilities. An assistant news director might work on the editorial, logistics and scheduling in a newsroom.

News Director

This is the boss of the newsroom, typically answering to the station's general manager. He or she oversees everything described in the preceding jobs. In addition, hiring, firing, audience research, news philosophy and direction, and discipline, falls on the news director.

As mentioned earlier, this list expands or contracts, depending on market size. In very small markets, it is not uncommon for a weekend anchor to act as desk and producer, shoot some video in the field and use a foot controller to run their own teleprompter. By "not uncommon" we mean "don't complain if you're asked to do everything."

The Planning Meeting

At the start of each shift, usually once in the morning and again in the early afternoon, all hands gather for the planning meeting. Reporters present their story ideas, the desk presents what is in the daybook, and producers choose what they want in their shows. Their choices are governed by management and the day's logistics.

Story ideas come from:

PRESS RELEASES

Public relation firms and amateurs pitch stories via email, U.S. mail, telephone and in person. Some of these stories are worthwhile and others are business-promoting fluff.

SOCIAL MEDIA

See above, and add trending topics and observations from your local viewers and population.

OTHER PROFESSIONAL MEDIA

Television newsrooms subscribe to all the local newspapers and newspaper newsrooms have TVs in them.

WIRES

Besides Associated Press, newsrooms get constantly updated feeds from their affiliates, e.g., NBC and CNN.

VIEWER TIPS

These can come in via telephone, email or social media. Some will make you shake your head. Others will have you turning it. Do not ignore all the eyes and ears out there that think to notify you when they see something going on.

ENTERPRISING

Staff should be thinking of questions and possible story ideas everywhere they go. Everybody has a story. A simple tip for this came from a National Press Photographers Association speaker who advised photographers to drive back to the station using a different route than the one they took to the story; this exposes you to more of your community.

POLICE AND FIRE SCANNERS

The time you stop listening is the time some major news breaks in your area and you'll miss it. Stories I've picked up off a scanner besides fires and shootings include:

- A four year-old boy who caught a fish bigger than he was in a city park
- Wild dogs who were killing cattle over the course of weeks
- Valets at a restaurant who were doing burnouts in customers' cars in the parking garage next door; the smoke was so bad someone thought there was a fire.

From a compiled list from the above sources, or just ideas thrown out there, producers and managers choose the story and its treatment.

Television is a different medium than print, web and radio. The story selection criteria is different, too.

First, we consider newsworthiness. The PBS Newshour Student Training Manual (https://d12grbbaljejv6.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Worksheet-1.1.pdf) lists five criteria:

1. TIMELINESS

Things that have just happened are "fresh" and new. Besides new information, the timeliness of a story can be affected on an hourly level: If a story happens around the time of a newscast, it lends itself to live reporting, especially for breaking news. In Utah, Governor Herbert has started important announcements at 5:02 p.m., lending itself to a news open, anchor toss to a reporter live, and the

reporter can quickly introduce the governor who is just arriving at the podium.

2. PROXIMITY

Local news affects people in the area. The farther away the story, the more extraordinary it needs to be. In your area, a minor traffic crash that snarls traffic may affect hundreds of your viewers, but U.S. media also covered a traffic jam in China in 2015. Why? Because it was 50-lanes wide with hours of waiting. Another in 2010 had some Chinese drivers waiting in for five days; that was extraordinary enough for most producers.

3. CONFLICT AND CONTROVERSY

"When violence strikes or when people argue about actions, events, ideas or policies, we care. Conflict and controversy attract our attention by highlighting problems or differences within the community." This can be a pair of Trump vs. anti-Trump rallies, or simply one of your locals taking on city hall or even a neighbor. Make sure you have both sides of the issue covered.

4. HUMAN INTEREST

Everyone has a story, and some are quite amazing. People overcome great obstacles, handle crises or can just be amusing. PBS says we like these stories because we can identify with them. They are seldom lead stories, however.

5. RELEVANCE

"People are attracted to information that helps them make

good decisions," PBS says. Information about hobbies, consumer prices or a proposed law can and will affect your viewer's lives. Viewers will be drawn to these stories and you have an obligation to provide them (maybe not the hobbies part). KTVX in Salt Lake City had a series of posters on the walls of its newsrooms to help producers target their product. The posters showed the results of audience research they had done where viewers tell what's important to them.

When I was doing live feature reporting on Saturday mornings, I stayed away from wacky setups; instead, I tried to show viewers a good option for where to spend their day off. Eventually, that show became the highest-rated morning show of the week.

BONUS: PROMINENCE (THIS IS NOT ONE OF THE PBS CRITERIA)

The more famous a person is, the more likely things they do will be of interest to your viewers. If someone throws an egg at a neighbor's house, has his car stolen or gets arrested for a DUI, is that news? It is if that person is Justin Bieber, your city's mayor or a local news anchor, respectively.

I grumble about the interest our society has on celebrities, but cannot deny it. When a woman and her date were killed in car wreck half a world away, my wife was glued to her TV for days because the woman was Princess Diana. Following the same formula as the other criteria, the more famous/local the person is, the more newsworthy the things they do will be.

Other factors come into play every day.

What are the other stories of the day? While other

media may be able to expand or contract as needed, television news programs are precisely timed and must fit into a finite slot (as a rule, though major breaking news can expand as needed). Bigger stories may push out human-interest stories for the day. The good news is human interest stories are often evergreen (confusing. Use a different word/say this differently). enough to be run later, when things calm down.

News Philosophy

This can be dictated by a news director and heavily influenced by your programming. When KTXL-TV in Sacramento picked up the Fox affiliation, its politically heavy, buttoned-down newscast gradually adapted to the style of Fox programming, even calling the approach "Foxified." One of KTXL's competitors — KRBK at the time — had an "If it bleeds, it leads" philosophy for a time. Another, KXTV, tried family-friendly for a while, not showing any body bags or disturbing footage.

What is your lead-in? Who is watching that night that you can draw in with teases? Your sales department knows. When I finished an in-depth piece about animals at the local shelter, my station's promotions director suggested we run the piece on a Wednesday night, since that's the night we had the highest percentage of pet ownership. Indeed, we ran teases during breaks in programming, introducing viewers to Tank the dogand asking them to watch the news to see if Tank gets adopted. Viewers called in throughout the evening offering to take Tank. Pit Bull Tank was already in a good home before the story ran.

It is important to consider your medium when choosing

stories, or at least their treatment. Television is the medium, or motion, and sound. Used properly, it is powerful. Budget stories, stories of future events or other stories where there's no obvious thing to point the camera at, present a challenge. Some stations may shy away from these stories, but they can be done; it just takes more effort and some ingenuity.

It has been said, "there are no boring stories, only boring reporters." While many reporters might argue that saying, a visual story will often take precedence over a non-visual one.

2.

Leads

The first words out of an anchor's mouth as he or she introduces a story is the lead; some spell it *lede*. A television news lead differs greatly from the newspaper lead. In TV, we don't give all the information up front; we try to grab and hold a viewer's interest, so they will continue watching.

Lead writing is an art form, meaning it can be hard to define exactly how to write a good one, but you know a good lead when you hear it. They are a chance to be creative, catchy and clever. They are also very important, get one wrong, and you could lose your viewer. Your competition is fiercer than ever, and you need to guide your viewer along.

You must accomplish three basic things in a lead, all three, every time (well, *almost* every time. This is an art, after all):

1. Capture the viewer's attention.
2. Set the tone of the story.
3. Prepare them for the information to follow.

Leave out such information like names, ages, addresses and other details if they are not interesting or part of the news hook. If someone has the same name as Taylor Swift and her mail is getting mixed up, the name could be in the lead. If an address is, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, that could work. If a 100-year-old just graduated from high school, the age could belong. Notice that in all of these examples we use could, because you could take another angle in the lead and not use any details.

Present-tense leads are preferred, and future-tense leads are even better. Present-tense leads make your newscast sound up-to-the-minute, allowing your viewer to feel the same.

You write a present-tense lead by writing what is true *now*. The woman who robbed the quilt shop was arrested at 10:00 this morning, so what is present for your six o'clock newscast? She is in jail. The owners are relieved. Police are building a case against her. Pick whichever of these you can write the most compelling lead about.

Example 1:

A WOMAN IS WEARING ORANGE TONIGHT AFTER POLICE SAY SHE ROBBED A QUILT STORE TO SEW OWN CREATIONS.

Example 2:

THE OWNERS OF A QUILT STORE ARE RELIEVED TO KNOW THE WOMAN WHO ROBBED THEM WON'T BE COMING BACK SOON.

Example 3:

POLICE ARE PATCHING TOGETHER THEIR CASE TO PROVE A LOCAL WOMAN GOT HER SEWING DONE BY STEALING IT.

These examples just show the first two purposes of a lead; they still need to prepare the viewer for what follows.

If these introduced VOSOTs or VOs, you could take the video next. A lead for a package might finish up like this:

SOME QUILT STORE OWNERS ARE RELIEVED TO KNOW THE WOMAN WHO POLICE SAY ROBBED THEM WON'T BE COMING BACK SOON. OUR MISTY INGLET TAKES YOU BACK TO THE STORE WHERE ONE PHONE CALL FROM POLICE MADE THINGS A LOT LESS TENSE.

A plaguing problem in broadcast news writing is *false* present-tense. The basic form is, a man walks into a bar... We tell jokes in false present-tense, but news should not be done this way.

Past tense:

A MAN WALKED INTO A QUICK-D MART THIS MORNING, POINTED A GUN, AND DEMANDED ALL OF THE BEEF JERKY ON THE COUNTER.

False present tense:

A MAN WALKS INTO A QUICK-D MART THIS MORNING, POINTS A GUN, AND DEMANDS ALL OF THE BEEF JERKY ON THE COUNTER.

Real present tense:

POLICE ARE LOOKING FOR A MAN WITH A GUN AND A LOT OF BEEF JERKY TONIGHT. THEY SAY HE COULD BE THE ONE WHO ROBBED A QUICK-D MART AT GUNPOINT.

Once again, past tense:

A BABY FELL OUT OF A WINDOW YESTERDAY, BUT IS OK BECAUSE IT LANDED IN A PILE OF SHAVING CREAM.

False present:

A BABY FALLS OUT OF A WINDOW YESTERDAY (now we're getting confusing), O-K BECAUSE IT LANDS IN A PILE OF SHAVING CREAM.

Real present tense:

A BABY IS O-K TODAY THANKS TO A PILE OF SHAVING CREAM. THAT WAS AFTER IT FELL OUT OF A WINDOW.

Maybe for something like this example (based on a camp song), a present-tense lead is not the way to go. There are, instead, plenty of other types of leads.

Narrative Lead – start telling the story from the beginning:

SHE PUT HER BABY IN HIS CRIB BY THE WINDOW, BUT WHEN SHE CAME BACK STARTED EVERY PARENT'S NIGHTMARE.

Connection with viewer – try to get them involved:

YOU CAN IMAGINE THE TERROR OF YOUR BABY FALLING OUT OF THE WINDOW. NOW CAN YOU IMAGINE IT BEING SAVED BY A PILE OF SHAVING CREAM?

Mystery lead – keep something out to keep your viewer curious:

A LIFE COULD'VE ENDED IN STRANGE WAY... BUT IT WAS SAVED BY SOMETHING EVEN STRANGER.

Update lead – this is for a story you have reported on previously:

WE TOLD YOU OF THE BABY WHO FELL OUT OF A WINDOW. TURNS OUT HE'S O-K... SAVED BY A PILE OF SHAVING CREAM.

Build on a quote – you have to be careful with this one, but it can be done:

LOU GEHRIG SAID HE WAS "THE LUCKIEST MAN ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH." IF HE COULD TALK... A BABY WOULD BE SAYING THE SAME THING TONIGHT.

Significant detail – if there is something extraordinary–yes, even a statistic, you can lead with that:

FIVE-THOUSAND CHILDREN FALL OUT OF WINDOWS EVERY YEAR. FOR MOST... IT GOES BADLY. BUT ONE LOCAL BABY ESCAPED WITHOUT INJURY...THANKS TO A PILE OF SHAVING CREAM.

We can be amazed and try many approaches because the baby was uninjured. When people are hurt, your choices narrow, as you must stay respectful of their situations.

Every writer will tell you some things to avoid. We assembled our own list of eight to avoid:

1) Don't start with a turn-off. "This is the most disturbing thing you'll hear all day...." Why would I stick around for that? Of course, you will do stories that disturb your viewers, but don't start off with that as a lead.

2) Don't give orders, telling them to check this out or other bossy commands.

3) Don't tell your viewers the news is good, bad, disappointing or whatever. First, respect their intelligence to know; second, they may be more engaged if they have to figure it out for themselves; third, you may be showing a bias; and last, good news for some is bad for others. At my first TV job in California's oil country, when gas prices went up, more people got work in the oil fields. Very low gas prices meant layoffs. If you keep judgments out of your writing, you'll never be on one side or the other.

4) Don't start a story with a question viewers can answer no to and move on:

"Have you ever wondered how they time traffic lights?" "No, next channel." Instead, try, "sometimes it seems like you hit every traffic light red..."

5) Don't date your story in the lead. If you're not using

a present-tense lead, that's OK, but don't use words like yesterday or last month off the top.

6) Don't start a story with the word, another, or a similar word that lets viewers know it's more of the same. If there is a rash of something, that information should be included, but not off the top.

7) Don't cram too much information into the lead. The lead has its purposes, and that is all. Get to the video as soon as you can and start telling your video-driven story.

8) Don't congratulate each other. Let the viewer decide if you did a good job or not.

9) Don't drop verbs. Is, isn't the best verb, but at least it is one. A MAN... IN JAIL TONIGHT AFTER POLICE SAY HE ROBBED THE QUICK-D MART. This is common, and it tortures English teachers and anyone else who cares about humanity's need to communicate. Changing MAN to MAN'S won't tell but a fraction of a second more of your show.

Now, four keys to successful leads:

1) Write in active voice. If you can stay SUBJECT-VERB-OBJECT, you'll avoid passive voice. Tell your viewer the person/force/organization that did something, and speak in a conversational tone.

2) Use the most powerful verbs you can. The verb, to be, is not one of these. Use verbs instead of nouns where you can. Try, "fire burned the building;" not, "the building was burned."

3) Read the lead *aloud* to make sure it flows, is well spoken and sounds right coming from the anchor's mouth. Good anchors will change things around a little so scripts sound the way they talk. Lazy or rushed anchors read whatever pops up in the prompter cold and sometimes are burned.

4) Stay viewer-centric. Relate news directly to your viewer whenever possible. I knew a news director who paid his main producer 25 cents every time he used the word, you, in his writing (25 cents was more money back then). Sometimes it's not appropriate, but if you can make it work, bring in the viewers and their interests. Treat them like selfish, self-centered people and you'll keep them engaged. I am not saying viewers are self-centered, but most people would have a harder time turning off your newscast if it were all about them.

These lists, guidelines, rules and laws might seem paralyzing. I hope the opposite is true. When you sit in front of a blank script, I would hope a rule or guideline can help you get started.

3.

Common Mistakes

Why take a course in writing for broadcast? Why not just watch, listen and emulate what you see and hear? The reason is simple: because even people who are good at this get in a hurry and write poor and sometimes libelous copy. In this chapter, we'll look at four common mistakes and some just annoying stuff that keeps getting used.

Allegedly

Do your viewers know what this word means? Do you? Reporters use it to avoid accusing or convicting people who may have committed a crime: NED WAS ARRESTED AFTER HE ALLEGEDLY ROBBED THE FIRST NATIONAL BANK. THE ALLEGED ROBBER WAS FOUND ON THE SIDE OF THE FREEWAY WITH A MONEY-BAG LOCATING DEVICE SHORTLY AFTER THE BANK WAS ROBBED. There are two writing crimes here: First, the word alleged gives you no legal protection from lawsuits. This situation

happened in Sacramento, California, when I worked there. Person A robbed a bank and threw the security device from the bag out the window on Interstate 5. Person B picked it up before the police arrived and they arrested him. Person B was later cleared, but not before his image and name were dragged around on the evening news.

According to the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, you can use allege:

Only if you attribute the statement to **an official source** that you are privileged to report. If you opt to use the verb, allege in a crime story, the subject of the sentence should be police, the lawsuit, an indictment or some other official source, which is then fairly and accurately reported.

When used legally, it is essentially a non-conversational way to say *said*.

Second, *allegedly*, in all its forms, is a throwaway word your viewer doesn't understand. It would be more conversational and understandable to say: POLICE ARRESTED NED AFTER THEY SAY HE ROBBED THE FIRST NATIONAL BANK. THEY SAY THEY FOUND HIM ON THE SIDE OF THE FREEWAY WITH A MONEY-BAG LOCATING DEVICE SHORTLY AFTER THE BANK WAS ROBBED. All alleging is gone, whatever that is, and we know who is accusing him. We can also form our own doubts about whether Ned robbed the bank or not. If you never use allege, alleged, allegedly, you will do well.

Suspect

This word is a problem waiting for a good lawyer. We begin with a three-part syllogism:

Socrates is a man.

All men are mortal.

Therefore, Socrates is a mortal.

When someone says a suspect committed a crime, as opposed to a criminal, and then name someone as a suspect, they are convicting that person the same way:

The suspect robbed the bank.

Ned is the suspect.

Therefore Ned robbed the bank.

Once again, a crime with two consequences. First, you convicted Ned. Give the guy a trial first. Second, you have missed the opportunity to use much better words. Robbers rob, not suspects. Rapists rape. Thieves steal things. Burglars burgle (which is fun to say aloud). Killers and murderers kill people. Crooks do all the other stuff you don't have a good crime word for. All suspects do is get arrested and tried. I heard a tease recently where the anchor said there was a "suspect on the loose." A suspect? Who cares? Tell me there's a rapist, a murderer, or a burglar on the loose and I may react.

A suspect is someone with a name or very distinct look, which comes from a photo or video, not a written description. Even when that person is in custody, they are still a suspect accused of the crime that the robber, murderer, or scam-artist did. Do not convict them by using the same word.

Apparently

What does this mean? Does it mean X may have happened? Does it mean you're not sure exactly what happened, but it looks like A may have caused B? It's not only OK to say that, but it's far more conversational. Exhibit A:

NEIGHBORS FOUND NED WITH A BRUISED HIP AFTER HE APPARENTLY FELL OFF HIS SKATEBOARD.

Neighbors saw Ned on the ground with his skateboard nearby, but no one saw him fall, so apparently is a cheap guess. Try it again with just facts and honesty:

NEIGHBORS FOUND NED ON THE GROUND WITH A BRUISED HIP. HIS SKATEBOARD WAS NEARBY, AND THEY SAY HE MAY HAVE FALLEN OFF IT.

The guesswork is out, viewers can weigh the evidence for themselves, and you can sleep at night knowing you weren't part of unclear, lazy writing.

Undetermined

This is a common mix-up with undisclosed. Law enforcement hates telling how much a robber gets away with after a robbery for fear of encouraging copycats, so they won't tell you. Undetermined means they don't know. If you hear that your bank doesn't know how much money they have in every part of the bank, move your money from that disorganized mess into a bank that keeps track of things.

Undisclosed is not conversational, either. Try:

POLICE WON'T SAY HOW MUCH MONEY THE ROBBER TOOK.

It is honest and sounds like how people talk.

A close relative of this is someone's medical condition:

NED IS IN THE HOSPITAL TONIGHT WITH UNKNOWN INJURIES.

If I were Ned, I would demand X-rays so they could figure out my injuries. Try:

NED IS IN THE HOSPITAL TONIGHT. STAFF WON'T RELEASE WHAT HIS INJURIES ARE.

Now we've told viewers why we don't tell them Ned's injuries and we make the staff seem tight-lipped, not stupid.

Other Newsy Cliché Nonsense

Hack

A real hack is when someone without permission circumvents protocol or security to create a different result. Some are illegal; some just void your warranty. Using baking soda to clean your fridge is not a hack.

Speaking Up/ Speaking Out/ Speaking

Speaking up is letting your voice be heard. Maybe you have been quiet while those around you ran things in your community, and now you've raised your hand at the city council meeting. You are now speaking up. Speaking out happens when you voice opposition to something. It is more dramatic if it's against a group you were involved in or if it involves some controversy. Speaking is uttering words. If you are a reclusive celebrity who gives an interview after years of not being in public, you are speaking. Maybe you are finally speaking, but unless you're telling how some celebrities prefer the quiet life, you are not speaking up. Unless you're taking a stand against something, you are not speaking out. You are merely speaking, talking, or doing an interview. Watch Matt Lauer on the Today Show for examples of this.

Raising the Question Begging the Question

If you talk to someone and it brings up something unknown to you or curious, it has raised a question. Begging the question is a logical fallacy, wherein a premise

is used to prove the conclusion: "freedom of speech is important because we all need to speak our minds."

The news nonsense goes on and on as writers mix up terms and they somehow make it through to anchors' mouths. Stay conversational, stay factual, stay honest and you won't get sued, and we'll all be able to understand you.

4.

Interviewing

For many of your stories, most information will come from interviews. You will talk to eyewitnesses, crime victims, prosecutors and defense attorneys, and experts on a plethora of topics. You will work with people who give you information, and, in the video medium, soundbites you will use to tell your story. Some of these people will have just gone through or witnessed something traumatic, and you will be one of the first people they talk to afterward. While being respectful, you want to capture the emotion they are feeling. My motto is that I want to conduct, edit, and air the interview in such a way the person will do another interview with me in the future.

That respect starts with the way you dress. My reporter dress code is always a shirt and tie, and never jeans. As a photographer, my dress code was no jeans, always a collared shirt, and never athletic shoes. Other photographers might wear shorts, but I never did. Shorts are not allowed in courtrooms, and I needed to be prepared to go anywhere. Doc Marten's shoes work well

for photographers because they are formal enough and tough enough. If you are assigned to cover a funeral, you should wear a necktie at the minimum; a full suit shows more respect. These are male dress code guidelines; females should dress in an equivalent. A skirt or dress pants for funerals, business-casual skirts or pants for basic newsgathering. Shoes should be professional, but must also be able to handle almost any terrain. Athletic shoes or other clothes are not appropriate unless the story is something athletic and the reporter will be involving herself.

Your dress shows others what you think of your job and what you think of them. Think of your own reactions when someone in a t-shirt and cargo shorts asks you for something and compare it to someone asking the for the same thing, but wearing at least khakis and a collared shirt. When you approach or call someone, introduce yourself first and state your affiliation. If you are a reporter alongside a photographer, introduce the two of you. Tell the person why you are there. If there is anything tragic, tell the person you are sorry for their loss. Sometimes you can just ask for the interview next. Other times you must first build some degree of trust and show a reason why the person should give you an interview. No one owes you an interview.

Some people might seem unapproachable, but you never know until you ask. If you knock on the door of a grieving family, they might invite you in and tell you all about their loved one. What do people do at funerals? Talk. They talk about the deceased, and it helps the survivors feel better. Some families will invite you in to talk, and possibly to the funeral.

Others will not. They might slam the door in your face.

Even if they do, you have just communicated that someone cares about what happened. Most responses are somewhere in between. Leave a business card if they are not ready to talk yet.

If you are conducting an interview that has been set up ahead of time, do some background research. Preparing for an interview:

1. Saves the interviewer's time because they don't have to educate you from square one.
2. Shows the interviewee you care enough about the topic do do the research.
3. Lets them know they can't walk all over you.

For experts or victims, use empathy: Try to think of that stupid question they've already been asked a hundred times, and don't ask it. You could ask something like, "Is there something that frustrates you that you wish people understood?" That could allow them to handle the question they've been asked so much already while getting the word out to thousands so they hopefully will have to answer it less in the future.

If you meet someone with a strange name, ask what dumb jokes they hear about it instead of trying to make one yourself. I had heard all the jokes about my name by 5th grade; none were ever funny. Apply this reasoning to your interviews' names and situations. Law Enforcement officials are a common interview. They're used to giving you the who, what, when, where, why, and how. Tip: the one that often stumps them is "when." Before you roll the camera, tell them you're going to ask them the time the incident happened; it will save time on camera. After you get the basics from an official, try to get a soundbite. A

soundbite adds color and emotion to a story. A cop telling you the name or location of an intersection where a bad traffic crash happened is *not* a soundbite; him telling you he's never seen a crash this bad in his 20 years on the force *is*.

Use the same reasoning for experts: *You* can tell us that one in every ten children in your area goes to bed hungry every night more efficiently than the food bank manager can (you might even use a graphic for this); use the soundbite for her to describe what it's like to see the faces of children who don't have enough to eat, or her outrage that your community doesn't do more to help.

Young kids are often the toughest interview subjects. "Do you like the carnival?" will usually be answered with "yes." "What's your favorite part of the carnival?" will often get you a shrug, "all of it," or "I like turtles."

Try "What would you tell your friends about this?" or give them a quick multiple choice: "Do you like the rides best, the clowns, the food, or what? Tell me about that." Sometimes this works because it gives them some options and an idea of where you are headed with your questions. Still, you never know: I've seen outgoing kids clam up on camera and shy ones go on and on.

Some reporters pre-interview with just a notebook. They get all the facts down they need, then turn on the camera for soundbites. This can save battery power, time during the interview, and time spent afterward logging and editing.

Do not make assumptions about people's age, gender, or politics. Ask open questions that can lead you to understanding their positions. Ask questions open enough to not show any bias. The other extreme is trying

to compensate for you own perceived bias by asking a question that leans the opposite direction.

Location

Don't interview people in front of a wall unless they just built it. Put people somewhere they're comfortable. This will put them at ease and into a better visual setting. Interview a cowgirl sitting on her horse. A farmer on his tractor. A mechanic over an engine. If you have a wireless mic, talk to your interviews as they do something: The soda jerk as he scoops ice cream. The flower judge as she works in her roses. The kid who wants a better skate park as she skates around the old one pointing out the problems. Once again, you'll get a far more interesting shot, all while your interviewee will feel more relaxed and in their element.

Once you get the camera rolling, have the interviewee pronounce and spell their name. They will try to hand you a business card instead. Cards are kept in different places than video, so don't skip the name. This also serves to let them know you're recording and check your mic levels. Skip this step if they're nervous and you want to just slide into the on-camera part of your interview (do not be deceptive and trick innocent people into talking on camera);, but remember to get the name recorded at the end.

Start with the easy questions first, letting the interviewee warm up and forget about the lights, camera, and microphone. Tell them to address you, not the camera, and try to have a conversation. An interview is not a conversation, however. You are here to record what they think, not exchange thoughts like a good chat. You may

use yourself just enough to set up the next question: "I've had a tough day myself in this heat on the ground, but you're up here roofing; what is different up here?"

Listen. If you hear a useable soundbite, you can quick jot down the timecode if it's easily visible. It is not worth it to break the rhythm of the conversation if it is not handy. After you know you have one good bite, you might want to change your shot a little for the next one if you are an MMJ, or cue your photographer to do it if you are part of a team. Think of a subtle signal, not: "That was a great bite! Now zoom in more for this next question!"

If you know you don't have a couple good bites, do not stop interviewing. Once while I was being interviewed for a story, the reporter asked me the same question four times. It got a little nerve-wracking because we worked at the same station and I didn't know what she wanted. It turned out she wanted me to state the problem, "too many single drivers in the carpool lane," more succinctly. It's better to ask again than try to tell someone to say something in fewer words.

After you know you have enough material to put your story together, ask the interviewee if they have anything else they want to add, or if there is something you, the reporter, might have neglected to ask. It's surprising how many people say "no" and then proceed to bring up something very important. Ask the photographer or interns, if they're on site, if they have any questions. Many times the reporter I was shooting for would end up using my question. I was no better than they, but may have been listening in a different way or had a different relationship where I could ask a question uniquely. During a group interview, after Michael Dorn (who played Worf on *Star Trek: The Next Generation)* had just landed his own vintage

fighter jet, the pros finished their questions for the stiff interview on the tarmac. I then shot out: "What's the difference between your jet and the Enterprise?" The reporters there rolled their eyes at me. Then Dorn gave a quick chuckle and said "The Enterprise is just a set where we pretend... this is the real thing." Soundbite.

Thank the interviewee for their time. Offer a business card if they think of anything else later, and ask for their number in case you do the same.

5.

VOs

What is a VO?

VO (we never write it V.O.) stands for voice over. Outside of television news, a VO is any time you hear a narrator or interview covered with video.

In a newsroom, however, it is a brief news story where you may not see the anchor read the lead. The anchor will continue to read as video is shown. A VO may or may not return to the anchor after the video. If the anchor is seen after the video, putting in a final bit of information about the story, that is called a tag. VOs may be chained together (usually with a graphic transition) so the viewer doesn't see the anchor introduce or segue stories.

Your script should have an opening sentence that hooks your viewer. It should then get right into the script, or VO as soon as and then get right to the rest of the script, into the VO portion as soon as you can, or when your producer dictates. VOs can run anywhere from 15 to 40 seconds, depending on the video. If the video is compelling, it

should run longer; if not, the script should be tightened up.

Writing to Video

Let's apply some of what we learned in Chapter 1 here.

When we don't write to video and it doesn't match our words, it's called *wallpaper video*. It happens all the time: The anchor reads a story about a property tax proposal that would benefit schools and you see video of kids at recess. A professional athlete is arrested and we video of him scoring a touchdown.

Try this exercise: Have someone read you *Little Red Riding Hood* while showing you pictures from *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. There's a splitting effect as you try to process what you're seeing and hearing separately. Why would you say one thing and show another? You can do better.

Rule #1

Your script should be determined by your video.

Let's say you're writing a VO about gas prices. What could you show? Editors probably have file footage of people pumping gas, cars on the highway, expansive oilfields and gas station signs. With this video, you could write whatever you want about gas prices. This is wallpaper video. It's just usual TV news junk. The words don't match up with what we see, but they could.

Side case in point: A new diet study just came out, and you're writing the script. You will que up video of overweight people – shot from the neck down – walking on a crowded public street. It doesn't matter if the study says weight loss will now be harder, easier, more

dangerous, safer, or impossible; it will be the same video you use for any story about fitness and weight. I know this because when my station converted to HD the same week we ran a weight-loss story, I had to go out and get new video of overweight people with their heads cut off (fortunately I wasn't around for the first post-HD story about smoking or aging).

Now, back to your gas prices story: What can you do instead of just calling up wallpaper video? You can remember Rule #1. Look at the video, whether it's new or file footage, before you write. If it's several shots of people sliding credit cards, pulling out the nozzle and putting it into their cars, create a stronger script by writing to those images:

NEXT TIME YOU SLIDE YOUR CARD AND START PUMPING YOUR GAS... IT'S GOING TO SHOW UP SMALLER ON YOUR BILL. GAS PRICES ARE HEADED DOWN GOING INTO THE HOLIDAY WEEKEND. YOU AND HUNDREDS OF OTHER DRIVERS ON THE ROAD WILL PAY AN AVERAGE OF FOUR CENTS A GALLON LESS THANKS TO MORE PETROLEUM RESERVES FOR MOST MAJOR SUPPLIERS.

We could've started this story more directly, saying that more petroleum reserves are lowering gas prices. Maybe that could be in the lead, but for the video we follow Rule #1 and write to the shots we have while including our viewer. Does our viewer care more about major suppliers or her credit card bill? We move the elements of the VO, and even a sentence, around so they follow the video while keeping our viewer engaged.

Let's try another example involving a city's budget for road repairs after a winter of heavy rain damage. If we are

going straight to video without an on-camera lead, this is how we would write directly to the video:

THE LOGAN CITY BUDGET IS STRAINED AND PLANNERS ARE JUGGLING FUNDS TO KEEP OUR ROADS IN SHAPE THIS SPRING....

This is present tense and puts the subject first, which is good. However, what video will you show when your anchor reads about the city budget? What do planners juggling funds look like? This doesn't work well for the broadcast medium. Instead, we use file footage of flooded roads and crews working on them and write to the footage:

THESE FLOODED ROADS AND THE DAMAGED PAVEMENT KEPT CREWS WORKING AT ALL HOURS THIS WINTER. NOW CITY BUDGET PLANNERS ARE JUGGLING TO PAY THE BILL....

Yes, we start with file footage, but this approach is more dramatic and better shows the winter's impact than freshly shot video of cars on well-paved roads.

If you were using on-camera anchors before the video started, you could write a present-tense lead, but when you're not looking at an anchor's, follow Rule #1.

6.

VOSOTs

The next step up from a VO in television news is the VOSOT. Some people pronounce it by saying all the letters, "V-O-S-O-T," and others pronounce the acronym "VOH-sot." It stands for voice-over sound on tape, meaning the anchor reads a voice-over portion, then stops talking while a sound bite is heard full. After the SOT, it may return to more voice-over (VO-SOT-VO), return to an anchor for a tag, or go directly on to the next story. We use bite, sound bite, and SOT interchangeably.

The VO chapter covered how to write to your video. With a VOSOT, you also need to write to, and in some cases, from your sound bite. It is usually easier to do this if you choose the sound bite first.

Choosing A Soundbite

Sound bites are typically 5-15 seconds long, though the closer you get to 15, the more you must justify the added length. When you are logging your interview, listen for something the person says that can add flavor, personal

insight, or emotion to your story. Someone stating facts is not a good bite unless the facts are astounding or in question.

After a fire or car crash, an official from the fire or police department will usually grant an on-camera interview. They will tell the time the call came in, their response, extent of injuries or damage, where the incident happened, who was involved and how it happened. Use all of this information to write your VO; you can probably say it more concisely, faster, and in more conversational language than the official did. The sound bite, however, should not be some of these facts. Perhaps a motorcycle crash story can include a sound bite about the importance of helmets or drivers checking their blind spots if either were a factor. A house fire story could use a plea for smoke detectors or fire escape plans. A robbery might include a SOT about how dangerous the robber is and the urgency of getting her behind bars.

The only time you should use a fact in a sound bite is when the fact is the story, and even then, consider a reaction:

"This is the tenth fire caused by fireworks this year."

"A man went skiing on his 100th birthday in June. He can ski at that age and there's enough snow to do it that late into the season."

"Even though the crash was minor, it's tragic that the victim died when a seat belt could've easily saved her."

All of these are stories because of an interesting fact. That fact should go in your lead, and the SOT should be a reaction to it. Getting police and fire officials to give a candid, heartfelt comment is getting harder to do. Often, you can see them carefully choosing their words to not offend or cause any legal issues.

Choose a bite that is representative of your interview. If your advocate for lead paint removal does a 10-minute interview about the dangers of the paint, and takes a quick moment to say asbestos is still a problem, use a lead paint bite. Unless, of course, her acknowledgment of asbestos is dramatic for some reason — perhaps she was an asbestos-denier up until then.

Setting Up The Bite

If you choose your sound bite before you write your VO, you can artfully craft your script to lead right into it. You want the SOT to fit right after the anchor's last words. You also don't want to the bite to repeat what the anchor just said.

Bad example:

FARMER BROWN SAYS HE CAN'T BELIEVE HIS COW GOT OUT, followed by "I just can't believe the cow would get out like this. I thought she was happy. Maybe I need to..."

Better example:

FARMER BROWN IS SURPRISED HIS COW IS GONE, works better to set up that same bite, as it does not repeat the same words Farmer Brown uses, rather sets up his reaction.

You can set up a bite with a something like, WE ASKED MAYOR HOBBS HOW HE FELT ABOUT IMMIGRANTS IN THE COMMUNITY. Don't repeat this same setup multiple times in the same newscast. If you were going from the mayor's sound bite to one of his critics, you wouldn't want to say; WE ASKED IMMIGRATION ADVOCATE SYLVIA CALVIN HOW SHE FELT ABOUT IMMIGRANTS. You might,

instead, say, IMMIGRATION ADVOCATE SYLVIA CALVIN DISAGREES or perhaps, IMMIGRATION ADVOCATE SYLVIA CALVIN SAYS THE MAYOR'S VIEWS ARE DATED before going to her bite, "he has no idea what immigrants can add to our town. They are hard-working people, more so than he is."

You're OK with all those pronouns because of the way you set up the SOT.

If you set up a bite with HAD THIS TO SAY, you are doing it wrong. First, it is obvious they had that to say. Second, you are also missing a chance to use better and more interesting words to set things up. Make sure your setups are factual. You only use the CALVIN SAYS THE MAYOR'S VIEWS ARE DATED line if she also spoke about that. It need not be used in the SOT, but if challenged you should be able to play back a section of the raw interview wherein she talks about his views in a way that suggests they are from a past era of thought. It could be Calvin or Hobbs who challenges you on this later.

You can make almost any VO into a VOSOT. If a solar eclipse is coming to your area, you may pull information and animated graphics off the NASA website, but the reaction from a local scientist, merchant who might make money off the crowds or amateur astronomer will humanize it. Of course, rule #1 says you need to get some setup video of the person you choose. No matter the story, there is probably a geek group for it who would love to speak, speak up, or speak out about it.

VOSOTS are a great way to break up the rhythm of a show. You can break up packages and VOs with VOSOTs to change things up. In a fast-paced show, fewer packages can give the anchor a chance to at least clear his/her

throat. They can also add color and a human element to your story and newscast.

7.

PKG

What is a Package?

The package, abbreviated PKG or PAK, is the basic reporter's report. It is pre-written, and the voice track is pre-recorded, so it can be edited to have video very precisely match the audio track. Soundbites and natural sound breaks (called NATS) can be edited tightly since they are pre-produced on an editing system.

Typically, the anchor introduces the PKG on set, then the director calls for it to play, and the anchors' mics are cut as the viewers see the story full-screen. A variation of this is the anchor tossing to the reporter either on set, on a side set, or in the field live. The reporter takes the toss from the anchor and introduces her own PAK (we are using PAK and PKG interchangeably). After the package runs, the anchor may tag it and then toss back to the anchor. If the reporter introduces her own PKG in the field, it may be called a donut.

The script for the anchor or reporter to introduce the PKG is called the intro. The last words the anchor or

reporter says that let the director know when to switch to the PKG are called the roll cue. Ad-libbing a little in the intro is OK, but should end with a roll cue the director can recognize. If you throw off a director while introducing your package, you're going to end up staring at the camera and waiting for him to figure out you're done talking and get the package going.

Packages can run 50 seconds (typically called a mini-pak) on the light side. The average in the 1980s and 1990s was about two minutes, but that has been shrinking, and averages about 1:30 now. In-depth stories can run longer than three minutes, but not without planning with the producer.

Reporters are typically assigned stories in the morning meetings. Some stations' assignment desk might help set up interviews and b-roll, but at others, it is solely the responsibility of the reporter.

How To Produce Packages

The minimum number of interviews for a package is two, but more people/sources are better. Find the experts from both sides of an issue and the affected and/or witnesses, depending on the topic. Log and choose soundbites using the criteria from Chapter 7.

Often you can shoot b-roll after the interviews, which helps ensure you have video of what the interviewees talked about. For spot news this is often not the case: If a building is burning, shoot the flames first, get reactions and official information after; usually the fire chief is busy until things cool down anyway.

As you shoot (MMJ) or assist (reporters with photographers), look for natural sounds that will help

bring your viewer into the story. These can be the sound of traffic going by, a siren, a bird chirping, swimmers splashing, a nurse checking on a patient—whatever. If you hear a good sound that could introduce a new area of your story, shoot more video to complete a sequence. Repeat this for every new thought or area you want to cover. For example, imagine you have been sent to do a story about winter's first snowstorm and its effects on a well-travelled canyon. You get solid sound of the cars driving in snow, and then a few more shots of cars, a mix of telephoto and near shots.

Then you get to the bad area. You get shots of spinning tires, people pushing cars, and cars getting stuck. Make sure some of these are close enough for good sound. Interview a few stuck or struggling drivers. Later you find someone from the Highway Patrol. In Utah, all troopers are authorized to talk on camera. In other agencies, you may need a sergeant or lieutenant. The trooper can give you the who, what, when, where, why, and how about what is happening. She might also give some reaction, whether it be advice, frustration, or surprise.

After the interview you set out to shoot things the trooper talked about that you want to put in your story. You don't need b-roll of everything she said, but when in doubt of whether you'll use the footage, shoot it. Better to have and not need than need and not have.

Looking for what is out of the ordinary, you stop for some tow trucks pulling cars out of snowbanks. If it's safe, you can get close enough for NATS. Try to shoot these from the shoulder side, not the highway side. If the tow drivers look too busy to clip your mic on, just shout a question at 'em as they work. If they shout back loud enough, you can use a quick response. In my experience

covering this kind of story, the driver said he loved the first storm of the year because they were "money makers." I wasn't sure it was loud enough for the mic to pick up, so I yelled "what?" and he repeated the same words louder and clearer.

Once again, after you get a quick NATS or SOT, get more video to follow up for your future script.

With interviews from an official, reactions from drivers and tow drivers, and plenty of video and sound of each, you can go log. If your station is nearby, log there. If not, you might be spending the day in your car. Rather than idling your engine for hours, try logging in a nearby library or empty restaurant (don't take up tables if they need them for new customers).

How do you start your script? Use these guidelines to help you put something on that blank page:

Start the package and each new aspect or thought, with natural sound or a compelling thought.

In this case, we can start with a quick NATS pop of cars driving by in snow, followed by the script THE SNOW DIDN'T LOOK THAT BAD AT THE BOTTOM OF SARDINE CANYON.

Your package has started. Now on to the next thought in it, where the road conditions get bad. Use the NATS of a spinning tire, then BUT GRIPPING TURNED TO SLIPPING JUST THREE MILES UP. You used the natural sound full to transition, and the next words addressed the NATS. You might have to adjust the order of your sentence, slipping into passive voice if absolutely necessary to put the words about the NATS right up next to the NATS. Awkward sentence structure is not good, but our rule number one is Write to Video. Now that you have shown action, put in some reaction with a stuck

driver and/or Highway Trooper SOT(s). You could then put in more track as you summarize the conditions and response.

Use NATS again to transition to the tow truck driver, write a line that ties the NATS up to the SOT: THOUGH THEIR CHAINS AND HYDRAULICS ARE GETTING A WORKOUT, THE TOW DRIVERS DON'T MIND THEIR WORKOUT [TAKE SOT] "The first storms of the season are great. They're moneymakers." Close the package[Ibid.] with perhaps another SOT from a driver or trooper, then give your sign-out: "Joe Reporter, A-TV News."

This book is about writing, and not editing. When you edit, however, lay down all of the NATS, SOTS, and track first. These affect the length of the piece. Once they're down, you can tell your producer about how long the story will be. If the producer gasps, you can remove or rewrite before you've invested all the time to cover the track with video.

Once you get the script delivered to your editor, write the anchor intro and tag and supers for your producer. If you are are an MMJ, write them whenever it fits best in your environment.

Those are the basics of how a package is done–now let's look at how to do them well.

Recording Your Voice Track

You should record your voice in a professional audio booth if your station has one. A good booth will have sound deadening foam, a microphone on a stand, and hopefully something to hold your script like a clip or a

music stand. Your hands should be free so you can make gestures.

If you don't have access to a professional booth, try to create one as best as you can in your environment. If you are in a car, shut off the engine, or the air conditioning at the very least. If you're in a home, find an area with soft surfaces like the side of a bed on a carpeted floor. Kitchens and bathrooms give too much echo. If you're stuck somewhere with hard surfaces, consider using a jacket, blanket, or towel to surround you and the microphone; put them over your head like an old-time photographer if need be.

I assume you'll be recording your voice with a camera. If a photographer is recording for you, have her hold up a finger in front of the lens with the track number; this will make it easier to find the right track later.

You may consider using an audio recorder, like a Samsung Zoom. I use a basic Zoom H1 for my voice and end up with an mp3 file when I'm done. The Zoom plugs into my computer so I can drag the file right over when I'm done, and mp3 or even wave files are much smaller than the video file would be if you used your camera to track.

As you track, try to *tell* the story, not just read words. Talk as you would to your friends, and use gestures—yes, you can hear the difference if someone is physically animated as they speak. It's OK if you goof up, you can just start up again and patch it together in editing. Edited track needs to be perfect.

Standups

The standup is the part of the package where the viewers get to see who's talking to them, which is important. They

run between 5-20 seconds depending on what you're saying and doing. If you stand in front of a building or sign, while holding a stick mic and just talking, you are doing what is called a "thumbsucker." You have shown viewers your face, and have just shown everyone else you are not very creative. Better to treat standups as show-and-tell. Demonstrate something or point out how or where something was done. Your station gave you a wireless mic for a reason. If you don't have a wireless, you can still walk, talk, show, and tell. This is a chance to show viewers (and potential employers watching your resume reel) that you understand and command your medium.

Standups should be flawless, since you can do as many takes as is necessary to get them right. I usually need 3-5 takes to get everything right. As a photographer in a top-market, I have shot 20 takes for a reporter who just couldn't get it right. In market 111 (at the time) I worked with a reporter who did his stand up in one take. The problem was, I was doing a pan/zoom out and assumed he would need multiple takes like everyone else and I'd have a few chances to practice my camera moves. I had to ask him to do it again.

If you're doing 10 or fewer takes you'll be fine. I ask reporters (and especially students and interns) to say their standup three times perfectly before I even turn the camera on.

So where in the story does a standup go? Rarely at the beginning—these days that may be done, but it is called an as-live or look-live and mimics the look of a real live shot. You can end a package with a standup, but these often end up as thumbsuckers.

Besides a demonstration, standups can be used as a bridge from one thought to another. Going back to the

Snow Drivers story, perhaps you want to visit a local tire store to see if snow tire sales picked up on the first day of real snow. Up in the canyon, you crouch down by a stuck car and say THIS CAR'S TIRES ARE STUCK . BUT MAYBE THE TRACTION PROBLEM ISN'T ALL SNOW. SOME OF IT COULD BE THE TIRES THEMSELVES. This sets you up to have your next shot be at the tire store. You could use a NATS pop of the air-impact wrench taking off lug nuts, or a sound bite of the tire store manager saying, "First storm of every year people find out their tires aren't going to make it."

Notice how the sentence was arranged to have you mention the tires at the beginning so it's clear why you're cuddling up to a tire and ends ready for the soundbite or NATS pop.

Standups can bridge two soundbites in a less-visual story: Follow the guidelines for writing up to a soundbite. Because packages keep going, remember to write *to* and *from* SOTs and NATS.

The Diamond Approach

When given a story about a larger problem (or good thing), you can try the diamond approach to the story by finding someone/something representative or affected by it. A local county was cutting its supplemented housing checks. We found a mother who depended on the assistance. We started the story with NATS of her doing some dishes, learned her story, and then introduced the county-wide cuts. We used soundbites from the country administrator explaining why this was happening, and then wrapped the story up by going back to the mother.

What is a budget cut? What does it look like? Budgets

don't watch TV; introduce us to people affected by both sides of an issue.

People

If you are describing your story to your producer, you had better include people. A new stop sign on a once-peaceful road is not about signs, safety, or traffic; it is about how people will/won't like it, people will be safer/in more danger, and people who tried to stop it/get it done.

I arrived at KEYT a month or two after the big Santa Barbara fire. Photographers got lots of great video of enormous flames. There were signs up at the station that read, "Flames don't watch TV." Yes, get a shot (and write about) of big, house-devouring flames, but your next shot should be about the people affected.

Crashed cars don't watch TV: Shoot the people and record their reactions and changed lives.

Torrential rains, extreme heat/cold, blizzards, hurricanes, and tornadoes don't watch TV: Shoot how these will affect your viewers.

Heart-warming puppies and kittens don't watch TV: Can your viewers adopt them? Do the puppies help people with PTSD?

New construction projects don't watch TV: Whose lives will be affected?

Basically, every story is about people. A comet that only passes earth every 100 years is interesting, but still should be tied into people.

Thinking Visually

Television is the medium of motion and sound. Many stories get advanced because they are motion- and sound-

rich; others get rejected because they are considered too abstract. There are, however, ways to overcome what might be a visually-poor story. When deciding if a story is visual or not, ask, "What can I point the camera at?" and beware of wallpaper answers.

Most stories, through the Diamond Approach, can be made visual. What do layoffs look like? Higher internet speeds? Kindness? Discrimination? Love? Economic Sanctions? Poverty? Most stories with an abstract (nothing to point the camera at) topic can be made visual by finding an example of the effects on people.

You might also consider metaphor, if appropriate. You can use a popular, established metaphor: "They say time is money. With the new highway project's delays, what uses to cost you 35 cents in time (coins clink) will now cost you three dollars and sixty-five cents (more clink, or you slide the stacks next to each other for comparison).

Some government reporters are quite good at creating their own metaphors. If uninsured people are dragging down the progress of a government program, hitch a trailer to a car, get a rowboat and someone to hang on the outside of it, or just tie a heavy weight around someone—you could try this at a gym. Just make sure to explain it and not let it get too distracting.

One of your biggest challenges in the future is that more and more newsworthy stories happen on computers and mobile devices, and not in the "real world." You'll need creative ways to cover apps, internet fraud, and programs.

8.

Producing

BY KIERA FARRIMOND

KSL EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Take the image of a big shot Hollywood producer out of your head. That is NOT what we're about to talk about. News producers don't have their name in the credits. They don't sit back and make decisions while other people do all the work. And they don't make millions of dollars.

News producers work entirely behind the scenes, do most of the hard labor and generally get no credit for their work (at least from the public). Sounds glamorous right? In the newsroom, producers are the workhorses. Some days, producers will work nonstop from the moment they sit down until the moment their show goes off the air. It's a demanding, thankless job. So why be a news producer? Because it can also be the most exhilarating and rewarding job in the newsroom. We'll let these long time producers explain why they love what they do:

"Just when I think I can't take it anymore, something happens that makes me realize how important my job is and how many lives I can positively impact." – Erica Thomas, WBRC Producer

"Never the same day twice." – Atish Patel, WTSP Producer

"There's nothing quite like creating something from nothing every single day. Then, erasing it all and starting over. You learn to condense a ton of information into digestible portions every day. And you absolutely rely on teamwork to get things done." – Melissa Dies, KXLY Executive Producer

What Is a News Producer?

Producers are the brains behind every newscast.

They're the ones who decide which stories make the show, which stories get cut, and just how much time each story is worth. It's up to a producer to give viewers an all-encompassing look at what's going on in the world that day, which is not an easy task in such a short amount of time. Producers decide how much of the newscast is dedicated to crime and how much is reserved for happy stories.

Producers are the writers of the newscast.

The only things in a newscast not written by the producer are the meteorologist's weather report, the sports report and stories filed in the field by a reporter. If an anchor reads it off the teleprompter, there's a 99 percent chance the producer wrote it. In some stations, you'll find anchors who like to help out and write some scripts, but in others, you'll find anchors who couldn't say their name right on TV if the producer hadn't typed it into the

teleprompter for them. This obviously means producers need to have good writing skills, good grammar and even good spelling because the last thing you want during a live newscast is for an anchor to say pubic instead of public, Osama instead of Obama, moron instead of Mormon, you get the idea. They've all hit air in my career, and you can bet the anchor, executive producer and news directors were not thrilled after the show.

Producers are the vision behind the newscast.

The look, the feel and the tone of the show come entirely from the producer. Will the show start off with a reporter on a house fire or will the lead story be a different reporter on a big scandal at the state capitol? Will the anchors read story after story about robberies, stabbings or will the show be filled with stories on the economy or consumer alerts? The producer makes all of those decisions. Each newscast a station airs is going to have a different feel. Early morning news should be different than mid-day news, early evening and late-evening news. The story choices, the length of those stories and even the way the stories are written will be different, and it's the producer's job to know their show and their audience. Meanwhile, while it's important for ALL journalists to be impartial and not show bias, but as a producer you face this is two ways. Where a reporter must make sure his or her story is not right- or left-leaning or missing interviews to give the story balance, a producer has to make sure each story is the same AND make sure that the mix of stories chosen to fill the newscast does not show bias as well.

Good producers take ownership of their newscast.

Producers come to work each day hoping to craft their best newscast.

To good producers, a rundown is not a template to be

filled in. It is a blank canvas providing timing parameters to the day's biggest stories and best videos. Good producers cultivate relationships with the anchors, editors, reporters, photographers and other members of the newsroom. They accept responsibility for their mistakes that make air and work to correct the errors and learn from the mistakes. They also accept the responsibility of figuring out what did go wrong, if it wasn't something they caused. Anchors want to know why when they were supposed to be on-camera reading a story, the director took a different camera or the wrong video or graphic came up. It's the producer's job to talk to everyone involved after the show and help ensure it doesn't happen again.

Duties of a Producer

Find the News – From helping determine which stories your reporters are going to cover and which of those will end up in your show, producers are also in charge of finding all the other news of the day to fill the show. This can be more local news, national or world news, consumer news, medical news, and even some news that just plain fun here and there. We'll talk more in depth about how producers find the news later on in this chapter.

Stack the News – Once a producer has found the news, or as they are finding it, they are stacking it in a rundown. This means they're deciding which order the stories will go on air. Producers have to keep in mind what's coming before and what's coming after a story. You want to group like stories together, i.e. crime stories, health stories, etc. But you also don't want to have five straight minutes of crime in the newscast. That's just depressing for everyone

watching, and if you depress your viewers, they won't watch you again.

Write the News – When a show is stacked, the producer will spend time writing all of the great stories they've chosen for their newscast. Information for these stories can come from local press releases, on-camera interviews from the scene of a local news event, national and international wire feeds and other news video feed services.

Edit the News – If a news anchor says it, it'd better be true. One of the BIGGEST jobs of a producer is to edit the news. This includes looking for factual errors but also grammar errors and spelling errors. Producers should read EVERYTHING they've written out-loud before it goes on air. You want to make sure the story will make sense to a viewer who has to hear and understand the story in a very short period.

Time the News – Once you're on the air, the production team takes over most of the hard work. But a producer can't sit back and relax in the control room. At this point, their biggest job is to time the show. Each newscast is given a specific amount of airtime to fill, down to the second or even the frame. There is no budging. If your show is scheduled to start at 5:00:00 and end at 5:28:35 and your anchors are still talking at 5:28:36, they will be cut off, and your station will move on to the next program without them. Not only does this look unprofessional on the air but it makes the anchors look bad and you never, ever want to make your anchors look bad on the air.

Coordinate with the Production Team – During their shift, a producer is typically in the zone for most of the day. That means, sitting at their desk with multiple windows open on their computer, typically with headphones on listening

to stories or video, getting information, writing stories, editing stories, etc. There's not a lot of group discussion taking place. But as you get nearer to air, you have to come out of your zone and begin to communicate with your director and other people on your production staff. These guys are the experts in getting it done. Do you want to try a new camera shot or angle? Run that by your director, maybe even take a field trip to the studio to see the angle for yourself and adjust with the director's guidance. Most directors are happy to try new things, as long as they're physically possible AND as long as a producer gives plenty of time to plan and practice. Good producers are willing to take risks, think outside the box and give viewers a new experience every now and then and they absolutely can't do that without a great relationship with their director.

Coordinate with the Assignment Desk – The assignment desk is the heart of all the action in a newsroom. It's where the police scanners are blaring, the phones are ringing and the crews are being dispatched. It's critical that a producer keep close communication with the assignment desk, so they know of any changes to big stories or of any new stories that are breaking and need to be added to their show. In some newsrooms, and on some shifts, it's part of the producer's job to listen to those police scanners and react with appropriate crews. But even if it's not your job, you should learn the police lingo, train your ears to understand the jumbled mess that comes out of those speakers and at the very least, pay attention enough so that you can tell when there's breaking news because of all the extra noise coming from the assignment desk.

Coordinate with the Reporters – Producer/reporter communication is critical in every newsroom. Producers should be checking in with their reporters throughout the

day. They should know if the reporter scored an exclusive interview or if the reporter is struggling to get anyone to do an interview. Producers can help redirect reporters in the event their story falls through, or they can help come up with ideas of different angles to pursue. A reporter's story should never surprise a producer live on the air, so it's important to make sure that two-way communication is open up until the show is on the air and then during the newscast through interruptible feedback or IFB. Reporters in the field are relying on the producer during the show to let them know how long they have until their live, how long they have left in their time and when to wrap things up. Clear communication here is critical, and a good producer doesn't forget about their crews in the field, even when things are falling apart in the studio.

Coordinate with the Anchors – They make the big bucks for a reason. They are the face on the TV and it's their reputation on the line every single time that the "On Air" light turns on. Anchors are typically more seasoned journalists with years more experience than most producers have. This is a valuable tool for a producer. If you're questioning what story to lead with or whether or not to use a certain piece of video or soundbite, on top of getting guidance from an executive producer or news director, ask the anchor. In most newsrooms, the anchors are happy to be included in the discussion. Producers also want to make sure they warn anchors about anything new or different happening in the show. If you want your anchor to use a touchscreen, for example, and they've never done it before, you need to give them a heads up well before air time, so they have time to practice and get comfortable. Let's be honest; you'd never have an anchor who had never used the touchscreen before, use it for the

first time on the air. It would be a complete and total nightmare. But let's say you took that field trip with your director and decided to try out a new camera shot. Anchors are creatures of habit, and when the camera isn't where they think it should be, they get nervous. Alerting them before air gives them a chance to prepare. During the show, producers are the anchors' connection to the control room. Producers have the ability to get in their ear at any moment and let them know a story has been killed or cut out of the show, tell them a reporter's live shot has died or even let them know their necklace or tie is crooked. Good producers know how to balance between talking to the anchors too much and leaving the anchors out there feeling lost and alone with no clue what's going on in production control. Trust me; anchors want to know what's going on when things start going away from the plan. A calm, collected producer in their ear will do wonders for their nerves, even if all the producer can say is "I don't know what's wrong but we're working on it, and this is what we're going to go to next."

Be a Newsroom Leader – Producers get to work with nearly everyone in a newsroom which means you get to build relationships across and outside the building. That puts producers in the position to take a leadership role even if they're not in any sort of management role. Again, producers are the vision behind the newscast. They have the big picture in their mind, so it's their job to help everyone from the talent to the art department understand the vision so that everyone comes together nicely on the air.

Where Does All The News Come From?

In a newscast, you'll typically see six types of news: local, national, world, interesting news from out of your local market, weather and sports. Producers get to decide how much of each newscast is dedicated to each. Let's take a brief look at what each of those mean and then we'll explore where the producer finds those stories to include in their newscast.

1. *Local News* – Producers in local TV markets will fill the majority of their newscasts with local news. These can come in multiple formats including reporter PKGs, VOs, VO/SOTs, NatPKGs, Maps and full-screen graphics.
2. *National News* – These are the top stories of interest across the country that day. This could be political news coming out of Washington, D.C., or it could be a mass tragedy in a different state. These are stories you're likely to see the networks cover heavily during the morning and evening network news. Typically, local TV producers will include this news is smaller forms. Instead of dedicating 2-3 minutes to the story, it might get only 25-45 seconds during a local newscast.
3. *World News* – Following national news, this one is self-explanatory. These are stories with international interest. This could be political, or it could be a major weather incident in another country.
4. *Interesting news from across the country* – Think incredible video of a swift-water rescue during

flooding in the Midwest, aerial footage of a wild llama chase through the streets of Phoenix or the story of how a 4-year-old girl in Florida helped save her little brother from an alligator attack and she retells the entire thing in front of the camera. These are stories that have some kind of wow factor that makes them interesting to viewers everywhere.

5. *Weather* – This is almost always the biggest factor in why a viewer turns on a newscast. Viewers want to know how to prepare for the day, or the next day, with what to wear, what to bring, etc.
6. *Sports Headlines* – Not an element of EVERY newscast, but generally you'll see some kind of sports segment in most morning news and late-evening news.

Now that you understand the basic content categories that can make up a newscast, let's look at where producers find stories that fall into those categories.

1. *Local News* – These are stories shot locally by your own station's photography staff and/or reporters. You might have a story that doesn't have any video but you can have a map built to show the location of the event, or you can have a graphic made to show a person's mugshot or describe the suspect police are looking for.
2. *National News* – Producers can find these stories in a handful of places. Obviously, it's impossible for a local TV producer in Boise, Idaho to call police in Boston, Massachusetts for information regarding a news event happening there. Just as it

would be impossible for a producer in San Diego, California to gather his own information about the G20 summit happening overseas. But it's important for most daily newscasts to include elements of news from out of your local area. That's where news wires and news video feeds come in.

Each station typically subscribes to 2-3 of these services. The Associated Press is probably the most widely used by a majority of stations. The Associated Press is a standard resource most producers have access to, and it's a great place to start the day and get a feel for what's making news nationally, internationally and even locally in some markets. The AP Wires include National Newsminutes that are sent out every hour. This is typically very short, but informative bulletins giving the very latest in the top 6-7 national stories of that day.

Video to accompany your national news will come from the affiliate video news service. For CBS stations, that's generally CBS Newspath. For NBC, it's NBC VideoOnDemand (VOD). CNN also has a video news feed that many stations pay a subscription to. These services usually have staff reporters who are available for affiliate stations to use on the air, typically on the top 2-3 stories of the day. Producers can choose to use those reporters to cover a big story (for a fee) or rewrite the story using the feed's information, for one of their own anchors or reporters to read.

3. *World News* – Producers can find these stories on

the wires and video news feeds just like national news

4. *Interesting news from across the country* – Here is where you'll REALLY thank your news director for paying for CNN Newsource or your affiliate news feed. Stations across the country subscribe to these feeds and share video with each other so that when a station in Texas has a story about a really cool kid who saved his grandma by calling 9-1-1, you can air that too. These are the stories that make GREAT teases and can keep your viewers around through commercial breaks.
5. *Weather* – Luckily for producers, meteorologists typically handle their own content. Producers can help guide what that looks like, for example, if you want to do an extra weather segment tied to a local wildfire and you want the meteorologist to talk specifically about winds or lightning in that area, the producer should absolutely make that request. This is one spot where communication is critical to keep the flow of the show going.
6. *Sports Headlines* – This is another place where producers help guide instead of doing the heavy lifting. Most sports departments will create their own segments with input from the producer.

Where Does All That News Go?

The Rundown

Once a producer has decided a story is important enough to make their newscast, they'll start organizing the stories in what's called a show rundown. This is a place where everyone from the producer to the director,

anchors and everyone in-between can see throughout the day what the newscast is looking like. Anchors can select a story and pre-read through a script, directors can plan for certain shots, and field crews can see where they've landed in the mix of stories and generally input their scripts from wherever they are on location.

The show producer fills out the majority of the rundown when they are choosing the stories they want to run. The rundown is also where the producer will indicate to the director which anchor is reading that story, what format it is (a reporter toss, a VO/SOT, a PKG, etc.) and in some stations where anchors move around the set. The producer will also indicate where that anchor will read the story. Producers will typically indicate whether or not a story includes extra graphic elements in the rundown and it's also where they'll give each story an allotted time and be able to see how much more news they need to fill the show.

There are two main news rundown programs, ENPS and iNews. Both work similarly but have a little different look. Ask any producer that's used both, they'll usually tell you they like the program they learned on better, but both do the job and are easy enough once you get the hang of them. Both have the feeling of a spreadsheet with columns and rows dedicated to certain information. Let's look at what some of those most common columns are for:

Page – This is how a rundown is numbered so that when the scripts are printed, there's a page number to keep things in order. In news, the shows are divided into blocks which encompass the airtime between commercial breaks. These blocks are alphabetical starting with A and generally ending with C or D for a 30-minute news program and G or H for a 60-minute newscast. Page

numbers are tied to those blocks and numerals start over again at the beginning of each block.

Story Slug – This is the name of the story. Each station will have different ways of determining story slugs. In some stations, the story will be slugged the same thing in all newscasts to simplify archive searches in the future while in other stations the producer is free to give a story whatever slug they'd like (so long as it pertains to the actual information the story contains).

Segment – Here is where a producer indicates the story format. Reader, VO, VO/SOT, PKG, reporter story. Stories that have multiple elements, like an anchor intro to a reporter live shot then a reporter PKG, will typically take up multiple rows of the rundown with each element described in the segment column.

Anchor – Who is reading the story? Producers decide and indicate that here.

Estimated Duration – Here a producer can decide how much time they want to allot to each story. VOs typically should run :20-:25, VO/SOTs should run :35-:45. PKG times will vary by station and by content, but a general assignment daily report will typically run somewhere between 1:15-1:30. Since each show has a specific amount of air-time to fill, producers will also use this column to judge how close their content is to filling that time. News software will help calculate that time and generally indicate for the producer how "light" or "heavy" they are on time. Most producers are comfortable going into a newscast :30 light. This can allot for reporter stories that go long, unexpected delays or issues that can take extra seconds, etc.

Actual Duration – This column will populate on its own once a story is written. Both ENPS and iNews calculate the

length of scripts as they're being written. Producers need to pay attention to the actual time of scripts to make sure a story isn't written for more time than they've given it.

Other columns in the rundown can include columns for graphic elements, assigned editors and notes for where editors can find the video for the story. There are also columns used only by the production team and director to indicate which camera will be used or where the video will come from once you're on the air.

Stacking a Show

Putting everything into your rundown is referred to as stacking your show. It's what will take the majority of a producer's day. Typically, a producer will start with stories in one order and throughout the day, more stories come in, breaking news happens and what eventually goes on air is nowhere near how the show was stacked hours before.

News Blocks

Earlier we briefly described news blocks when it comes to page numbers in a rundown. Now, let's talk in more detail about those blocks and how they differ from each other.

A Block – In most newscasts, the A Block is where the biggest news of the day belongs. It's where your show kicks off and where most of the hard news will come. These stories are the most urgent and important for viewers to know about. Not for cat fashion shows and viral videos of water skiing squirrels – and if you get either of those references, you should get bonus points on your next test.

B Block – This second block following the first commercial break is usually reserved for stories that are on the lighter

side (NOT murders, robberies, etc.). Producers also like to have stories with great video or other "teasable" stories that can help keep viewers watching as the news stories become less urgent as the newscast moves along.

The B Block is also where, in most 30-minute newscasts, you'll find the main weather segment. How much time you spend on weather will depend on several things, your market, the forecast and your meteorologist. In some places, main weather, as it's called, gets just 1:30 and in others, it gets 3:00 or more.

C Block – For some 30-minute shows, the C Block is where you'll find the sports segment. This is another segment where the timing will be determined by the news of the day and general station practices.

In other 30-minute shows where sports do not have a presence, the C Block will be your end block. The last block of the show sometimes reserved for a kicker, think zoo babies, water skiing squirrels or other fun, very light hearted stories, and a goodbye.

In a longer, 60-minute newscast, the C Block can be reserved for just about anything. It's a good place to throw in a few interesting consumer stories or health stories. The C Block is a shorter block that will get you to the bottom of the hour where you'll restart things with another hard news block for the D Block.

Selecting a Lead

One of the biggest decisions of the day for a producer is answering the question "What is my lead?" This should be a story that's urgent and has wide appeal. Some days there's late breaking news that slides into the role of lead story, other days producers rely on reporters to find the

biggest story of the day. If the lead story has been happening all day, producers need to figure out what's the very latest or what comes next so that the viewer knows it's not the same story they saw on an earlier newscast or read online hours ago.

Lead stories do not always have to be about death and destruction. Yes, the news should be harder, but given the right scripting and set-up, an argument can be made for many different stories to lead the newscast. Even stories about ducks stalling traffic on the interstate, yes, I led a show with that once.

Pacing

As a producer is stacking the show and inputting all of the stories he/she wants in the broadcast, they also need to consider the pacing of the show. Viewers get bored. Easily. They're like toddlers. Or college students. To keep viewers watching, producers need to keep their attention. One way to do this is to keep the pace of the show "up." To maintain a fast-paced show, producers should not go from one live reporter to another, unless you're in a big story, breaking news, team coverage on multiple-scenes type event. Having anchors toss out to a live reporter, who then tosses to a pre-recorded PKG and then gets tossed back, takes roughly 2:00. If you have three of those back to back you've just spent 6:00 of your newscast on just three stories. Instead, a producer should try to break up the bigger reporter stories with quick, shorter news that the anchors read.

Tight writing that's straight to the point also helps pacing. You have such a limited amount of time to get information to viewers; every sentence should provide the

viewer with NEW information and not repeat something that's already been said.

Meters

Speaking of viewers' attention spans, producers have another thing to keep in mind while stacking their show. TV News is driven by ratings, right? The higher the ratings, the higher the sales team can charge for commercial time. Ratings are important and a producer plays a key role in a show's ratings, for obvious reasons.

In a nutshell, when it comes to ratings, a newscast is broken down into 15-minute segments. Shows get rating points for each 15-minute segment. Those are then averaged for the entire newscast. As long as a viewer watches for 5 minutes during that 15-minute window, they are counted in the rating. If they turn off the TV or change the channel after watching just 4:59 of the show, they count for nothing. BAM. Quickest description of ratings you'll ever get. It's a lot more complicated, but for our purposes here that's all you need to know.

Meters help ensure viewers stick around for the time needed to count. Producers stack their blocks with meters in mind. The A Block should obviously be more than 5 minutes long so that you count all those viewers who watched for the first part of the news. Ideally, the A Block is more like 9-10 minutes long. Weather is generally stacked during that second quarter hour since it's one of the very top reasons why viewers tune in to the news. If they stick around through at least 20-minutes after the show started, the station gets to count their viewership in both 15-minute segments of the newscast. Does your brain

hurt yet? Just wait until you see a ratings report at your first job.

Showcasing

Good producers do more than just stack the news, write the news and get ready to go live. They showcase the news. This means they add elements that go beyond a typical anchor on-camera-VO-SOT-next story repeat. In the least, it means adding graphics that accent the story during anchor reads but even better would be a producer who researched extra information that added context, history or more details to a story and had special graphics built to help visually show the audience that information. Showcasing skills develop over time and new producers can find inspiration by watching other newscasts online. It's always fun to see how other markets do the news and then try implementing something new in your own show.

Writing for TV – Reminders

You've covered this in detail in other chapters but here are a few more things to remember when it comes to writing specifically for TV:

1. Short sentences. Think ten words or less, that's not a hard and fast rule but a number to keep in mind.
2. Keep things simple. Remember, your audience doesn't have the luxury of going back and rereading a sentence that didn't make sense the first time.
3. DON'T leave out important facts. Even :20

stories should have the who, what, when, where and why answered.
4. ALWAYS read what you've written out loud. You will catch things like mistakes or even just sentences that don't quite sound right.
5. Write to video. DO NOT write a story without looking at the video you have.

Writing Teases – Reminders

1. Decide if the most interesting part of the story is amazing video, sound or some other detail.
2. Make a promise.
3. Be SPECIFIC. No, "we'll have the latest, coming up next." Duh. That's your job.
4. Make sure your video doesn't give away the story. Communicate with your editors.
5. Deliver whatever you promised.

Putting It All on the Air

Okay, now that your show is stacked, written, showcased and ready to go, it's time to head to the control room. This is where a director will take the show you've carefully crafted and poured your heart and soul into for 8 hours and bring it to life on the air. When everything goes to plan, you'll leave the booth feeling extremely proud of your team.

Timing

This is one of the main jobs of a producer during the live show. Both iNews and ENPS, and any other news producing software out there contain an internal timing

function. Producers will control this timing bar as the show progresses. As you move from one story to the next, you'll follow along with the timing bar which will help you know if stories are running on time or if something took longer than you allotted, like that reporter who always thinks their story is worth more than the 1:15 you gave him. When stories start to go heavy, as we say, you'll have to figure out how to make that time back somewhere else. This can be done in a handful of ways, but the most common is to choose another story to kill or drop out of the show. That's called floating. Floating the story in your rundown takes it out of the teleprompter, but it's still very important to communicate and let your director and then anchors know about the story you're dropping.

Producers should confirm their show's end before air time, so they know exactly what time they need to be off the air. Some morning shows don't have hard outs or specific times the next program will take over, but it's still important to finish at a time that leaves the next hour or half-hour newscast beginning at its scheduled time. In some stations, producers will count the anchors down in their IFB for the last 10 seconds, in other stations, the director or floor director will give the anchors that count so that no one is still talking when you've faded to black.

Breaking News

Good producers are never afraid to add breaking news at the last minute. Trust me; breaking news is what you'll live for. It adds excitement to your day and can leave you feeling extra fulfilled when you leave.

In today's world, your viewers have up-to-the-minute news available right at their fingertips on a smartphone,

laptop or tablet. If your show doesn't have the VERY newest information, they will turn you off. Newscasts should be updated as much as possible leading up to and even during the show. As a brand new producer, this can feel daunting, but I promise with time adding breaking news while you're timing the show you already created, will become second nature.

Why be a Producer?

If this sounds like an easy job, you clearly didn't read the whole chapter. Producing is hard. It's a jam-packed, non-stop day filled with writing and rewriting, researching, editing, checking in on reporters and eating lunch at your desk because you don't have time to step away or your show won't be done before deadline. There's quite a bit of pressure on a producer in the newsroom. They spend the day making decisions that will shape the entire newscast that market will see. They're making ethical calls, sometimes on the fly, and after everything goes on air and you head home to sleep, the rest of the team will pour over that night's ratings and try and determine why you won or didn't win.

Different producers are driven by different factors. Each has a different reason for loving what they do. Some producers love producing because they love to be in charge. They love calling the shots, especially in the control room. Other producers choose the job because they really enjoy writing. Some producers enjoy the job because it's different every single day. You will never produce the same show twice, which can keep things interesting.

If you've never considered producing, I urge you to give

it a shot. You may find it's something you hate but you might also find that it's something you love and something you excel at. Good producers are hard to find, and that means it's a job where you'll ALWAYS be in demand. Where jobs for on-air talent like reporters and anchors can be hard to come by, especially as stations try to cut down on costs, jobs for producers are abundant. Producers with proven ability can find themselves being fought over and that means, in the end, the producer can end up on top with the pick of where they want to work and how much they want to work for.

9.

Teases and Promos

What is a tease?

A tease is usually a few lines of copy, preferably accompanied by video, promising something to viewers if they stick around through a commercial break. They can also appear during programming, exhorting viewers to watch your news, which may be a week, day(s), hours or minutes away.

At many stations, the promotions and tease producer is its own position. The tease producer attends planning meetings and works with producers to determine which stories would be tease-able. At stations without tease producers, the producer is on their own to write the teases.

Teases can be just a few seconds long or up to thirty seconds for one that occupies its own spot. They may appear in the newscast before a commercial break, right before the show starts or even mid-block. They may also run on social media as you let your friends and followers know what's coming up.

Examples of Non-News Teases

Movie trailers are teases. They show you parts of the movie and may even develop characters and a plot line, but the good ones leave enough out to get you to want to pay to see the rest of it.

The people who give out free samples at Costco are teasing. They give you a taste of how yummy the product they're pushing is and you can buy more from the display right behind them. The good ones make you buy a $9 bag of a new snack food you have somehow lived without up to this point.

Social media is full of teases. The good ones get you to click over when you are in a hurry and went online for something entirely different.

How to Write a Tease

The "Golden Nugget"

A good tease provides some information, enough to set up and/or arouse curiosity, and then you hold back what KSTU producer Kelton Wells calls the "Golden Nugget." This nugget you promise is some missing or additional information your viewers will want to know about so badly they'll stay with your newscast. If they hear it on the radio, they'll want to get home and turn on your news.

Choosing the Nugget

You need to choose a specific aspect or fact to tease. "Details," "More" and "A look at" are not concrete. Could you imagine a couple sitting at home watching your newscast: As you go to break, you promise them details on a new lunch program that might not be as healthy for children. Would they fight over the remote for details? Maybe if they had school-aged children.

Instead of "details," you write COULD YOU FEED A KID A HEALTHY SCHOOL LUNCH FOR $2.68? WE'LL SHOW YOU HOW THAT NUMBER IS MAKING OUR KIDS FAT. Or perhaps hold back the budget fact: EXPERTS SAY SCHOOL LUNCHES ARE MAKING OUR KIDS FAT. GUESS HOW MUCH MONEY YOUR SCHOOL GETS TO TRY TO GIVE KIDS HEALTHY LUNCHES.

Another example: Police arrested a 92-year-old bank robber. He said he fell on hard times, hates banks and has been robbing them since he was 80. He handed a note to the teller who asked twice if he was kidding. He was arrested 30 minutes after the robbery, and was just sentenced to 12 years in prison. He says the prison serves better food than his rest home.

All of the facts above are tease-able; this is not the time to say A 92-YEAR-OLD MAN WAS SENTENCED FOR ROBBING A BANK. MORE COMING UP. This might arouse some curiosity, but a concrete tease will seal the deal. Some possibilities:

A MAN GETS JUST 20 MILES AFTER ROBBING A TEXAS BANK. WAS IT A BAD GETAWAY PLAN OR HIS AGE?

A JUDGE SENTENCED A TEXAS MAN FOR ROBBING A BANK. WE'LL TELL YOU WHY HE'LL PROBABLY SPEND THE REST OF HIS LIFE IN PRISON... AND HE'S O-K WITH IT.

HE MIGHT BE THE OLDEST BANK ROBBER IN THE COUNTRY... WE'LL TELL YOU WHICH BIRTHDAY HE'LL BE CELEBRATING IN PRISON.

LAST TIME HE ROBBED A BANK HE WAS EIGHTY-SEVEN AND GOT PROBATION. WE'LL TELL YOU HOW MUCH OLDER HE IS NOW... AND

HOW THINGS GOT MORE SERIOUS AT HIS SENTENCING TODAY.

Obviously the man's age is the reason he's in the news, but his motivations are curious too, so all are possibilities. You could use your viewer demographics to help you decide which elements to tease: A younger audience won't relate to his age, so the logistics might be better. You might tease the fact that the teller asked if he was serious twice. Older viewers would appreciate that this guy prefers prison food and is even physically able to rob a bank. Since no one was hurt, you can use a lighter mood.

Tease With Care

Do not tell viewers YOU WON'T BELIEVE or YOU'LL BE SHOCKED. First, maybe they won't be, and second, you can do better. You may have fallen for these for the first few click bait articles you went to, but are probably done with "...is amazing!" for a while.

Do not promise what you don't deliver. Viewers won't fall for this twice. A trailer for Marvel's *Avengers: Age of Ultron* showed a cracked Captain America shield and enough costume wreckage, and sad music to have me believe they were beaten. I saw the movie, they were not, and I've been skeptical of their trailers since. If you promise to tell how to safely observe a solar eclipse, you had better have a list of places and/or conditions, a viewing box I can make or buy and some warnings from experts. If all your report says is "don't look directly at the sun," you have over-promised and delivered only what our mothers taught us as small children. The Golden Nugget must be revealed and it can't be something cheap. The social media and internet teases that lead you to pointless

or drawn out articles are called click bait; now we all laugh at people dumb enough to fall for them. Don't make your viewers feel dumb or else they'll go somewhere that doesn't. The second time someone says, "made you look," you don't. Do not trick viewers; tease honestly with real information. *Promotions* Promotions, or promos, may its own job title or department, depending on the size of the operation. They can tease to the upcoming newscast called "topicals" or promote an anchor, your investigative unit, or promote your station's newscast or general image. The image ads have more in common with advertising than journalism. Promos may run on air or social media. Nightly topical teases must be ready to air in a few hours. Some generic promos may be weeks in the making and use more Hollywood-style cameras and lighting, and may use external companies to produce them.

10.

Live Shots

Live shots are an integral part of most television newscasts; they used to be what set us apart from other media. The live capability of social media is changing the game, but for the moment, television is the medium that can take you anywhere in the world at that instant in full broadcast quality.

What Is a Live Shot?

An anchor reading at a desk might be live, but that does not constitute a live shot in our definition here. Tossing to the weather center or the studio sports desk is not a live shot: Positions in the studio laid out by a producer and shot by studio cameras are not live shots. Reporters fronting packages live in the newsroom (often with teleprompter) are not live shots, either.

Live shots are done outside the studio. They can be as close as the roof of your building or the sidewalk outside your station. They are usually staffed by photographers with ENG cameras, not news production staff.

For a typical lead-story live shot, the show might start with a tease, go to an open (optional), and then the anchors greet the viewers from the anchor desk. The anchors might use a VO or graphics to set up the story (or not; they could just get right to it) and introduce the reporter live in the field. The intro might be done with a two-box, or more commonly, a graphic video transition. The reporter is then taken full-screen where she explains what is going on. If there is a donut, she will first refer to her current surroundings, and then introduce the pkg. After the pkg runs, she will add some concluding information and toss back to the anchors. The anchors can move on to the next story;, or if it's a major event, they might read a related VO or VOSOT or toss to another reporter.

In this chapter we will use the term "anchor" to refer to someone reading the news from the studio and "reporter" for someone in the field. Sometimes anchors report or go live from the field, and sometimes reporters are on the anchor desk, but we will keep the jobs separated here for clarity.

How Live Shots Are Done

Live shots take more planning than studio shots because there are more factors to coordinate and things that can mess them up.

Live Equipment

Technology is changing the way live shots are done. In the old days (up until 2010-ish) there were two options: satellite truck or microwave truck. There are more paths to get video back to the station now.

Satellite trucks are the ones with the dish on the back or roof. They send their signal to satellites orbiting above the

earth, which send them back down to where your station has a dish that can pick it up. First-generation satellite trucks were built on large truck bodies. There was room for three+ people to work in them, but they needed extra space to maneuver and park.

Newer satellite trucks have downsized and might be built on full-size vans or SUVs. These smaller vehicles take up much less space, and do not fall under commercial vehicle laws, but have less space in which to work. Satellite trucks can send signals that reach all around the globe, although, because of the curvature of the earth's surface a signal can't go up in China and back down in New York. A satellite visible to a truck in China cannot be seen by a New York receiver, so the signal might go up and down a couple of times (think of an "M" pattern) before it gets to the station. You can usually see this effect on the air: When stations send their reporters abroad to cover something like the Olympic Games, after the anchor asks them a question, it takes several seconds for them to respond. In most cases, the reporter answered as soon as she heard the question, but the signal had to go off to space a couple of times before it made it back.

Microwave trucks are more local. They have smaller dishes (about 2-3 feet) usually mounted on top of an inflatable mast. The dish must point to a receiver antenna, and the mast can be pumped up with air from an onboard compressor to help it clear obstructions like trees, houses, and shorter buildings. Microwave trucks can be on full-size vans and SUVs, but are showing up on smaller SUVs and crossovers.

Portable microwave gear works like the truck-mounted system, but can break down into a suitcase-and-a-half of

equipment, hauled in any vehicle it'll fit in, and set up wherever it can see its receiving antenna.

COFDM stands for Coded Orthogonal Frequency Domain Multiplex, and don't worry, you don't need to know that. You should know it is a compact transmitter, small enough to attach to the back of the camera, and with a shorter range.

Cellphone backpacks are often called by their brand names: Dejero, LiveU, and TVU. They are the size of a student's backpack and getting smaller. They split their signals over multiple cell phonecarriers. The signals are put into a network and decoded back at the station. They are very simple to use and are very mobile and portable. They scale down quality and increase delay according to the quality of signals they are able to establish with cellphone networks.

Social Media allows live signals over Facebook or other systems. It can be done as simply as pointing a cellphone. There are pros and cons to each system, and knowing them can help you choose the right one for your live shot.

Satellite trucks cost the most to purchase, train operators, and run. You will have to buy and coordinate time on the satellite (called a "bird") you want to bounce your signal off. They require some expertise to operate and are subject to strict FCC rules, since they're in a position to interfere with others' signals. They must "see" their satellite, meaning there are no obstructions between the dish and the (in North American, at least) southern sky, where most TV satellites orbit. Satellite trucks must have a clear upward-arcing view to the south, which means they cannot operate on the north side of tall buildings or in steep east-west canyons. They have the longest reliable

range—the cellphone backpacks can go pretty far, but are subject to third-party problems.

Microwave trucks are second in cost, but simpler and cheaper. Since their receivers are usually mounted on hilltops, tall antennas, or buildings, their signals go more horizontal and are subject to more things blocking them. Masts can run anywhere from 8-40 feet tall to help with this, but once you go around the first curve of most canyons, microwave trucks are done.

Since most stations own their own receive sites, microwaves can transmit whenever they want for as long as they want. They are reliable, but still can have hiccups from the transmitter or truck. With the gear on top, they cannot be driven in parking garages, car washes, low-hanging trees, or a Sonic Drive-In.

Microwave gear is portable and reliable (no truck issues to worry about), but can be tougher to establish a signal with a receive site since it can't raise its transmitter above obstructions. It also takes longer to set up than a truck system.

COFDM systems are more portable than microwave gear, but have less range. One company claims 40 miles of range from an airborne source, but a signal coming from the air wouldn't be subject to terrestrial obstructions. The system I used attached to my camera and used my camera's battery, which worried me that it might kill the battery while my shot was live.

Cellphone Backpacks are subject to the availability of multiple cell phone networks' signals, which rules out most canyons and outlying rural areas. They may also have signal issues where lots of people are using their cellphones, like a stadium full of people.

Social media live shots, if you use your phone, will have

poorer audio quality and be subject to data speed for your phone and the connection of those watching.

Setting Up and Establishing Uplink

Live shots are set up as long as is feasibly possible before they air. Some stations ask that shots are established 45 minutes before they air; I was still driving to my shot three minutes before I was to be live once; with the reporter's help we made our slot. It wasn't worth the stress of everyone involved.

No matter which live system you are using, you will need to establish a signal back to the station with clean audio and video. There will be someone on the station end to ensure this happens and let you know when your signal is good. This can be very technical or simple, depending on the live transmission gear you are using.

You will also need IFB, or Interruptible Feedback. Just the acronym is used in most newsrooms. IFB is the signal the station sends back to the reporter and/or photographer on a live shot. It usually goes through a cellphone or wireless box the reporter wears and into an earpiece. You cannot go live without it, or else how will a reporter answer an anchor's question, or even know when to begin speaking? In a bind without reporter IFB, a photographer can be told when to cue a reporter to begin talking. The photographer just gives a hand signal to the reporter at the appropriate time. If reporter IFB is missing, the anchors need to be told so they don't ask specific questions of the reporter.

Live shots require audio, video, and IFB or you can't take them. You've seen them, either on the air or a blooper reel: the anchor tosses to a live reporter who just sits there looking like an idiot. The irony is that a technical person

made the mistake and it's the reporter who looks bad to viewers.

IFB is typically the sound of the show in progress, with a producer interrupting to give time cues. Producers should keep their live shots apprised with a short cue every minute or two as the time of the live shot approaches. The last cue is "stand by" so the reporter can be looking into the camera as the toss comes. Producers will also give brief cues to let reporters know when they are covered by video, which lets them know it's OK to look down at their notes. On longer shots there may be time cues given.

As mentioned, reporters also hear the show live, but depending on the live system used, there may be from 2-4 seconds' delay. For this reason, they are given mix-minus in their IFB. Mix-minus is the news program minus the reporter's own voice. Hearing yourself talk with even a one-second delay is very distracting, so it is not fed back to them. As a viewer you can tell when a reporter has not been fed mix-minus in her IFB because right after the anchor toss and she begins talking, she will pull her earpiece out of her ear. If she tosses to a donut or SOT, the station will usually correct the problem while she is not on camera, and she'll usually have her earpiece back in when the camera comes back.

Live Shot Safety

Power lines and lightning can injure or kill live crews. As a rule, give 10 feet of distance for every 10,000 volts a power line carries. The bigger the voltage, the higher the wires.

Electricity seeks the easiest path to ground, so if your truck's mast can give it a path down, it will take it. If there are power lines in one section of a tree's branches and your mast in the other, the electricity can take a path through

the water-filled branches to your mast, and then down to you.

If your truck becomes energized, stay in it. Your tires should insulate you. Call 911 and stay put, even if you fear the career consequences: Any workplace disciplinary action is better than getting electrocuted. If your energized truck catches fire, you may have to leave it. Remembering that electricity will take the easiest path to ground, and if you touch the truck and the ground at the same time, the power will go through the water-filled body link you set up between truck and ground. Jump out instead, never touching ground and truck at the same time.

In higher-voltage situations, electricity will spread out from the contact point—your truck—in concentric rings like a pebble in a pond. It is easier to go through your body than across the ground, so do not take normal steps as you move away. Either hop with your feet together or shuffle while keeping your feet together. The common guideline of how far to do this is to go past the first person laughing at you.

This is not advice just for tech staff; in a power line-contact accident in Los Angeles, it was the reporter who got her hands burned off. Lightning is another form of electricity you don't want flowing through your truck. Most stations will respect your decision to drop your mast and/or pack up your gear if lightning is approaching; those that don't expose themselves to the possibility of expensive lawsuits. Even if you're not near the truck itself you can be shocked or electrocuted. If you are at the end of a video or mic cable hooked up to a truck or equipment that gets struck by lightning, that bolt has an easy path down your copper cable, through your water-filled body,

and to the ground. I have called off at least two shots for fear of lightning; no shot is worth the risk.

That was a lot of technical and scary information for a book about writing the news, but the more you know about how things work, the better job you can do working with them.

Planning Good Live Shots

Breaking news live shots don't get much planning; when something major is happening unexpectedly, you just put your training to use and get a reporter on the air at the scene, wherever it might be. The reporter gathers information as quickly as she can and relates it to the viewers.

Planned live shots can be more meaningful with some forethought. First, ask why you're going live. Are you doing a story about saving for retirement for your 10pm show? Why not go live in front of a savings and loan office? Because it closed five hours before your newscast, that's why. That might be better fronted by the reporter in studio.

The reporter should have some interaction and/or show-and-tell with the setting. Most IFBs and microphones are wireless now, so reporters have all the freedom they need. When my career started, we had clumsy cables for IFB, microphones, and video cables, but we still moved around a lot back then anyway

Live interviews are a bit risky, since you don't know how things might go with them. It is extra risky to try to pull passersby aside to ask them questions. Examples of this range from the "I Like Turtles" kid to things that raised the ire of the FCC.

Usually, if you talk to an interview ahead of time you

can get a feel for the knowledge and intent of the person, but you never know, and that's what makes live TV so fun.

As-Lives, aka Look-Lives or Fake Lives are not live shots, though they look like them to viewers who don't notice the absence of a "live" bug. Reporters pre-record stand-up intros and tags for packages while looking and acting like they do on real live shots, sometimes even adding a "thanks" to the anchors at the beginning and a "back to you" at the end.

As-Lives can be good for logistics; you can look live in places you can't get live signals, and they are "in the can," meaning they are set up and good-to-go well before the newscast begins.

Producers need to keep in communication with live reporters to let them know what is expected from them, and when.

Reporters need to send producers anchor tosses, location info for supers, and roll cues to any VOs, SOTs, or PKGs they might introduce. In a suddenly-breaking news situation there might not be time for all or some of these; a good director and producer should be able to keep up, using obvious cues like, "Let's take a look at that video from earlier" and tone of voice to know when to take video or cameras.

After the reporter tosses back to the anchor, the anchor might ask a pre-planned question. These were popular a few years back, but sound canned now. Some anchors will ask spontaneous questions. Doing so is a little risky because a reporter might have to find an intelligent way to say, "I don't know," but if the anchor asks what viewers are wondering it can be a good thing.

After the toss back to the anchors, it is unusual for

anchors to tag with additional information; it makes it look like the reporter left something out.

We'll close this chapter with a cautionary tale: The day before I wrote this, I did a rushed live shot. The story was shot hours earlier and we wrote and edited at the station. Editing and logistics problems kept the photographer and I from leaving when we should have. Rush-hour traffic was terrible, and we arrived at our live shot less than 10 minutes before it was to air. I helped set up the live equipment, but did not have enough time to practice my role. I stumbled through, tripping over words and looking at my notes far too much. Give yourself time.

11.

Social Media

Social media includes: YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, Periscope and whatever other platforms may develop in the years to come.

News organizations have gone from teasing with social media to displaying their product on it. Reporters go live on Facebook with regularity, and quality is improving. Ideally, you should tease back to your website and newscast. Your tease guidelines are to give a sample of the information you have, and then leave your readers with a question or fact that can be answered on your platform.

Social Media Can Be Used To:

- Interact with your viewers and get their feedback
- Research people and get their photos or videos (Facebook is public)
- Reach out to people who are newsmakers
- Poll your viewers
- Use your followers to locate people who may be affected by a news item; e.g., if the governor is

proposing a cut to farm subsidies, you can ask if anyone knows a farmer who would be affected by those cuts.
- Add extra features that your newscast didn't have time for
- Show the personal side of yourself, reporters, anchors and staff

Keeping In Touch With Viewers

The one-way medium of television is over, with a two-way communication network enabled via social media. Viewers can now feel like they are better connected to your anchors and reporters and give feedback on your stories.

This allows for some good exchanges of ideas, and also some trolling. There is a private Facebook page devoted entirely to the crazy and inappropriate comments some viewers post on stations' social media pages. It has no shortage of submissions.

Some newscasts, mostly morning shows, will read viewers' Facebook feedback on the air. If the posts aren't insightful or funny, they can be viewed as a waste time and send viewers reaching for the remote. Maybe I'm old, and other people do *like* to hear comments from people they don't know.

Researching People and Pages

Many photos and videos of people that make it into news broadcasts are downloaded from social media. It is ethical to credit your source on the air with at least a courtesy.

Wanted criminals will often have uploaded photos of themselves posing with guns and money before they

became wanted, and felons on the run rarely take the time to clean up their feeds. After a person has done something newsworthy, check social media quickly to find media of them. The interest they have created may be good or bad, but the bad ones are more likely to remove uploads. After President Trump named Anthony Scaramucci as the White House Director of Communications, Scaramucci quickly deleted older anti-Trump posts. Outlets that did not act quickly or preemptively would have missed out.

Polling Your Viewers

There are perhaps two types of polls: for research and for fun. You can run a research poll to see how your viewers feel about a given topic. KSL was working on a story about a special-needs girl who made noise at a restaurant prompting other diners to complain. On-air promotions directed viewers to weigh in on the issue of the rights of the diners versus those of the girl and her family; promising commenters would have input on the story.

Fun polls can also provide some value. "Do you like our warm weather?" is a time-waster, but "What's your secret to beating the heat?" might produce some responses that other readers might find useful.

Facebook Live

If you're going to use this or other apps that allow going live with your phone, do it sparingly. Let your viewers know they can trust you to show them something important when they receive a notification. This may be the shortest-lived phenomenon for me as after a few times checking in when friends and family go live; I rarely act on a live notification now. Did I say rarely? I meant, stopped

completely. Funny, right as I typed that I received a live notification, which I ignored.

Comments

Have a friend read comments about you, for you. If there is anything you *need* to know, they can tell you. They can filter out the sickos for you. The comments following a story I did about car idling included someone calling me a fag. The story was strictly about running cars wasting gas, but whatever. Unmediated comments get stupid, mean and pointless fast. Many outlets have them disabled on some or all stories.

Personal Pages Are Not Personal

It is tough for some to understand that social media is not private. Consider nothing transmitted to be secret. If you wouldn't scream it to a crowd of your biggest detractors waiting to fault you and bring you down, don't post it, tweet it, snap it, whatever.

I'm not saying not to make jokes about people, groups or organizations; I'm saying tell those comments to your friends in person, not via electronic transmission of any kind.

I'm not saying to not drink alcohol, I'm saying don't post photos or texts of yourself drinking alcohol.

I'm not saying don't have your arsenal of weapons; I'm saying don't post pictures or texts of yourself with them. It's bad tactical judgment to inform your enemies and potential burglars of your resources anyway.

I'm not saying not to hunt and kill animals; I'm saying don't post pictures or texts of yourself with them.

I'm not saying don't hold deep religious and political

views; I'm saying don't post them with your professional working name. Better yet, save them for parties and in-person discussions.

I'm not saying there's never anything funny at a bad situation; I'm saying don't transmit or post any dark humor. Save it to deliver verbally, only for your most-trusted friends who will appreciate it.

Have you ever run into a friend who posts so much on social media that you already know everything they are up to and there is little need to catch up? Don't be that person. And if you've ever participated in sexting, you should think twice about seeking an on-camera job. Ever.

If these guidelines sound too restrictive, remember that for thousands of years mankind has survived and enjoyed life without sharing food, politics and thought-provoking videos across the world. If you're still not convinced, Google "fired over..." with any of the items on the list.

The website mentioned earlier whereon reporters can share the stupid and offensive stuff viewers say was breached in 2016, leading to a bunch of angry people aghast that reporters and anchors would share such things. If you're accepted into this group, and it is stress-relieving and funny, have a username your viewers would not recognize.

12.

Working With Photographers

This book is about news writing and will stay true to that throughout this chapter. At your first reporting job, you will probably be shooting your own video. If not, you may have slipped into a bigger market and are denying yourself your small-market, dues-paying, respect-earning opportunity to make mistakes somewhere it's forgivable, and after your leave, forgettable.

In your second market, you will probably get to work with a photographer. Yes, they shoot and edit video but are still called photographers, photogs, or shooters. Why are we devoting a chapter to working with one? Rule Number One. How can you write to video if you don't have it?

What Is a Photographer?

Photographers are issued a camera, tripod, mics, peripherals, and a station vehicle. They are sent out to

shoot video with or without a reporter. If working alone they will ask the interview questions themselves. A non-writing photographer (most of them) will bring or transmit the video back to the station for a producer, anchor, or reporter to write. Photographers might shoot VOs, VOSOTs, photo essays, or complete PKGs. On several occasions I shot and fed video to a station via microwave from a bureau or my truck. I have also seen reporters log, write, and front a story live with my footage, having never left the station. It is more common for the pair, reporter and photographer, to leave the station together and shoot interviews and b-roll for a package. Usually the interviews come first, with the exception of spot news. You work as a team.

Photographers also run microwave and satellite trucks and all the live gear mentioned in the Live Shots chapter. They set shots up, establish IFB, and run the camera.

Types Of Photographers

The list to follow is short, and a photographer might fit into different classifications depending on the day:

Clock-Puncher

This person is there to put in eight hours of being there and then go home. He will figure out the minimum required to not stand out as terrible or get fired. He exists in other fields besides news. Think Wally from "Dilbert."

Green and Eager-to-Please

This photog has a great attitude because he's trying to get a career started and has pride in his work. He lacks experience, though, and needs guidance.

Trained Monkey

Does not bring his brain to work. Shows up and points

camera where directed, but does not contribute to story process. The stereotype photographer seen in movies.

Story Snob

This photographer is a highly-skilled artist who takes great pride in his craft. On a good day he can be a great asset and do beautiful work. If he deems that day's story below his craft, his attitude goes south.

Career Photographer

Tries to do a good job every day. Knows he has to get along with everyone and makes an effort. Some days are better than others, but he will always be prepared and take pride in his work.

Why was this section written with all male pronouns? Because the field is dominated by men. Perhaps this began back when camera equipment was heavier and perhaps it was the work culture. Technology has shrunk cameras and lightened tripods (the good ones are carbon-fiber), the newsroom culture is shifting, and more women are finding jobs as photographers.

Working With, Not Alongside Photographers

Don't be scared by the types described above; there are ways to work with all of them. The first thing to remember is you are a team. As a photographer, I have worked with reporters who treated me like hired help: They did not help with equipment, involve me in the story process, or ask my opinion. You can simply tell a photographer what to do, but you are throwing away a set of eyes and another viewpoint when you do.

Carry the tripod. Doing so:

- Shows you are working as a team
- Frees the photographer to carry a light kit if you are headed indoors
- Allows the team to move faster
- On spot news, allows the photographer to just shoot with the camera if things are crazy. If you can set it up, you can get it ready while he gets the camera going.

I cannot stress this enough: If you don't even offer to carry equipment, you may be considered pompous and treated as such.

The goal is synergy as a team. On your way to the story, discuss it with the photographer. Ask what they think about it, and any ideas they have for creative interviews or standups. Some suggestions might not work, and typically, you've studied the topic more than they have, but try to incorporate some of their ideas. I've suggested a few ideas that reporters doubted, which is fair, but a few of my ideas ended up on their resume reels.

At the shoot, allow the photographer significant input on where you put people when you interview them. The less engaged or experienced your photographer, the more you can give suggestions; still, you should not boss them around: If you want the ice cream scooper interviewed while he scoops, but you think the photographer might want them up against a wall of the ice cream parlor, say something like, "I thought we could talk to him while he's working. Can you come up with an artsy shot for that?" Now you have given them a challenge, a chance to use their creativity and come up with their own idea. Had you said, "I want to interview him while he's working; shoot

this on a wide shot" you would have been a dictator ("I want") shutting down creativity ("shoot this").

When it comes to shooting b-roll, tell the photographer what you'd like to write about and let him use his noggin to figure out how to best show that with video. If there is a particular shot or two you want, go ahead and ask, but don't get carried away.

Standups

Standups are your chance to try multiple takes and new ideas to show how creative you are. When I shoot reporters' standups, I ask them what they want to say, then I try to make it as visual as I can. If needed, I will ask them to alter their scripts to fit the visuals better. The two of us can get very creative with standups, but only if we work together, not as reporter dictating commands to photographer. I can get my camera rolling and composed in fewer than 10 seconds, or I can take longer and make you look better—your choice.

If you need multiple takes to get your words right, don't worry about it; we're used to it. In a top-20 market I once shot 20 takes for a reporter. A coworker of mine shot 30 for the same guy. Anything fewer than 30 is no biggie to us photographers. If you're taking more than 30 you should probably practice more on your own.

Teases

Often Promotions or a producer will ask for on-camera teases. Might as well involve your photographer in this as well. Work with him on the visual element and how well the tease works. I drove my bureau reporters (same person every day) when I asked them what their tease was. Often I would say, "That's a summary, not a tease," and we could then work out something better together. I left my camera on the ground until we worked out a better version. It

drove some of 'em crazy, but we came up with some good teases together.

When the news director hears a good tease, she credits the reporter, not the photographer. That's OK with us, but you should thank us when we help synergize.

After the Shoot

Now that the interviews, b-roll, stand-up, and teases are shot, it's time to start piecing your story together. Ask the photographer what his best shot is for an opening (even better, do this during the b-roll shoot). Ask about good closing shots, too. Photographers will shoot better if they know their video is being counted on for specific needs. Ask if there are any sequences or NATS you should be aware of. Really log the video. Look at the shots. Too often, great shots are not written to, and thus not used in editing, because the reporter did not see them. Between asking the photographer and looking for yourself, this shouldn't happen.

Editing

Review your script with the editor, whether it be the photographer who shot with you or an editor. Communicate what the shots and sequences were intended to be when you were writing, while following Rule #1. As a writer, I am often surprised by what editors come up with that was not what I was writing to. As with a photographer, do not dictate and shut down the creative side of the editor's brain.

Feedback

Tell your photographer and/or editor what really helped today. Phrase negative feedback as positively as possible: "I really liked your sequence of the police blocking the street; I was hoping we could've spent more time on the racers passing by but I didn't have enough shots of them." As you

share feedback before or after, use language like, "I want us to win an Emmy," and not, "I want to win us an Emmy," or even worse, "I want to win an Emmy." If you ask any special favors, like an air check dubbed off, pay them with a treat. Money is not appropriate, but gummy bears in an edit bay are priceless.

Averting Technical Problems

Do not insult photographers by asking them directly if they're missing something. There are better approaches for these people you're building a working relationship with. It's better with today's color viewfinders, but still some photographers forget to white balance their cameras. This can happen among the experienced and rookie in small and large markets. Instead of asking, "Did you white balance?" which is an insult, ask, "What temp did you get?" You can even make a game of it, seeing who can guess the Kelvin temperature of the light closest.If the photographer you're assigned has a problem with low or high audio levels, don't ask if it's distorting, ask what dB it is. If you're concerned about lighting, ask if you can help set a light up; you are offering a solution, not pointing out a problem. Does the photographer skip his tripod on spot news? Tell him you're worried the police might make you stay far back on this one, and offer to carry it.

Conclusion

Most photographers will try to do a good job. The more you work together, the more you'll know how they shoot, and they'll know how you write. All of the suggested questions in this chapter will pare down as you develop chemistry and trust. I have been part of some great teams where we knew what the other was thinking.

Technically, the reporter also works as the field producer and determines the direction of the story. You're the boss. Work with photographers instead of trying to boss them around and you'll do a better job in everything, including Rule #1.

13.

Radio

by Brianna Bodily

KSL News Radio

Writing Radio News

Radio news is perhaps the most accessible of the mediums. Available online, in the car and on smartphones, anyone with a signal can access news reports without interrupting their workflow to read or watch the information. This also makes radio one of the first places audiences turn to in the event of breaking news.

Because this medium only uses one sense, reporters often rely on description to paint a picture at the scene of the story. One of the most famous examples of this was in 1837 when Herbert Morrison reported on the crash of the Hindenburg:

"It's practically standing still now they've dropped ropes out of the nose of the ship...and they've been taken a hold of down on the field by a number of men. It's starting to

rain again. It's... the rain had slacked up a little bit. The back motors of the ship are just holding it just enough to keep it from...It's burst into flames! Get this, Charlie! Get this, Charlie! It's fire! And it's crashing! It's crashing, terrible! Oh, my! Get out of the way, please! It's burning and bursting into flames and the... and it's falling on the mooring mast. And all the folks agree that this is terrible; this is the worst of the worst catastrophes in the world. Oh it's... [garbled] its flames... Crashing, oh! Four- or five-hundred feet into the sky and it... it's a terrific crash, ladies and gentlemen. It's smoke, and it's in flames now; and the frame is crashing to the ground, not quite to the mooring mast. Oh, the humanity! And all the passengers screaming around here. I told you; it – I can't even talk to people, their friends are on there! Ah! It's... it... it's a... ah! I... I can't talk, ladies and gentlemen. Honest: it's just laying there, mass of smoking wreckage. Ah! And everybody can hardly breathe and talk and the screaming. I... I... I'm sorry. Honest: I... I can hardly breathe. I... I'm going to step inside, where I cannot see it. Charlie, that's terrible. Ah, ah... I can't." – Transcribed from Morrison's report on May 6, 1937.

Pictures and video aren't necessary when good description can bring images to the mind and a journalist's voice can convey the urgency, passion, and importance of a story.

Writing for Radio's Demographic

The first rule in writing for radio is to write conversationally.

Radio's biggest market is consistently morning and afternoon "drive time", typically between five and nine

A.M. and three and seven P.M., when most of the city is headed to work and back again. These drivers don't have the luxury of re-reading or rewinding when they miss a sentence. They have one chance to hear the story and understand it. That is why radio journalists keep their stories simple and succinct.

A common rule of thumb for writing in radio is to keep diction and phrasing at an eighth grade level. If a middle school or junior high student can't follow the story the first time around, a typical drive time audience may have a difficult time following the story while they are distracted by the road and other passengers. Another trick reporters use is to read out loud as they write. If it doesn't flow while they are writing, it won't flow while they are reading it live on air.

The second rule in radio writing is to paint a picture.

A tense mood during a vote at the Capitol, crying family members at a court trial, glass littered across the street at a car accident- they are all important pieces in stories that can draw audiences into the scene itself. Imagination can fill in the gaps if writing will only give it a nudge. Because radio does not have any visual aids, like pictures or video, description is key in bringing a story to life. Good radio reporting gives the audience the information they need to know. Great radio reporting makes the audience feel like they are part of the story and connects them to that information.

The third rule in radio writing is to understand your audience.

Radio isn't as intimate as a newspaper or web story. It often isn't late at night when the kids are asleep. Radio is there when someone turns on the car. When an alarm goes off at six in the morning. It's there when bus drivers

take kids to school and when parents run errands. Sensitivity is important when delivering news that will often be heard by ears from nine months old to ninety. Radio reporters work to bring their audience to the scene without going into unnecessary and gruesome details. Every station and every news director has a different rule about where that line sits, based on the station's demographic. For example, stations in New York City, New York may be more liberal with their descriptions than the local radio news station in Cedar City, Utah.

The fourth rule in radio writing is to write in active voice and present tense.

Print and web reporters finish their work and let their audience find it over several hours. Radio reporters bring their story to the audience live. At the time of delivery there is always a way to start your story with what is happening right now. Radio stories start with the freshest detail.

Example: Instead of starting a story about a car accident with "A passenger vehicle t-boned a semi on state street this afternoon, injuring one man," start with "One man is in critical condition after police say he lost control on state street and slammed into a passing semi". Active voice and present tense bring a story to life, even hours after it broke.

Commercial Radio vs. Public Radio

Radio news can vary greatly between state lines and market size, but the biggest differences are between commercial and public radio.

Commercial radio is faster-paced and shallower than public radio. Stories are short and producers will typically fit as many as they can into a newscast. This means that

audiences that listen to commercial radio will get more news in less time. They are exposed to a wider variety of stories, from spot news to features, and the stories often range from local to national. It is also funded by paid ads. These ads will interrupt news programming on a scheduled basis, similar to what you see in television news. Newscasts are high energy and often marked by sounders, fast delivery, and precise producing. Commercial radio is often used for a general look at the news of today, but often lacks the depth of public radio. Large network examples include ABC, NBC, and CNN.

Public radio is slower paced and dives deeper than commercial radio. Fifteen minutes spent listening to a public radio station will bring a fraction of the news coverage, but each story will have more substance. Often public radio will skip spot news and sports news, instead focusing on features and political stories. Bed music and slow delivery are classic benchmark of public radio. Audiences that rely on public radio will have a narrower exposure to news, but a deeper understanding of the few stories they hear. Public stations rely on federal funding and private donations, and do not play typical ads. The US only has two major national networks: NPR and PRI.

Roles Within Radio

General Manager: The head honcho in each news station. The general manager is in charge of all staff at the station and responsible for keeping track of the success of the station.

News director: This person is in charge of the news department and the entire news staff. The news director has final say on story assignments and keeps track of the

success of the overall news product. Often the news director is only trumped by the General Manager, or in a small-market station a programming manager may have authority over them.

Producer: Producers assign reporter stories, determine the direction of each show, and organize the show for smooth delivery by the host. They often write significant portions of each show, and copy check stories filed by reporters. Producers also help coordinate on-scene story delivery from reporters in the field. Assistant producers will help write readers and actualities to beef up the story content. They also help coordinate with reporters in the field.

Host: The host is the equivalent of an anchor in television news. They are the figureheads of the station and front long newscasts like the drive time news shows. Hosts are often asked to work on special projects for the station, come up with segment ideas for each show, and make appearances at charity events to promote the station. With the rise of social media Twitter handles and Facebook pages are becoming a requirement for hosts across the nation.

Anchor: An anchor hosts smaller newscasts. Anchors often take over delivering the news in less popular time slots: evenings, midday and weekends. Anchors often play the role of host and reporter as well.

Reporter: Reporters gather and produce news stories. They spend more time out in the field than any other position in radio news. In commercial radio, reporters are expected to turn several stories during their shift and often are required to turn more than one version of each story (see Terminology). Reporters are expected to gather and implement natural sound from the scene, and use

hardware to go live from the scene during breaking news. In public radio reporters may turn fewer stories, but are expected to turn out highly produced stories full of natural sound. Reporters are also often required to keep a strong presence on social media, and are often asked to write a web version of their story for the station's website and app.

Board Operator: Board operators are similar to technical directors, but on a simpler scale. They are responsible for bringing up the right pots to turn a mic live, fire off sounders, and start advertisements or public service announcements for the newscast. Board operators are expected to keep a strict eye on the VU meter to make sure that everything stays around -9 decibels. These are the people that push the buttons to keep each show on air.

Radio news crews often have less staff than TV stations in the same market. Reporters are expected to juggle more stories and turn more content. A national network station will have several reporters on staff in the local city and state, but they will also employ reporters to cover news in high traffic states and countries. For example, ABC news keeps a reporter in Rome near the Vatican to cover Catholic news and one in Israel to cover Middle Eastern updates. They also employ reporters to cover white house news full-time, and travel with the President of the United States to countries all over the world. Large-market stations will often employ several reporters, producers and board operators. Small-market stations require employees to wear multiple hats. A news director may also be the entire reporting staff and the only newscast host for the entire station.

Reporter News "Beats"

Television shows and movies often portray journalists with a beat. That means the journalist specializes in one topic: anything from healthcare to politics. Beat reporters are common in print, but broadcast can vary. KSL Newsradio in Salt Lake City is considered a large market, but doesn't have the reporter staffing to assign beats. Instead each reporter is expected to know enough about current events they can jump on a new story and deliver it expertly. Smaller stations are often the same. National networks, like ABC, will assign reporters beats but they are very broad. ABC might have a reporter cover all of California news, while another is assigned to cover only major weather disasters across the nation.

Terminology

Live hit: This is when a reporter or host has a live on-air report.

Natural sound: Background sound gathered from the scene of a story. This can include active audio like a car door slamming, or passive audio like the sound of a crowd murmuring. This does not include audio from an interview. Natural sound is gathered at each story to help paint the scene and draw the audience into the story.

Sound bite: A sound bite is a short segment of sound taken from an interview. In commercial news sound bites often only last seven to ten seconds. In public radio they can last as long as thirty or forty-five seconds if the audio is compelling.

Outcue: The way a reporter ends their story. A standard outcue (SOC) ends with the reporter's name and the stations name. An example of this would be: Marc Giaque,

KSL Newsradio. It both identifies the reporter and signals the host that the story is over.

Lead: A sentence or two the host uses to introduce a new story.

Tag: A sentence or two the host uses to wrap up the story before moving on to a new one.

Wrap: Similar to a television reporter's package. This is a fully produced story from a reporter. It starts with a lead for the host to read and then goes to a recorded story voiced by the reporter. This story will include sound bites and natural sound from the scene and end with an outcue. In commercial radio Wraps are often short- somewhere between thirty-five seconds for national networks and forty-five seconds with large stations. In public radio they can be several minutes long, depending on the station. Because of the short time frame, reporters will often use several sound bites that are closer to two or three seconds long, instead of one sound bite that is seven or eight seconds long.

Here is a script Marc Giaque wrote for KSL News Radio (102.7 FM/1160 AM) in Salt Lake City, Utah. Notice his present tense lead, how short and simple the writing is, and how he introduces all of his sound bites to help the story flow:

Lead: SALT LAKE POLICE ARE LOOKING FOR SUSPECTS AND ANSWERS BEHIND A SERIES OF VIOLENT ATTACKS OVERNIGHT. KSL NEWS RADIO'S MARC GIAUQUE HAS MORE.

Wrap: IT ALL HAPPENED LAST NIGHT WITHIN AN HOUR... TWO ROBBERIES... AND A SHOOTING.. ALL IN SALT LAKE CITY, ALL INVOLVING A SHOTGUN. DETECTIVE ROBERT UNGRITCH SAYS IT STARTED WITH THE

ROBBERY OF A CONVENIENCE STORE ON THE EAST SIDE. (SOUND BITE: THEN A SHORT TIME LATER, A PERSON WALKED INTO ANOTHER CONVENIENCE STORE ON REDWOOD ROAD, WITH SHOTGUN PELLET WOUNDS TO THE ARM). WHEN A PERSON AT A NEARBY RESTAURANT HEARD THAT SHOT, HE WALKED OUT AND WAS WOUNDED BY MORE PELLETS. A SHORT TIME LATER, AN ATTEMPTED ROBBERY AT ANOTHER STORE. (SOUND BITE: OUT OF CONTROL) POLICE SAY THERE'S BEEN AN UPTICK IN ROBBERIES LATELY. THEY'RE NOT SURE HOW IF THEY'RE RELATED. THEY'RE HOPING TO GET MORE CLUES FROM WITNESSES AND VICTIMS TODAY. SOC.

Debrief: This similar to a television station's VO-SOT-VO, but with a reporter as the SOT. A Debrief will start with an anchor lead that is about five seconds long. The anchor will toss to a reporter who will give a short account of the story and will not give an outcue. The reporter does not use any sound bites in a debrief. The anchor then ends the story with a tag. A debrief is typically about thirty seconds or less in commercial radio.

For comparison, here's a debrief from Giaque on the same crime story as shown above. Notice how he keeps the story short, simple and easy to understand.

Lead: SALT LAKE CITY POLICE ARE WORKING TO LEARN IF A PAIR OF ROBBERIES OVERNIGHT... ARE RELATED TO SHOOTINGS THAT LEFT TWO PEOPLE WITH MINOR INJURIES. KSL NEWS RADIO'S MARC GIAUQUE HAS MORE.

Reporter: IT STARTED WITH A ROBBERY AT A CONVENIENCE STORE NEAR 5TH EAST AND 17TH

SOUTH, THE SUSPECTS WERE SAID TO HAVE HAD A SHOTGUN. A SHORT TIME LATER, AND ON THE OTHER SIDE OF TOWN, SOMEONE WALKED INTO ANOTHER CONVENIENCE STORE WITH SHOTGUN PELLET WOUNDS TO THE ARM WHILE AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME, A WORKER AT THE RESTAURANT NEXT DOOR WHO HEARD A GUNSHOT, WALKED OUTSIDE AND WAS HIT ALSO HIT BY PELLETS. LATER AND TO THE SOUTH, AN ATTEMPTED ROBBERY AT ANOTHER STORE, INVOLVING TWO PEOPLE, A HANDGUN AND AGAIN A SHOT-GUN.

Tag: POLICE ARE WORKING TO LEARN IF THE CRIMES ARE CONNECTED.

Voicer: This very similar to a debrief but the reporter will tag out of their own story with a standard outcue. Once again the reporter will not use any sound bites in the story. Voicers are often thirty-five seconds or less in commercial radio.

Actuality: This is exactly like a television station's VO-SOT-VO. It starts with a host lead, moves to a sound bite, then ends with a tag from the host. Actualities, or ACTS, are often about 25 seconds long in national networks and up to 30 seconds long in large networks. Here is an example from Marc Giaque, on the same crime story as above. Notice what details he chose to emit to fit the time requirement. This is often a struggle for all broadcast reporters. There is often more to the story than time will allow.

Lead: SALT LAKE CITY POLICE ARE WORKING TO DETERMINE IF TWO ROBBERIES ARE RELATED TO A BIZARRE SHOOTING OVERNIGHT. TWO PEOPLE WERE HIT WITH

SHOTGUN PELLETS NEAR A CONVENIENCE STORE ON REDWOOD ROAD. IT HAPPENED AFTER A ROBBERY AT ANOTHER STORE... AND BEFORE ANOTHER *ATTEMPTED* ROBBERY IN A DIFFERENT PART OF TOWN.

Sound Bite: WE'RE STILL TRYING TO DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT THE INCIDENTS HAVE ANY CONNECTION TO EACH OTHER OR ARE CORRELATED.

Tag: DETECTIVE ROBERT UNGRICHT SAYS POLICE HAVE NOTICED AN UP-TICK IN THE NUMBER OF ROBBERIES IN THE AREA LATELY.

Reader: This is the shortest of all the radio stories. It is a script read by the host- no sound from the reporter. Typically a reader (RDR) will last between ten and twenty seconds at the most in a commercial radio station. They are used when sound isn't available, a story isn't big enough to justify the time spent collecting the sound, or when a producer needs to mix up a newscast that is too heavy with one type of story.

In depth: This is a radio reporter's chance to produce an excellent story. Typically reporters, at both commercial and public radio stations, are allotted more time in the newscast for in depth stories. In commercial radio that typically amounts to a couple of minutes. In public radio that could mean fifteen minutes or more. In-depths often have several sources, are rich in natural sound, and delve deep into a public interest story, investigative story, or feature story. Similar to a wrap, these start with a host lead in and end with the reporter delivering a standard outcue (SOC). Here is an example from Brianna Bodily at KSL News Radio in SLC, Utah. Notice how the natural sound

is weaved into the story and supports both the script and the soundbites.

Lead: (HOST ONE)

A HIGHER NUMBER OF BLACK BEARS ARE ROAMING THE UTAH MOUNTAINS AND THAT HAS WILDLIFE WORKERS BUSY.

(HOST TWO)

UTAH'S WARM SPRING CHASED BEARS OUT OF THEIR DENS EARLIER THAN USUAL...LEADING TO MORE WORK FOR BIOLOGISTS THIS SUMMER, BUT THEY'RE GETTING SOME HELP FROM TECHNOLOGY. K-S-L NEWSRADIO'S BRIANNA BODILY TOOK SEVERAL HIKES OVER FIVE MONTHS TO TRACK OUR STATE'S LARGEST PREDATORS.

Indepth: DEEP INTO THE MOUNTAINS IN SPANISH FORK CANYON (NATURAL SOUND OF SNOW CRUNCHING) WE TRUDGED THROUGH SNOW, SLICK MUD, (NAT SOUND POP- WATCH OUT FOR THAT BRANCH) AND THICK BRUSH.

SEVERAL IN THE GROUP WERE OUT OF BREATH...GRASPING BRANCHES FOR SUPPORT AS WE CLIMBED HILL AFTER HILL. AND ALL THE WHILE...WE WERE LED BY THIS BEEPING.

(NATURAL SOUND OF THE BEEPING)

IT'S COMING FROM AN ANTENNAE THAT HELPS BIOLOGISTS ZERO IN A COLLAR ALREADY ATTACHED TO A BEAR'S NECK.

(Sound bite: A LOT OF TRYING TO NARROW IN AND DETERMINE WHERE THE LOUDEST SOUND IS COMING FROM)

RILEY PECK...THE REGIONAL WILDLIFE PROGRAM MANAGER WITH THE DIVISION OF

WILDLIFE RESOURCES HAS BEEN ON SO MANY BEAR DENNINGS...HE'S LOST COUNT. HE SAYS THIS KIND OF TRUDGING IS NOT UNUSUAL WHEN YOU ARE TRYING TO FIND A WINTER DEN.

(Sound Bite: THEY DON'T DEN IN EASY LOCATIONS.)

FOUR MILES LATER...PECK FINALLY CALLED OUR MARCH TO A HALT. THE BEAR WAS OUT OF THE DEN AND MOVING...

(Sound Bite: IT'S FRUSTRATING...WE HIKED ALL DAY AND DIDN'T SEE ANYTHING.)

BUT IT'S NOT NECESSARILY UNUSUAL. BIOLOGISTS...ESPECIALLY ALONG THE WASATCH FRONT...HAVE TO BALANCE ACCESS TO THE DEN...WITH HOW WARM IT'S GETTING. TOO MUCH SNOW-YOU CAN'T GET TO THE BEAR...BUT TOO WARM...AND SHE'LL WAKE UP AND LEAVE BEFORE YOU CAN FIND HER. ON A SECOND OUTING WITH BIOLOGISTS...THIS TIME UP ROCK CANYON IN PROVO...WE HAD A SIMILAR PROBLEM. HIKING UP AND DOWN THE CANYON WALLS...TRYING TO ZERO IN THE RADIO COLLAR.

(Sound bite: EVERY TIME YOU GO INTO A CANYON THE SIGNAL WILL BOUNCE.)

THIS IS ONE OF THE REASONS THEY WANT TO SWAP COLLARS ON AS MANY BEARS AS POSSIBLE. BIOLOGIST DALE LIECHTY SAYS RADIO COLLARS ARE LIMITED...AND RELY ON THAT BOUNCING SIGNAL.

(Sound bite: THIS IS AN ART.)

ON THE OTHER HAND, GPS COLLARS CAN ALMOST PINPOINT THE BEAR'S LOCATION.

(Sound bite: SO WE'LL KNOW EXACTLY WHERE SHE IS NEXT YEAR.)

THIS BEAR WAS ALSO MOVING. SO A FEW MONTHS LATER, LIECHTY SET A TRAP... AND WE RETURNED TO ROCK CANYON. THIS TIME...WITH A BEAR WAITING FOR US.

(Sound bite- WOW, SHE IS BEAUTIFUL (NATURAL SOUND OF HER BREATHING AND GROWLING))

SOME DISTRACTED THE BEAR (Sound bite: LOOK HERE. LOOK HERE) WHILE ONE MAN INJECTED A CONCOCTION OF KNOCKOUT DRUGS WITH A LONG JAB STICK. (NATURAL SOUND- GOT HER)

WITHIN MINUTES SHE WAS ASLEEP...AND THE DWR HAD THE BEAR OUT OF THE TRAP TO REPLACE HER COLLAR. (NATURAL SOUND POP FROM COLLAR REPLACEMENT) IT'S SOUNDS LIKE A COMPLICATED...AND FICKLE PROCESS...BUT PECK TELLS ME THE INFO THEY COLLECT...LIKE WEIGHT, DNA, AND LOCATION...IS INVALUABLE..AND EITHER IMPOSSIBLE OR TOO EXPENSIVE TO COLLECT ANY OTHER WAY.

(Sound bite: THEY ARE SECRETIVE. THEY DON'T WANT YOU TO SEE THEM. DO A GOOD JOB OF HIDING.)

ONE OF THE BIGGEST USES OF THAT DATA...IS POPULATION. IN FACT LAST YEAR'S COUNT PUT UTAH'S BEARS AT ABOUT 6 PERCENT HIGHER THAN THE YEAR BEFORE.

AFTER THEY'RE DONE TAKING

MEASUREMENTS, THE REVERSAL DRUG GETS THE BEAR UP AND MOVING AGAIN IN A MATTER OF MINUTES.

(NAT SOUND- THERE SHE GOES)

SOC.

Sounder: This a produced sound bite that plays underneath a news segment. Commercial radio will often use them during their newscasts to make specific segments stand out. For example, when the host moves to a weather segment they will play the sounder first so that listeners unconsciously make the realization they should tune in because weather cast is about to start. The same method is used for political news, national news, traffic news, breaking news and other segments.

Bed Music: Long segments of sound to play under segments that need more energy. These are often repetitive melodies that are fairly bland so they won't distract from the story or segment. Often used in talk shows and on public radio.

The Changing Face of Radio

"Radio you can see" is an idea quickly spreading in the radio world. Stations are installing cameras in their studios so audiences can connect with news and talk show hosts while they perform. Skype and Facetime make it possible for radio reporters to deliver news on the scene while on camera. Social media apps like Facebook and Twitter have made live video available so reporters can connect with audiences on scene even when they aren't on air. Live tweeting brings audiences right into the courtroom, even when video and live broadcasts aren't allowed.

While the basics of radio new reporting remain the same, it is slowly changing from an audio-only format to a medium for multimedia journalists.

(KSL News Radio's live streaming web camera. This gives the audience a chance to watch radio crews deliver the content and connect with them visually)

Conclusion

The digital world is bringing reporters closer to their audiences than ever. It's a sometimes overwhelming challenge for both groups. Reporters and hosts are constantly required to learn and master the latest trends in social media, while audiences struggle to find to the balance of too much information vs. not enough. Radio has proven over the last hundred years that it is a medium that can and will adapt as the world changes. This will likely mean the role of its operators and talent changes as well.

14.

Sports

It seems like half of the people who watch sports regularly, dream of being a sportscaster some day. Unfortunately, the odds of them making it to the big time are about the same as a kid hoping to make the big leagues in his or her given sport. There are jobs in sports casting but the market is as competitive as the sports it covers.

That being said, it could be done. The ESPN layoffs of 2017 showed the budgets are not endless. But local sports reporters and anchors continue to do their jobs day after day bringing their viewers the highlights and profiles of their local and national sports teams.

Sports departments are usually in their own corner of the newsroom. Sports anchors coordinate with producers, especially for time allotments, and the assignment desk for photographers, but basically do their own thing. Sports reporters may have to shoot their own video, even in markets where reporters don't. Large markets may have dedicated sports photographers but they're getting harder to come by.

Sports Writing Rules

Sports' style is different from news. Sports reporters get more latitude and often can ad-lib and use sentence fragments more. But they must follow Rule #1, even more than news: It is tough to imagine video of a batter running the bases as the sportscaster tells you he has just hit a home run; you must show that batter hitting the ball and the ball clearing the fence. Early in my career I was shooting the Minor League series for my station's hometown team. The series was tied. Our team was down in the ninth inning with runners on base. The batter swung hard and the ball that would win the series was headed over the fence. I lost it as it sailed away. Our sports anchor showed me a lot less frustration than he must've felt inside. He was stuck describing the play to viewers.

Sports reporting must still tell a story with a beginning, middle and ending. When you shoot a feature of the rising star on the basketball team, find a starting point, introduce conflict — if they haven't overcome something than no point being there — and then tell how they have overcome. Perhaps the conflict comes at the end when the athlete heads off to the competition. Tip: If you want to do a story about how great an athlete is, don't ask them about their talents and skills, ask their teammates.

The rest of your writing tips come from experienced sports anchors:

From Wes Ruff, KTVX Sports Director since 2002:

> As far as television sports writing is concerned, I believe that it is more conversational than regular news writing. It's almost like having a conversation with a friend and you're telling him about a game you watched. You obviously need

to get the who, what, where, when and why into the script, but you can do so in a manner that is more like you're just talking to a buddy.

And because sports time is usually short in a newscast, the writing needs to be tight and concise. Don't use 10 words when six will do. That's probably why the typical sportscaster sometimes leaves out words. For instance, its not uncommon to hear "Big game tonight at the arena" as opposed to a more grammatically correct version "There was a big game tonight at the arena." I'm not encouraging that, I'm just pointing out that is more the norm than the exception.

As a rule, sports writing includes more adverbs and adjectives than news writing. You're trying to get the viewer excited about a game or the highlights. If you're not excited about it, why would the viewer be excited? So phrases like "big game," "incredible comeback," "amazing effort," are more prevalent in sports writing than news writing. Tell the story, get the facts straight and make sure the viewer can feel the excitement you felt from watching the game in person.

From Jeremiah Jensen, sports anchor and reporter at KSL since 2005:

Less is more when it comes to writing copy in sports broadcasting. We have a limited amount of time to communicate to our audience. It's important not to get too wordy or too descriptive. Make your writing conversational. Make it something your audience will understand and relate to. Talk to your audience the way you would talk to friends or family. Make it conversational.

Another problem some TV sports anchors fall into is doing play by play over highlights. We forget that our

audience can see the video highlights we are showing. They don't need us to describe what they are seeing. This isn't radio or print. What the audience does want from us is to tell them something about what we are seeing that they can't see. That can be an important stat, a fact about an athlete or explaining what kind of play the team is running. We can give the viewer so much more value in our sportscasts by digging deeper and delivering information or a point of view that the viewer may not see or know. That can be the difference in having viewers come back again and again to watch your sportscasts, or look elsewhere.

Jim Crandell, Sports Director at KTXL since 1992:

I am probably not the best person to ask about writing, considering I write almost nothing. I put my story slugs in the rundown/prompter but that's usually about it. I may have a few notes in the prompter, especially stats, but I ad-lib my shows. That said...

Don't try too hard to be clever or funny. If something comes naturally and it feels comfortable, go with it. However, if you have to sit at a keyboard trying to think of something catchy, your final product will most likely seem forced, or worse, trite. Along that line, don't use the first thing you think of, especially if it's play on words, a pun, etc. If it's the first thing that came to you, almost everyone else, including other sports reporters, probably thought the same thing. Give your viewers a good, solid, factually correct, well-reported story with some energy. That is what they expect. They can get plenty of comedy after the news from Jimmy Fallon.

That philosophy applies to writing PKGs, VOs and anchoring sports segments. I sometimes feel ESPN's two

anchor sports segments are not so much about information and highlights as they are about the two personalities at the desk. The shows degenerate into "I'm funnier than you are. Listen to this." My number one suggestion for anchoring is to write as little as possible. Talk to your viewers like one sports lover to another, and you don't need copy for that. You will need to work with the director so he knows your cues to roll video, etc., but if you can ad-lib most of your show, you will make an impression.

Access

Professional sports teams, even though they're named after your town and play in stadiums taxpayers help pay for, are private businesses. Most are happy to allow accredited news media in for games (and feed them!) and some practices, but that could be cut off at any time.

Public universities can limit your access to practice and even some games. Private universities can limit any access they wish. Access was better before the Internet, and web reporters and tweeters, but some privileged-access conversations and plays were published. Access gets limited a little more every time someone does this.

A player can choose whether he talks to you or not. When you're sent into a losing locker room, have some tact in how you ask your questions. If the athlete knows you are fair and respectful, you shouldn't have problems getting future interviews.

15.

Motivation and Ethics

Working in television news is hard. The pay is not much, the hours can be demanding and inflexible and you present your work in front of thousands of critics a day who think they can do your job better than you do. Ask a professional athlete what that's like.

So why do it? Because it's awesome. You get a front-row seat to history. The assignment desk never wraps up a phone call, slams down the receiver and screams, "there's nothing happening downtown! Get down there now!" As a rule, you only go where the action is.

You don't read about people with interesting stories, you meet them and tell their stories yourself. Those stories can change other peoples' lives.

You can make a difference by shining the light of truth into some very dark corners. What do you know about human trafficking or political corruption that you did not learn from a journalist?

You can share stories of inspiration and let your viewers

feel good about the world. I did a photo essay on a postal worker who donated a kidney to a coworker he barely knew. Television let us meet both people and see what they're like for ourselves.

Television can bring a level of emotion that can't be matched. I reported on the funeral of a police K-9 that was shot and killed in the line of duty. I wasn't sure what to make of it on my drive there, but things changed once the ceremony started. Officers take their K-9s home, and I saw and recorded a family grieving for a beloved companion they welcomed into their home. I interviewed an officer with his own K-9 who related with the loss so much that he was choked up. The dogs from neighboring agencies lined up as the casket went past, and I asked an officer if his dog knew the deceased, and he said it did. I kept my own emotions out of the story, it is hard to focus a camera when your eyes are tearing up, but was able to convey the event to viewers with natural sound and soundbites.

In World War II, the U.S. government rounded up Japanese Americans from the West Coast and sent them to internment camps. One of those camps, Topaz, was in an isolated area of Utah. I was sent to cover the opening of a museum there. Former internees, now 80-90 years old, were there to share their stories. These first-hand accounts were the first I had ever heard, and I heard them in person. I asked the questions. When I got back to edit, I chose what sound bites I could to convey their feelings, and put the rest on an 18-minute video. The station's website now has a link to the extended interviews.

What about those vehicle crashes? When you can read the line, "the rider wasn't wearing a helmet" or "the driver wasn't wearing a seatbelt" in a fatal crash story hopefully

someone watching will be nudged to take basic precautions.

When you report a house fire, the cause and the use/absence of smoke detectors could warn viewers not to make the same mistakes. Usually, a few well-publicized deaths lead people to action, and you can be the one publicizing. Often this type of story can be very sad, like interviewing the mother of a child who died from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. The mother has probably agreed to the interview to spare some future mother the same grief. Although you are one interviewing her, having her relive the experience and its pain, you are giving her loss some value.

You can also point out fun things people wouldn't otherwise know about. I've shot hundreds of these, including locally-made chocolate, a vintage bomber offering rides, festivals, get-togethers and recently, a magician's Kickstarter project for Halloween giveaway magic tricks instead of candy.

For a couple years, I did live shots for my station's Saturday morning newscast. Since it was a Saturday, I tried to show people their options for the day: a museum opening, a parade, a fair, a race and even a rummage sale like no other. Yes, people saw the rummage sale on TV and came to shop.

Ethics

Sometimes there are tough decisions to make on the job: Do we show an innocent victim's face? Do we knock on the door of a grieving family? Do we allow the sales department of our station to influence our news coverage? Legally you can do all of these, but that's another course;

these are ethical questions, and for these, we will refer to the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics. Here are four basic tenets, taken straight from the SPJ website:

For most situations, you can find one of the tenets that covers it. You won't have a quandary a day or even one a week. Thankfully, it is rare to have to ask for ethical or legal advice. If you stick to the SPJ Code you can sleep at night even if someone on some side of an issue isn't happy with your decision. SPJ.org has more ethical and legal resources for journalists. It is worth checking out and worth joining.

16.

The Job Market

There is nothing more exciting than getting your first job in broadcast journalism. Actually, there are probably a number of things more exciting, but it's up there. The way you get started depends on the position you want. The different roles within a newsroom, reporter, producer and photographer, among others, each have different paths, requirements and responsibilities, but the different positions each share a few things in common.

Television Markets

The United States' local news areas are split into classifications called Direct Market Areas (DMA) or Area of Direct Influence (ADI). The DMA outlines the area in which a station's broadcasted television signal can reach. Cable has blurred these lines a bit, and national outlets' DMA envelops the entire country (or at least the country that can receive the broadcast).

Radio and TV do not share the same signal boundaries

but overlap. For example, the state of Utah's television DMA includes the entire state and border areas of surrounding states, all the way to Elko in Nevada. Radio markets in Utah are separate for the Southern, Central, Northern, and Salt Lake City areas.

The more people in your ADI who see your signal, the more your station can charge for its advertising space, and the more money everyone makes. Markets are ranked in size, based upon the number of television homes within the market. Typically, the higher the market, the more money you can earn. However, there are plenty of exceptions due to differing costs of living and station philosophies, but the market size can act as an estimated earnings guide for you.

Currently, the largest market in the United States is New York, with Los Angeles at number two and Chicago, three. The rankings go all the way down to Glendive, Montana at 210.

Getting Started

The best and most common career advice is to start in a small market. I began in the Bakersfield, California market, ranked 141 at the time. It has since moved up to 126 because of growth in population. In a smaller market, you can make your early-career mistakes with lighter consequences, then move on, leaving them behind you.

Do not be afraid to move. You can live in interesting parts of the country for a few years before you settle in on one place. I have worked in Bakersfield (141), Santa Barbara County (111), and Sacramento (19) in California; then the Utah County area of Utah (35). They called my office the

Utah County Bureau, but we traveled all the way from Lehi to Mesquite, Nevada for stories.

Successful photographer Emily Landeen has lived in Charleston, South Carolina, Anchorage, Alaska, and Seattle, Washington. She is the outdoors-type, so she was often at the beach in South Carolina; she stayed up for the Northern Lights in Alaska, and is now hiking the Pacific Northwest. Find her on Facebook to see some beautiful nature shots with accompanying text admiring the scenery. Who knows if or where she'll settle down, but she's having a great time living in diverse places. <Is this necessary?>

If you are married or committed to another person, moving is not as simple. I met my wife in my second market (Santa Barbara), and kids came along at the third job (Sacramento). When we moved to Utah, the oldest was in third grade, which is typically not a tough transitional time for a kid. The roughest move on the family was when I left full-time TV news to move to Northern Utah and teach.

Starting in bigger markets is a rare exception. Plan on a couple of years in a smaller market, instead. You will learn much and make friends you will have the rest of your life, unless you're a jerk or something.

Stay on Track

If you want to be a reporter, as this is the path to take if you want to become an anchor, take reporter jobs as they come. Start in a smaller market and work your way up with reporter jobs. Don't take a desk job and then bug management to let you report. In every instance I know where wanna-be reporters took other jobs to get them in the door at a larger station, it would have been a *faster* path

to reporting there if they took a reporter job in a smaller market first. Paying your dues is worth it. You'll be doing what you want, and you won't drive your co-workers and management crazy because you're doing a job you don't like.

Internships

Getting a foot in the door might require offering your services for free. Many successful careers have started with or as an internship. You might also get into the newsroom routine and discover it's not for you.

Some universities place students in internships with network outlets in New York. It must be prestigious and exciting to be in New York, but the likelihood of you doing a job similar to what you did on your internship is slim. The likelihood of building networked connections is limited because those people are already sitting on top and aren't likely to move. The likelihood of skills you learned on the internship impressing a potential future employer is also slim. The likelihood of you getting a job offer from that network at the end of your internship is slimmest of all.

I know of several students whose internships ended with job offers. This gets more common as the market gets smaller. In smaller markets, you are more likely to be trusted to do more jobs and get real experience.

Emily Landeen interned at Salt Lake City NBC affiliate, KSL. Her gung-ho attitude got her up to speed with her shooting basics early in the internship. She earned the trust of her supervisors. They gave her a smaller camera and let her shoot stories on her own that eventually aired on live TV. The posting for her first job in Charleston,

South Carolina, asked for one year of shooting experience, but she was hired straight out of school thanks to the experience she picked up at KSL.

If you do not receive a job offer, you have at least gotten experience and established a network through your internship. Reporter Katherine May interned in Idaho Falls, Idaho, where she impressed the person working at the assignment desk. Later, that person was in Boise, Idaho, where Katherine applied for and got a job.

The trick is to make the *right* impression. Treat your internship as a 150-hour job interview. Dress like you would for a job interview every day. They may tell you casual dress is OK, BUT DRESS FULLY PROFESSIONAL EVERY DAY. They may tell you you can leave early; it's a trick, NEVER LEAVE EARLY. They may tell you there is nothing to do for a while, ASK WHAT YOU CAN DO OR LEARN. You may have another job or class competing with the internship, in which case, set up hours they know they can rely on you to be there. Co-workers may complain about the hours, one of their co-workers or an assigned story, NEVER COMPLAIN ABOUT ANYTHING. Whatever you are asked to do that is legal and ethical, SMILE and do it cheerfully. Ask questions when and where appropriate, but know that sometimes reporters, producers, and the assignment desk staff may be too busy for you. Try to get a sense of when things slow down and ask then.

THIS INTERNSHIP IS A 150-HOUR JOB INTERVIEW. Do more than the minimum, ALWAYS. I am very conservative with my use of all caps, so please take those capitalized guidelines seriously.

Applying for Jobs

As mentioned earlier, the application process is different for specific jobs. Here is a list of jobs and the common application methods:

Photographers – Submit three or four of your best stories via web link, usually YouTube. Use a common resume and have a cover letter that says why you want to work in that market and at that station. When I hired photographers, I looked for a link to our area, preferably family nearby. Title your reel, "NAME Photographer Demo Reel" to make it searchable. List any awards on your resume, and if they're a really big deal, put them in your cover letter.

I know of several students who were contacted by stations unexpectedly based on their online reels. Keep the clip updated with your best stories and keep your old embarrassing stuff or family videos under a different username and/or channel. Skip the rock and roll montages unless you're looking for a job making rock and roll montages. Start your reel with your contact information (just email is OK since this is online) for a couple of seconds.

Reporters – Follow the same guidelines for photographers, but add a montage of your creative stand-ups and/or live shots at the beginning. The first few seconds are critical, so show some creative work. This is not the time for thumbsucker standups. You can include any anchoring at the end of the reel or in another online clip. Title your reel, "NAME TV Reporter Demo Reel."

Producers – Submit a show you've produced with the commercial breaks removed. When a reporter package or long live shot begins, show just the first and last few seconds. You may also highly abbreviate weather and

sports since producers usually have little involvement in them. Title your online reel, "NAME News Producer Demo Reel." If you have never produced a show on your own, you may be asked for writing samples. Follow the same resume and cover letter guidelines for photographers.

Sports Reporters – Same guidelines as reporters, including keeping it creative. A graduate of mine used a viewer-discretion-advised-style graphic in his sports highlights during a student-news sportscast, and it caught the attention of the management and he got the job. Title your reel, "NAME TV Sports Demo Reel."

Assignment Desk – This job requires an ability to multitask, teamwork, phones and police scanners. KTVX News Director George Severson said he likes, "resumes that could include examples of social media and online/digital writing examples ... like a portfolio."

Promotions – Provide a reel and samples. Title your online reel, "NAME TV News Promotions Demo Reel" and follow the common guidelines above.

Weather – It's a given that your resume will have all of your certifications and degrees. Title your unique reel, "NAME Weather Reel." Provide a mix of anchoring weather segments and reporting samples.

Follow Their Rules

Most postings will tell you how to apply for the job. If it says no phone calls, do not call. Many applications are routed through a human resources department. Don't worry about this. If the station is advertising a job, they want to fill it, and they will look at the submissions. If you have a connection at the station, of course you can

use it. Drop names in your cover letter, but make sure those people will speak highly of you. Some managers may call the day you submit, others not. When in California I applied at two stations at the same time. The first station called me to ask for another tape with samples of my work, which I shipped and they then arranged to fly me out for an interview. They made me an offer, which I accepted. I told them I could report in three weeks. After working at that station a week or so, the second station called me to tell me they liked my tape.

About the Authors

The main author is Brian Champagne of Utah State University. He started his career 1988 at KGET (NBC) in Bakersfield, California. He then worked at KEYT (ABC) in the Santa Barbara station's Santa Maria Bureau. After building up a photographer's resume under renowned photographer Herb Tuyay, he went on to KTXL (Fox) in Sacramento. He worked with some great reporters there, and started his on-camera work reporting on the Automotive Beat. He also promoted to Chief Photographer, supervising a staff of nine. After ten years in Sacramento he was hired to staff the KUTV (CBS) Utah County Bureau in the Salt Lake City market. He took some time out from news to work on a college sports show and do corporate video and commercials before going back to KUTV and resuming his Automotive reporting once a week.

Now full-time at USU, he does fill-in shifts at Salt Lake City affiliates, shoots news video for affiliates and networks, and produces a weekly automotive news segment for KSTU (Fox).

The Producing Chapter is written by Kiera Farrimond. Kiera works as executive producer at KSL (NBC) in Salt

Lake City, but has also worked at KUTV and KPIX (CBS) in San Francisco.

The Radio Chapter is written by Brianna Bodily. Brianna works at KSL Newsradio in Salt Lake City, but has also worked for Utah Public Radio.

Kiera and Brianna get shorter bios because hey, one chapter. Rest assured they know what they're talking about.