



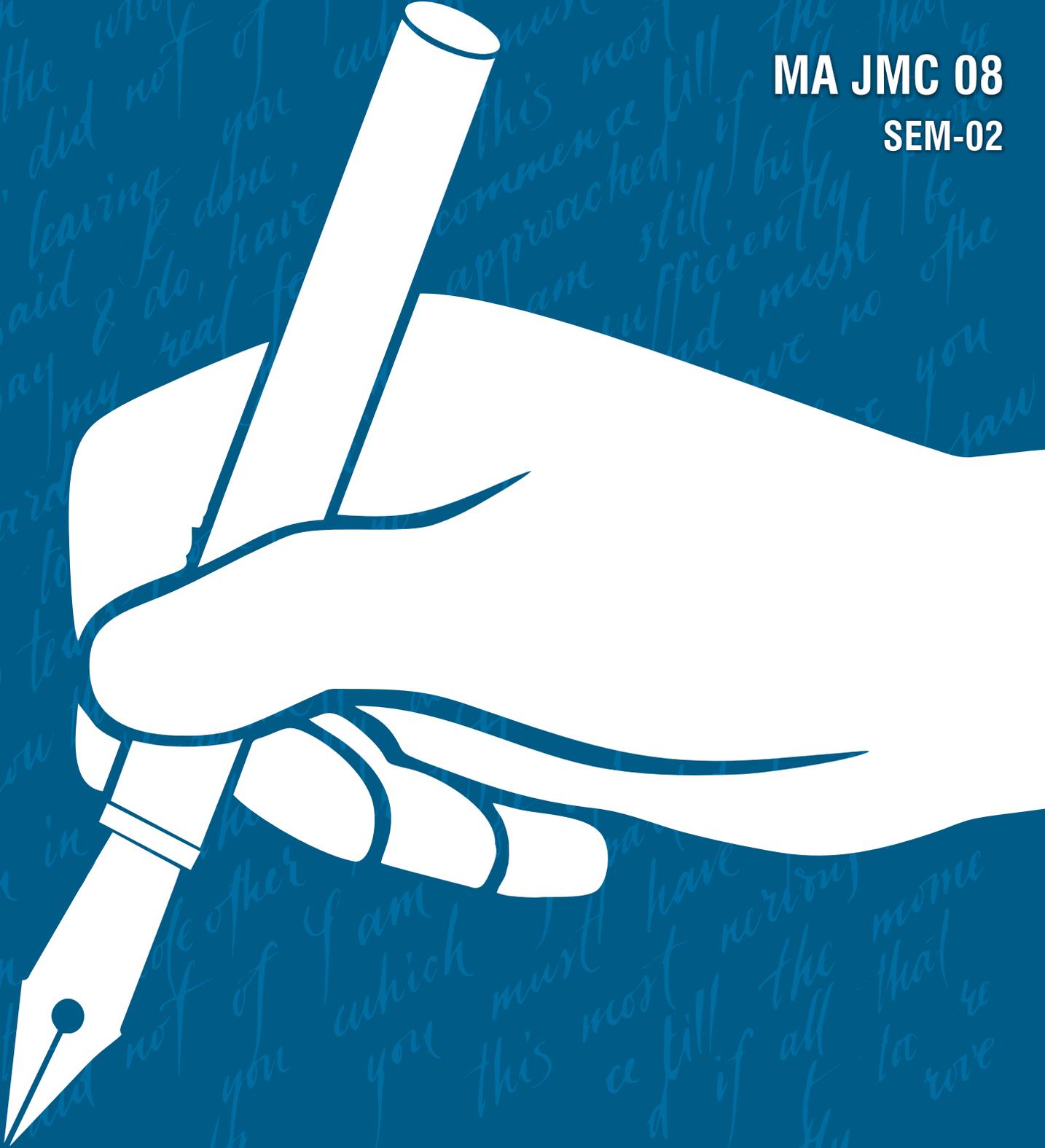
**BAOU**  
Education  
for All

**Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar  
Open University**

(Established by Government of Gujarat)

**MA JMC 08**

**SEM-02**



# **Types of Professional Writing**

MASTER OF ARTS - JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION

## Message for the Students

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University is the only state Open University, established by the Government of Gujarat by the Act No. 14 of 1994 passed by the Gujarat State Legislature; in the memory of the creator of Indian Constitution and Bharat Ratna Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. We stand at the seventh position in terms of establishment of the Open Universities in the country. The University provides as many as 81 courses including various Certificate, Diploma, UG, PG as well as Doctoral to strengthen Higher Education across the state.



On the occasion of the birth anniversary of Babasaheb Ambedkar, the Gujarat government secured a quiet place with the latest convenience for University, and created a building with all the modern amenities named 'Jyotirmay' Parisar. The Board of Management of the University has greatly contributed to the making of the University and will continue to this by all the means.

Education is the perceived capital investment. Education can contribute more to improving the quality of the people. Here I remember the educational philosophy laid down by Shri Swami Vivekananda:

***“We want the education by which the character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expands and by which one can stand on one’s own feet.”***

In order to provide students with qualitative, skill and life oriented education at their threshold. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University is dedicated to this very manifestation of education. The university is incessantly working to provide higher education to the wider mass across the state of Gujarat and prepare them to face day to day challenges and lead their lives with all the capacity for the upliftment of the society in general and the nation in particular.

The university following the core motto ‘स्वाध्यायः परमम् तपः’ does believe in offering enriched curriculum to the student. The university has come up with lucid material for the better understanding of the students in their concerned subject. With this, the university has widened scope for those students who are not able to continue with their education in regular/conventional mode. In every subject a dedicated term for Self Learning Material comprising of Programme advisory committee members, content writers and content and language reviewers has been formed to cater the needs of the students. Matching with the pace of the digital world, the university has its own digital platform Omkar-e to provide education through ICT.

The University is offering MA in Journalism and Mass Communication course under the School of Humanities of Social Sciences, it aims to emerge its learners as excellent communicators in the global arena by developing skills in thinking, reading, writing, and editing, audio-video production and more.

With all these efforts, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University is in the process of being core centre of Knowledge and Education and we invite you to join hands to this pious *Yajna* and bring the dreams of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar of Harmonious Society come true.



Prof. Ami Upadhyay  
Vice Chancellor,  
Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University,  
Ahmedabad

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**Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University**  
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**MJMC-08**

## **Types of Professional Writing**

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**UNIT: 1****NEWS REPORTING****:: STRUCTURE::****1.0 Introduction****1.1 Objectives****1.2 What is News Reporting?****1.3 The Role of a News Reporter****1.4 Formal Qualifications for a News Reporter****1.5 Beat System and Correspondents in News Reporting****1.6 Separating Objectivity and Opinion****1.7 The Bane of Fake News and Plagiarism****1.8 Profile of Five Famous News Reporters****1.9 Types of News Reporting****1.10 Check Your Progress****1.11 Keywords****1.12 Reference**

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**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

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News reporting is a major component of journalism. Across sections like front page, city, national and world news, and business and sports, the maximum space – as much as 80 to 85% -- is given to news reporting in any newspaper. So news reporting forms the backbone of any publication. News reporting has tremendous career potential in print, television and online journalism.

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## 1.1 OBJECTIVES

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- To prepare students in the craft of news reporting
- To familiarise pupils with types of news reporting
- To sensitise learners with copyright issues while reporting

**On the completion of this unit, you will be able to:**

- Write news reports with flair
- Differentiate between news and opinion
- Get the hang of reporting news for all media

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## 1.2 WHAT IS NEWS REPORTING?

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News reporting is gathering information and facts worth disseminating and presenting them in a lucid and comprehensive way for readers. News reporting requires a lot of hard work, perseverance, high levels of concentration and working long hours. It is one of the most important aspects of journalism.

A news reporter has to develop contacts/informants, trust in his sources to get original, investigative information or cross-check other information that is put out there by the authorities.

News reports begin with an informative – and sometimes catchy – headline which gives an indication of the subject matter and the most important and new point of the article (called “story” in journalistic parlance). It is usually followed, depending on the layout style of each publication, by a strapline which further explains or gives further insight into the subject matter in the article. The headline and the strapline are what draws the attention of the reader and lures him into going further into the article.

Then comes the lead paragraph, which lays out the most crucial point of the story. In the first few paragraphs, all the important aspects of the story are covered. These would include answering the 5Ws: Who (the person/s involved in the story), Where (the city, location where it took place), What (happened), When (the time period), Why (if a reason can be given) and to add to it, an “H”: How (did it happen).

Obviously the most important points of the story occupy the opening paragraphs. Though it should be avoided and at least kept to the minimum, some points in the story may be repeated for brevity and flow of the article. The reporter should have a sense of the length a story merits; usually, the news or page editor allots the word length to a story and it would be best if the writer can adhere to it. The other factor that the news reporter has to keep in mind is the deadline, which is sacrosanct in any newspaper or magazine.

Any news report should be easily comprehensible, with short sentences and lucidity. There is no room for personal bias of the reporter in any news report; the article should try to be fair and give both sides of the story for the reader to get the full picture.

News reports from the city, country, and world and from the business and sports world corner a chunk of the newspaper space. The rest of the space is given for feature stories and opinion pieces.

News reporting for print, online and television media differ and will be dwelt upon in a subsequent section. A new age reporter has to be adept in using the smartphone to the hilt; the camera, the video recorder and the voice recorder on the smartphone have to come into play whenever required. Earlier, the reporter would be done and dusted after his work once having filed the report/s for the day for his newspaper. Nowadays, even in a newspaper, once having filed his report for the newspaper, he is expected to file another for the online version, with a video or voice recording that he has captured on his smartphone. He is also expected to tweet his story and post it on Facebook, along with using his skills of tagging and hash-tagging.

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### **1.3 THE ROLE OF A NEWS REPORTER**

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A news reporter is a professional employed by a media organisation, who gathers information, writes it out (filing the report) in a lucid manner, which is then disseminated via newspaper, television, radio, internet, wire service or any other medium or platform to readers, viewers and listeners. It is expected of the reporter to give fact-based information in an objective manner. A reporter, in her report, answers, or at least tries to answer, all the 5 *Ws* – who, what, when, where, and why. The one letter that ties all the *Ws* together is *H*, or the how of the story. The information in any news report would by and large be of interest to the readers and viewers. Usually, news regarding city, civic issues, crime, courts, politics, current affairs, government, gender issues and human interest are some of the subjects that are of enduring interest from the point of view of both the reporter and her news organisation, and the reader. A reporter should be able to identify the news point and highlight it in the report and get all the participants/ stakeholders to give their version on the issue.

Breaking news is an integral part of a reporter's function. Reporting is often gathering of routine information based on events happening in universities, courts, municipal corporation meetings, assembly or parliament, a road mishap, or a crime. News breaks, in these days of television and online journalism, could mean being the first – just a matter of a few seconds -- in announcing the information. The other more stringent definition of news break is breaking an exclusive news story, which no other paper or medium has, or is likely to have for a

while, till they follow it up or do their own investigations. Breaking news can overlap with a scoop, but it is not the same.

A reporter should develop sources and contacts in his beat to be updated about information and news that he can pass on to the readers. The reporter establishes mutual trust and confidence with the sources and taps them from time to time to be the first to “break a story” for information that the authorities want to keep under wraps, and to cross-check facts. The trust is so sacrosanct that the reporter is not at liberty to reveal her sources should the latter want their names to be kept confidential. The reporter is a key component in upholding a community’s watchdog role, which is the touchstone of a credible news media.

Even as a reporter may seem to be a lone ranger, she must be a team player in the newsroom. There will be times when a news report will criss-cross several “beats” (or subject area in journalism vocabulary) and reporters will have to work in tandem with one another. The closest a reporter comes to in professional mirroring is that of a detective or a police investigator: she ought to do her own thinking and analysis of the situation, cover all loose ends, search for airtight corroborations and be ready to reach out to colleagues and professionals for help if needed, and accordingly write and file a thorough and irrefutable report.

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#### **1.4 FORMAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR A NEWS REPORTER**

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The key break from the past for a student or practitioner of journalism is that the news industry has expanded to a media industry, where the cycle of news is all-day every day and the definition of news encompasses all kinds of topics. That is a crucial distinction in today’s hyper-interconnected world.

A minimum graduation, with a good command over language and analytical abilities (usually learnt on the job), was enough in the past when journalism was largely restricted to print and television. A cub reporter or new entrant in journalism learnt on the job or was mentored by their editors. These days the ground reality is that newspapers and media companies do not invest at all in training, and the journalists and seniors in what are usually short-staffed media organisations have little time to hand-hold newcomers.

The technology shift too makes formal training a far more important qualification today than previously. A reporter must know the tools of the trade. So, a degree in journalism or mass communications from a reputed journalism school or institute is not just imperative for a basic grounding in media but is also a must for a reporting job in most media companies.

Several universities also offer a bachelor’s programme in mass communications or journalism. A bachelor’s degree course would prepare the student in the basics of journalism, namely, news gathering, writing and editing, legal guidelines and the structure of media organisations. A key advantage of formal training is the exposure to new technologies and techniques of news gathering and reporting, which would include the use

of smartphones, digital technology, web-design and editing and presenting it to the target audience. This would be adequate for a job application.

A master's degree would have wider scope in both learning and application by developing skills and techniques for researching, technology, investigative journalism and interviewing, apart from subject specialisation and opportunities in academia and media think-tanks.

Journalism schools offer further expertise to candidates in their preferred medium. In the last two decades, reporting in particular has shifted from a hard news-centric industry to a cross-pollinated ecosystem, in which genres such as lifestyle, entertainment, opinion, gaming, technology and social media have become integral parts of the behemoth that is the 24-hour-news industry. On completion of the basic courses, aspiring news reporters can opt for advanced studies in print, broadcast, television or online news media.

A post-graduation degree (without a formal journalism degree) too can be a gateway to reporting, since it could involve specialisation in fields as varied as literature, linguistics, theology, science, urban studies etc, all of which find space in media.

All in all, whatever the degree a reporter may have, what is needed first and foremost is excellent communication skills to interact with people, sources and authorities at one end of the spectrum, and good writing skills to convey that information to readers, viewers and listeners at the other end. In between the two, a reporter must be able to connect the dots in the information that has been acquired.

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## **1.5 BEAT SYSTEM AND CORRESPONDENTS IN NEWS REPORTING**

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Beat reporting is an integral part of journalism, which involves assigning a reporter for a sector (say sports, labour, banking, civic administration), an outfit (political party, a company, a labour union) or an institution (university, government, high court).

Earlier, till the late 1990s, reporters would be assigned beats after gaining a few years of experience in general reporting. These days, beats are assigned to even cub reporters, as understudies to experienced reporters in those beats. Beat reporters gain familiarity with the topic, build up sources in that beat, be in touch with them on a daily basis, gather information and get scoops from time to time.

Expertise in beats allows reporters to provide insight and commentary in addition to reporting straight facts. Generally, beat reporters will develop a rapport with their sources, with whom they have to be in constant touch, allowing for trust to build between the journalist and his/her source of information. Journalists become invested in the beats they are reporting on and become passionate about mastering that beat. Beat reporters often deal with their informants day after day, and must return to those sources regardless, of their relationship with them.

When reporters gather experience on a specific beat, they are able to gain both knowledge and sources to lead them to new stories relating to that beat. Beats help reporters define their roles as journalists, and also avoid overlap of stories within the newsroom.

Typically, beat reporters work with a specific editor or head, who also knows the beat and can guide the reporter toward sources or information as well as help to shape stories. A reporter covering retail companies might report to the business editor, for instance, who will be able to help that reporter gather information more effectively.

When a journalist works in a beat over time, he develops a multitude of sources. This means that they know who to call when something happens and they know the people who will talk to them. A good journalist establishes solid relationships with his sources so he can turn to them to get information.

Although people don't always like talking to reporters — especially when the story is about a scandal or something negative — a good journalist builds up sources who recognize that it is advantageous to come out with a story correctly. In other words, a good journalist will develop a respectful relationship with his sources.

Now, we come to the role of correspondents and stringers in news reporting.

Correspondents and stringers are appointed by news organisations where it doesn't have an edition or by channels where it doesn't feel the need for a daily coverage. These places usually tend to be some states, non-metros, Tier-2 cities (cities with fewer than a million population), rural areas and such. For a national channel or a national newspaper, such state merits coverage usually when it goes to elections, and a Tier 2 city only when there is a major breaking news that captures national attention. The job of a correspondent is to be an all-rounder when the occasion demands. In that sense, his or her beat is the state or the region itself. There is a kind of independence that correspondents have, being away from the centre of edition; correspondents usually work solo. Unless there is a demand for inputs for a larger story or there is breaking news from the area of correspondent's coverage, the correspondent, after consultation with his editor, is free to report on whatever he deems interesting or newsworthy. Unlike a reporter employed with the edition, the correspondent is under no pressure to file a report on daily basis. The correspondent must develop contacts across all beats—from the government to civic bodies to educational institutions to police to religious bodies.

Stringers are like freelancers and can be called in by the media organisation in case of an emergency or news break at a place where its own reporter cannot reach the place of action. As freelancers, stringers are not paid a regular salary. The amount and type of work they put in is normally voluntary. Still, stringers often build up a regular relationship with one or more news organisations, after which they supply content on selected topics or locations whenever they get an opportunity.

The term is typically confined to news industry jargon. In print or in broadcast media, stringers might be called correspondents or contributors; at other times, they may not receive public recognition for their contribution to the system.

A reporter or photographer can "string" for a news organisation in different capacities and with varying degrees of regularity, so that the relationship between the organisation and the stringer is typically very loose. Stringers are employed by most television news organisations as well as a few print publications in order to use video footage, photos, and interviews.

The salaries and perks for a correspondent, based on the area of operation and experience, could be in the range of Rs 25,000 to Rs 80,000.

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## **1.6 SEPARATING OBJECTIVITY AND OPINION**

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Objectivity and opinion (subjectivity) can be differentiated in the way that they are presented. Subjective information is easily defined as the opinion of a single person or a homogenous group. It has a viewpoint, or possibly a bias, regardless of the information it provides.

Objective information on the other hand is meant to be completely unbiased. There is a feeling of the writer or speaker being outside the information, and when they present it, they do so without taking a stance or expressing their feelings in relation to that information.

It boils down to the difference between fact (objective) and opinion (subjective). Objective information can be counted or described. Subjective information on the other hand can consist of statements of judgment, assumption, belief, suspicion, or rumour.

Objective information remains the same without variations, while subjective information tends to differ a lot from one person to the next, or even from one day to the other. A subjective report might even be wrong, or untrue, but an objective report gets more close to the truth than is expected.

Reporters most generally hold themselves and their writing to a high level of objectivity. They present the facts and do not offer their own opinions when it comes to their presentation. However, the editorial section of a newspaper is where subjectivity is the obligatory approach. The articles in these sections might show the facts, while in some cases they might be the same as the objective articles. However, these articles also factor the writer's viewpoint and opinion.

In recent times, especially in political reporting, there is a reflection of a bias of the newspaper/publication/channel. With falling circulation or TRP, there is a tendency for media firms to distort information to make it conform with the consumers' prior beliefs. There seems to be a pro-government tilt in many more media outfits than before, either out of fear of government retribution or largesse in the form of government advertising that is a vital resource for many publications. In India in recent times, questioning the government or its policies – a key job of newspapers and audio-visual media – have led to the

professional journalist being perceived as “anti-national.” Efforts to project the government and the nation as being synonymous instead of the former being an answerable trustee of the latter hinders the growth of a free, fearless and objective press.

This is in direct conflict with the inherent checks-and-balance between the three arms of the state, which was guarded by the press. It was called the Fourth Estate for its role in holding those in power accountable.

It is imperative for journalism to survive and thrive so that reporters are focused on honestly answering their readers. Media has to be autonomous and fearless while chasing and disseminating information. For it to be a real fourth pillar in a democracy, reporters should be able to criticise and take to task those in power. Posing hard-hitting questions to those in authority so that the full and true picture of an issue is given to the public and the readers is the main objective of a news reporter.

Having said all this, there is a paradox in reporting these days, with blatant lies and false narratives peddled by the authorities and political figures in the country. Columbia Journalism Review’s Brent Cunningham says, “The principle of allowing the principle of objectivity to make us passive recipients of news, rather than aggressive analyzers and explainers of it.”

There is a school of thought that believes that objectivity excuses “lazy reporting”. “If you’re on deadline and all you have is “both sides of the story,” that’s often good enough,” said Cunningham.

He says, “This is not a call to scrap objectivity, but rather a search for a better way of thinking about it, a way that is less restrictive and more grounded in reality.” Objectivity has persisted for some valid reasons, the most important being that nothing better has replaced it, he observes.

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## **1.7 THE BANE OF FAKE NEWS AND PLAGIARISM**

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All said and done, there is tremendous information overload these days. Apart from traditional media, digital and social network sites such as Twitter, Facebook, blogs and Whatsapp purvey information. Some of them go “viral” (instantly relayed exponentially through individual people) and are the talk of the town. A rumour, an opinion, a personal message mis characterised, manufactured videos or spoofs taken seriously may be passed off as authentic news with serious consequences. A credible news organisation filters the news through a system of checks and balances which includes verifying sources of information, cross-checking documents and going to the source for a confirmation or denial. This vital process is often absent in media in current times when the proliferation of information and misinformation outlets coupled with shortage of resources makes it challenging to comb through an information deluge.

Instead, rapidly evolving technology and easy-to-use editing apps help most of these “news”, especially video feeds, look “real”. With constant pressure on reporters to be first with breaking news, due diligence takes a back seat.

Fake news does not happen in a vacuum. It has grown, not only because of the spread of social media like “FB college”, twitter and “WhatsApp university” but also because of the falling credibility of the mainstream media.

Fake news circulates in various shapes and forms. Even elected governments float fake news with an intent to show themselves in good light. This kind of yellow journalism can be defined in the realm of “misinformation” which in a mild avatar is merely inaccurate information not intended to cause harm. At its worst, fake news has acquired an alarming presence as a tool for manipulation used by organisations and governments across the world to distort reality with alarming consequences for those targetted.

Political parties in India too have been accused of indulging in creating and actively promoting fake news to spread fear among communities and sway public opinion. This is disinformation with specific intent to create hatred and weaken the social fabric.

Many countries have seen a proliferation of fake news around the time of election. Usually embedded in negative messaging, fake news has contributed significantly towards ensuring lopsided political outcomes around the world.

That said, there is excellent thoroughbred journalism still around that call out on fake news, who try to hold the purveyors of false news accountable. Still, fake news is a growing industry, promoted by those who believe in a certain methodology and/or political ideology and are willing to discard authenticity when it serves their agenda.

For a journalist, it should be quite easy to identify fake news. Every news emanates from a source. It must be cross-checked with at least one more source. The version of the “other” side, whether it be an aggrieved party in the story, the police or the government, has to be represented in the article.

A story is believed to be true because it has gone viral. But there have been studies conducted in the US, where evidence has shown a direct relation between inaccuracy and virality. A Buzzfeed analysis in the 2016 US elections showed that the more inaccurate the information, the more FB users engaged with it and shared it.

News reporters should be aware of copyright laws in their respective countries. They should avoid usage of material, which will not only infringe copyright laws, but also expose them to plagiarism charges. Since news reports are current events, copyrights laws are not stringent.

Quoting directly from texts for a current news will not be considered plagiarism as long as the source is acknowledged and is relevant to the story. Sometimes, the story is based on a text produced by someone else, like a health report by a renowned publication like *Lancet*. The reporter is free to quote extensively from such reports, giving due credit across the article to the original *Lancet* source ad verbatim.

In spite of taking all precautions and giving credit, there could be legal issues that can crop up and it is left to the interpretation of the courts. The

issues that will come into play would be: if the use of any material would harm the commercial interests of the original author or source.

The laws are more stringent for use of images and photographs, which in the case of a published news report would be the lookout of the editorial desk rather than the reporter. These days, it is not only credit but also money that has to be paid for each photograph or image; agencies like Getty Images work on a subscription and per-use model. Getty Images operates a large commercial website used by clients who would search in order to locate images, buy usage rights and download images.

The thing about plagiarism is that it gets caught out, sometimes almost immediately after submitting (if the desk is alert), after publication or over a period of time. There is no escaping it. There are also plagiarism detecting software available, many for free, these days.

In these days of an active social media, getting caught out for plagiarism can be advertised and can be extremely embarrassing for the news reporter, the editorial desk and the organisation. The exposure on the social media can be more damaging and hurt in the long term than a legal suit.

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## 1.8 PROFILE OF FIVE FAMOUS NEWS REPORTERS

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**Robert Fisk** is a British journalist, who has been covering the Middle East stationed in Beirut since the 1990s. He is among a handful of journalists from the western world to have interviewed al-Qaeda leader



Osama Bin Laden more than once. Fisk has been in the thick of the Gulf War, the war in Afghanistan and the Iraq War between 1990 and 2003. He is a recipient of several awards, including the British Press Awards International Journalist of the Year and has received more British and international journalism awards than any other foreign correspondent.

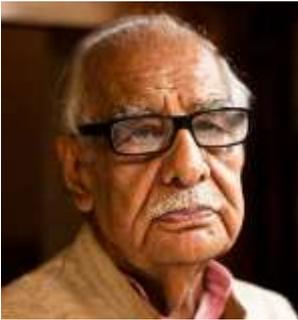
**Bob Woodward** became a well-known name across the world after he, along with Carl Bernstein, exposed the Watergate scandal, which led to



the then US President Richard Nixon resigning from office in the early 1970s. Woodward was working as an investigative report for the *Washington Post* at that time, and now is the associate editor there. Thanks to the Watergate expose, the *Post* won the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service in 1972. Woodward himself received the Pulitzer 30 years later for his coverage of the September 11 al-Qaeda attacks

in the US. He is also the author of several non-fiction books, many of which are bestsellers.

**Kuldip Nayar** is considered to be one of India's greatest journalists. He started his career as a news reporter for an Urdu paper, and later went on to become the editor of the then most prestigious English newspaper, *The*



*Statesman*. He was a champion of free speech and journalistic freedom, and as a testimony to that he was arrested when Emergency was clamped on the country from 1975 to 1977. He wrote syndicated columns and opinion pieces which would be published in more than 80 newspapers in 14 languages. He was an active advocate of peace between India and Pakistan. He died in 2018 and, as per his last wish, his ashes were immersed in River Ravi near Lahore in Pakistan (he was born before Partition in Sialkot, now in Pakistan) by his family and friends.

**Sucheta Dalal** is best known for her investigative stories when she was with the *Times of India* in the 1990s. She gained fame when she broke the Harshad Mehta securities scam of 1992, then the biggest financial scandal in the country. She also exposed the IDBI scam and the Ketan Parekh Scam of 2001. In *The Times of India*, she rose to become the Financial editor. She is well known for her numerous investigative reports on



Indian stock markets, consumer/investor protection, infrastructure projects and budgets. Presently, Sucheta runs MoneyLife Smart Savers Network, a community initiative aimed to educate and collate individual investors to become better at investing. She also runs a popular Credit Helpline to aid people who have financial difficulties, with redressal mechanisms for insurance, mutual funds and other investments.



**Muzamil Jaleel** has done extensive reporting from difficult news terrains such as Kashmir and Jaffna. He is the Deputy Editor in the *Indian Express*. He was a visiting scholar at the University of California Berkeley. On another fellowship, he worked in London for the *Guardian*, *The Observer*, and *The Times* newspapers. Over the years, Muzamil has explored a number of investigative stories, including Sex Scandal to Amarnath Land Row. One investigative report published in the *Indian Express* on the Kashmir sex scandal immediately triggered off public outrage in the valley, followed by a number of protests. Muzamil got a number of commendations when he covered the last days of the Sri Lankan government's war against the LTTE and for

his articles detailing the innocuousness that became incriminating in SIMI arrests.

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## 1.9 TYPES OF NEWS REPORTING

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News reporting is hard-core journalism. Its primary objective is to inform readers about local, national and world events and news. News reporters have to strive to be objective and whatever they disseminate has to be backed by facts, keeping opinions and biases at bay.

It is widely regarded that there are variants of news reporting or journalism; broadly, they can be classified as feature reporting, investigative, interpretative or plain objective news.

**Feature writing:** Unlike news reporting, more leeway is given in terms of word length and “real estate” space on a page for feature writing. They tend to be in-depth, involve dissecting trends and packed with quotes and 360-degree information. The journalist’s researching skills are brought to the fore more often than not in feature writing.

**Investigative journalism** hopes to do exposes on a scandal or uncover the truth on an individual or incident. It demands a lot of patience, work hours and perseverance. It could be an investigation based on first-hand information or it could be an investigation of an incident or information already in public domain and exposing the truth behind the propaganda. In recent times, the expose of the top-notch kind was in *Business Standard* just before the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, when Somesh Jha investigated the claims of the central government and exposed that the unemployment rate, based on unreleased data collated by the National Sample Survey Office of the Ministry of Statistics, was the highest in the last 40 years. Exposes have, in a functioning democracy, the effect of even toppling governments.

**Interpretative reporting:** Usually this is seen in business journalism, or where numbers and statistics are involved. The reporter tries to dissect the information that is released by the authorities or companies and explains the cause and effect or any other interpretation there may be. The reporter could dig into his own expertise on the subject or get experts to comment on the subject with probing questions. Many a time, news publications these days have an expert opinion write-up along with the news.

**Objective news** has already been dealt with in the preceding paragraphs. In plain terms, it is shorn of all biases and opinions of the writer. Usually, the report would be “he said, she said”. Like when the government announced the Rs 20-lakh crore Covid impetus, the reporter doesn’t go in to the reality of the announcement or whether the figures add up. It is reported that the Prime Minister announced a Rs 20-lakh crore package and the information that came along with it through either the speech, or the subsequent government order, or a press release.

## **Reporting for various media**

Also, one has to keep in mind that every medium has its own demands and idiosyncrasies. The same story will be treated differently on different platforms though the information source may be the same. Often, in the print medium, the text would do most of the talking with just one photograph or/and an illustration; on television, the priority would be given to visual video shots of the subject along with still photographs and sound bytes from the news reporter and eyewitness or experts as required; and on the online medium, it could be a combination of text, photographs, videos, charts, tweets and other illustrations.

Each medium is unique in its own way and each adopts its own style to present the information and news to its audience. In a newspaper, update on any news can be got only the following day. On all other medium, whether it be online, TV or radio, a developing news can constantly be updated almost minute-by-minute if it so demands. For example, on election day or during a sports game, every development is captured and each minute is a new update and can be captured only on a website, TV programme or radio.

Processing news on various media differs. On TV, if one misses the visual that is being screened or on a radio broadcast, if the news is not followed because of reasons ranging from the accent of the commentator to the attention span of the listener, there is no going back unless one awaits the next broadcast. A newspaper can always be referred throughout the day or later for any news that is published.

Though many media houses have lost credibility over the last few years, a news that appears in print is considered, more often than not, as credible. It could be because it is the traditional medium, and many of the newspapers and magazines have developed trust among their readers over years, if not decades.

In both print and online media, the readers have a clue about the physical attributes of the writer. Audience and listeners draw their own conclusions regarding the authenticity and credibility of the TV news presenter or reporter or the radio commentator (based on the tone of the voice) and gets drawn towards that.

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### **1.10 Check Your Progress**

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1. What does a news reporter do?

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2. What is beat reporting?

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3. Does a reporter always have to be objective?

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4. Why does fake news exist?

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5. Does reporting change according to the medium?

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### 1.11 KEYWORDS

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**Objectivity:** The quality or character of being objective, lack of favouritism towards one side or another, freedom from bias.

**Fake news:** False stories that appear to be news, spread on the internet or using other media, usually created with full knowledge that it is fake to influence political views or as a joke.

**Hashtag:** A word or phrase preceded by a hash sign (#) used on social media websites and applications, especially Twitter, to identify messages on a specific topic.

**Stringer:** A news correspondent, who is paid space rates or a reporter who works for a publication or news agency on a part-time basis

**Sound bite:** A brief, recorded statement (as by a public figure), broadcast especially on a television news programme, also means a brief catchy comment or saying.

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## 1.12 REFERENCE

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### **Books**

Reporting for Journalists by Chris Frost

India Misinformed by Pratik Sinha, Dr Sumaiya Shaikh and Arjun Sidharth

### **Online :**

<http://www.nraismc.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Specialised-Reporting.pdf>

[https://archives.cjr.org/feature/rethinking\\_objectivity.php](https://archives.cjr.org/feature/rethinking_objectivity.php)

**UNIT : 2****DIGITAL JOURNALISM****:: STRUCTURE::****2.0 Introduction****2.1 Objectives****2.2 What Constitutes Digital Journalism?****2.3 News Reporting On Digital Platforms****2.4 Feature Journalism Online****2.5 Blogging****2.6 Longform Journalism on the Web****2.7 Challenges of Fake News in Online Media****2.8 Conclusion****2.9 Check Your Progress****2.10 Keywords****2.11 References**

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**2.0 INTRODUCTION**

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Digital journalism or online journalism is probably the fastest growing medium, especially with the proliferation of smartphones and cheap data and WiFi. It is the fastest growing medium in recent times and offers immense opportunities to budding journalists. Online journalism has evolved exponentially over the years and is constantly innovating and bucking new trends.

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## 2.1 OBJECTIVES

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To prepare students with entire gamut of online media

To introduce different genres of digital media

To present trends happening in online media

**On the completion of this unit, you will be able to:**

Produce content for online media

Understand the technology and innovativeness in online media

Identify and avoid fake news

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## 2.2 WHAT CONSTITUTES DIGITAL JOURNALISM?

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Broadly, digital journalism can be defined as any form of online journalism or content that is posted on the internet. This could include text, audio, video – or a combination of any two or all – uploaded on any online platform. Its distribution is paperless and instant, as is its consumption. Readers having 24/7 access to internet through Wi-Fi and broadband connection can consume the journalism at their own leisure. The online platforms include websites, blog sites and social media.

Online journalism has both original and aggregated content, which is quite popular on many platforms. Length is not restricted as in print journalism and varies from 280 characters (Twitter limit) to longform journalism running into thousands of words.

People can now react to journalism in a way that was impossible before the internet. Articles have a ‘comments’ section where people can get involved and give their opinion. With Twitter and Facebook, there is public reaction and even outcry – with opinions galore from all and sundry -- to stories written by journalists. For journalists, this allows feedback they would not have had with traditional journalism, but it also means that content is harder to control.

The way journalists research stories has changed as well. In the past, journalists would often talk to experts or go to the library and research departments in each newsroom office to get background information. They would also make phone calls to PR offices. Now they do a lot of research online from a variety of sources, beginning with Wikipedia and moving on to open source websites and social media posts. In a study by ING last year, it was found that 50% of journalists use social media as their main source of information.

Journalists can also monitor stories using hashtags. Hashtags allow journalists to track a story, compile information from multiple sources and find an audience that is already interested in the topic they are writing about.

Online journalism has led to a few bad habits. Since it is the era of instant news and many avenues to get that news, in the endeavour to be the first with the news or “breaking news” syndrome, many journalists

now forego the practice of due diligence and rush to print without checking the facts. It leads to clarifications and corrigendum, and since it is online content, it is easy to delete posts and reports and make them disappear if the information in the report turns out to be unintendedly incorrect (Emphasis on “unintendedly” since there is a growing tendency to peddle fake news deliberately to create insecurity and disturbance in society and polity).

Online journalism can be practised by anyone with as few resources as a smartphone and WiFi connection. Mobile phones are used by even seasoned journalists to record videos and interviews. Blogging is another avenue to generate online content. Anyone – one need not blogsites to produce and promote content.

**Broadly, digital media constitutes the following (it is not a comprehensive list):**

**Website:** A website is a collection of web pages and related content that is identified by a common domain name and published on at least one web server. Notable examples are wikipedia.org, google.com, and amazon.com (there are other suffixes available, such as .in, identifying that it is from India, or .org, indicating it is a non-profit organisation or .gov, indicating it is a government website). All publicly accessible websites collectively constitute the World Wide Web. News, corporates, government and just about everyone has a website these days.

**Social media:** These are platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, in which interactions are allowed among netizens. It is best defined as “websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking”.

**Radio/Audio:** Internet radio (also web radio, net radio, streaming radio, e-radio, IP radio, online radio) is a digital audio service transmitted via the Internet. Broadcasting on the Internet is usually referred to as webcasting, as it is not transmitted broadly through wireless means. It can either be used as a stand-alone device running through the internet, or as a software running through a single computer.

**Publishing:** Books, magazines and newspapers are distributed in electronic formats as ebooks through mobile apps or through websites.

**Photographs:** Prime examples of photo distribution online include Getty Images and Pinterest. High-resolution photographs can run up to many gigabytes and can be easily stored online in the source format so that they are easy to distribute.

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## **2.3 NEWS REPORTING ON DIGITAL PLATFORMS**

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A news reporter gathers information, writes out the information (filing the report) in a lucid manner and disseminates it via newspaper, television, radio, internet, wire service or any other medium or platform to readers, viewers and listeners. It is expected of the reporter to give

fact-based information in an objective manner. A reporter answers, or at least tries to answer, all the 5 Ws – who, what, when, where, and why. The one letter that ties all the Ws together is H, or the how of the story. The information in any news report would by and large be of interest to the readers and viewers. Usually, news regarding city, civic issues, crime, courts, politics, current affairs, government, gender issues and human interest are some of the subjects that are of enduring interest from the point of view of both reporter and her news organisation and the reader. A reporter should be able to identify the news point, highlight it in the report and get all the participants/ stakeholders to give their version of the issue.

Online news reporting follows all the protocol that a print news report does, but in addition, the online news reporter is expected to use his or her smartphone camera to the hilt. Apart from writing a report for the website or blog, online reporters have to be all-rounders, having to shoot photographs, videos, do on-spot interviews and upload them from wherever their location may be. This also factors in the aspects of speed, accuracy and breaking news, which is an integral part of a reporter's function. Reporting is often gathering of routine information based on events happening in universities, courts, municipal corporation meetings, assembly or parliament, a road mishap, or a crime. News breaks, in these days of television and online journalism, could mean being the first – maybe a matter of a few seconds -- with announcing the information. The other more stringent definition of news break is coming out with exclusive news, which no other paper or medium has, or is likely to have for a while, till they follow it up or do their own investigations.

An online reporter traditionally writes like a print reporter, then the report is sent to the editorial desk, which uploads it after due diligence and editing. When the reporter is expected to upload videos on the website, he or she works almost like a television reporter and is required to write a script, or be extempore, in presenting his or her report. Often, the reporters are expected to write and read out their own report/script and put it online. Sometimes they write out the report for the online news anchor or presenter in the web studio, be ready to be questioned by the anchor and also be prepared with the answers regarding any news event.

All the print publications have their own websites, so the reporters' job becomes all the more tedious. The reporters, with their salaries for just one job, are expected to do all that is required for the online version, as the news develops. They have to later file a report for the print version that will come out in the newspaper form the following day. Apart from these, the reporters are also expected to post the news on social media platforms, such as FB and Twitter, to keep their followers and readers of the publication engaged.

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## 2.4 FEATURE JOURNALISM ONLINE

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Digital technology has become a disruptor in the business of feature and magazine journalism and has forced traditional media to reinvent itself. Feature journalism is often associated with glossy magazines and newspaper weekend sections, in which readers are invited to spend time, relax and take pleasure in their reading.

Feature articles primarily are what you may want to know, unlike news reports that tell you what you need to know. Feature journalism takes you behind the headlines and the scenes, deal with a subject in greater depth and usually, at greater length. While the news report gives you a snapshot, the feature aims to give a fuller portrait – often an immersive one that speaks to your head, heart and senses to give you a sense that you're right there where the action is, experiencing it for yourself and also getting a bird's-eye-view understanding of things. A feature article usually would be a minimum of 800 words and the topic and the writing have to be engaging enough to sustain readers' interest for the length of the article, unlike a news report, which can be wrapped up in just 250 words.

Online journalism today seems to be predominantly about breaking news coverage. Over the years, the art of storytelling has constantly been changing. The technology was there, the talented teams were there, but to deliver strong, digital content was not without a heavy price tag and for many the change never happened. Many were not convinced they could make digital publishing pay in the same way that print has in the past.

Feature journalism is not dictated by the deadline as stringently as daily news; this does not mean it need not adhere to deadlines, it just means that it does not have a daily schedule. Feature journalism normally looks visually appealing and is laid out in delicate layouts, using multiple illustrations, mainly still photos. Is magazine content already a print Dodo? Many feature magazines are left floundering with a tide of technology eating away at their sales. They did not grasp just how quickly this tech was going to rip out the paper hearts of their beloved magazines without as much as a backward glance.

For years, it had been declared that 'print was king', when in fact 'content was king' and as technology seeped into every corner of daily routines, readers changed their behaviour when it came to consuming content.

The person who showed the way was Martin Clarke, the brain behind today's MailOnline. It was launched in 2003. For three years, it languished and then in 2006, Clarke became editor and then publisher it in 2008. The rest is history.

MailOnline had its own unique take on coverage of celebrities and showbiz world and it kept on growing in popularity. It would not only cover UK news but keep aggregating weird and viral news and videos

from across the world, it had become a go-to site for netizens from across the world. Its worldwide appeal is unique. Readers from all over the world took “guilty pleasure” from it.

It turns out that the audience was always there. It was only going to be bigger than the print audience, because online content allows people to access what they want when they want it.

MailOnline’s success just showed that the arrival of the internet as a news provider and the growth of social media as a news distributor meant that anything in print was under threat. Those at the helm needed to find a new way to succeed in journalism.

Others have found their formula on the web, with serious and “non-tabloidish” content. Longform has seen moderate-to-good success in the online world. There are websites, again with worldwide appeal, which pursue serious journalism and put out in-depth and incisive articles and analyses.

There are also purely opinion sites which have experts writing on wide-ranging topics from defence to healthcare to foreign affairs, and these websites have a dedicated following. An online magazine’s success depends on creating a niche accompanied by a strong revenue formula, with paywalls, advertisement revenues and readers’ crowdfunding.

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## **2.5 BLOGGING**

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The term blog is derived from weblog. The frequency of posts can vary from several times a day or just once a month. The content of a blog is hosted online, generally by an individual or a group working together. The blog content is periodically updated and is in a conversational and casual style. The writer or what we now refer to as a blogger, may not be a professional media person or an author. In fact, bloggers could never have published a word before their blogs. What drives them is the idea to share and communicate what they have experienced or feel strongly about. The blog posts appear on the web page in a reverse chronological order so that the latest post appears at the top of the page.

What started as an informal communication or a “diary” of a single person, soon progressed to sometimes becoming the work of multiple writers. Many of these blogs were sometimes even professionally edited to give them a professional look and feel. When a group of individuals come together to express themselves on a single topic and related events, they give rise to what is known as multi-author blogs or MABs. Media houses, academic institutions and voluntary organisations are some examples of MABs and have contributed to an increase in traffic and voluminous interest in blogs.

The range of blogs covers everything and anything from science and technology, books, politics, activism and parenting. The main thing is that a blog is the experience or views in the form of an online diary. This online diary or journal is termed as a personal blog. This is like any physical diary, in which the writer expresses his or her feelings, experiences and complaints. Bloggers even share products and experiences. These are promotional blogs, in which bloggers are compensated to review a product.

Blogs take on an interactive nature when readers are encouraged to respond via posts. This leads to an ongoing relationship between the readers and writer. But of course, there are blogs that do not allow posting of comments. But what makes any blog exciting for the reader and increases traffic is leaving behind his or her views. Not only is the writer getting to read it but other commenters too, though it is the prerogative of blog owners to moderate or filter online feedback to remove offensive content.

Blogs are mostly textual. But photoblogs (photographs) podcasts (audio), mp3 (music) vlogs (video), and microblogs (short posts) are some other forms of blogging that we will be looking at.

In the beginning of the millennium, the use of blogs became mainstream with most high-profile political parties, corporate houses and authors using it as a tool to reach out to their target audience. Once the mainstream media was the only source of reaching out to the public, but now it could be by-passed. The blogosphere was creating its own rules and an alternative news distribution system, which necessarily was not enriching readers as facts and context were compromised.

A blogger is the boss of the posts – the content, the presentation, and timing, as long as he/she has something to write about and has a readership, and that comes with expertise and persistence. Over time, a blogger gains deeper knowledge on the subject he/she is writing about and gains confidence. And consistently writing and offering something novel each time wins readers. This is very crucial. Because only if there are readers will the blog have the possibility to be monetised.

A blogger has to wear many hats to be successful: those of a writer, marketer, designer and techie. Besides being a content generator, it helps if he/she learns about online marketing, basic web designing, and familiarity with search engine optimization.

So, let us take a look at the essential skills of a blogger:

*Sharing and caring* - Bloggers come from all walks of life, but what is common between them is the passion to create awareness on issues important to society like parenting, politics and education. They should also be responsive to people, as blogs are more interactive, unlike books and articles. Active readers are also a source of ideas and your best promoters.

*Topics* - Though there are blogs that are just about “feelings” and “thoughts”, successful blogs centre around more substantial content and are focused. That is the reason for the popularity of DIY blogs. Bloggers generally know about the topic they are writing about, either through experience or research. Choosing to write on niche areas like orchid gardening, budget travelling or home decorating is more likely to attract readers. As people search the internet to solve problems, niche blogs get more hits.

*Content is king* - A blogger need not be an exceptional writer, but basic communication skills are a requisite. The blog should have a clear, conversational style that can engage a first-time visitor. Verbosity or tech jargon limits readership. A friendly, conversational voice is always a winner. Also, the need of the reader should always be kept in mind – whether it is to provide entertainment or advice. Satisfaction is the best bet for readers to return.

*Marketing* - Bloggers cannot be shy and must promote themselves across social media. Collaboration, such as guest posts or hyperlinking to other blogs are ways of widening the circle. Learning to use search engine optimization is a good way to build traffic. Sending out newsletters, podcasts and interacting with industry forums are other ways to build traffic. Send invitations to readers to subscribe to your blog.

*Visual appeal* - Of course, your blog has to look good and be easy to navigate. The reader should be able to take in the most important information at first glance, without having to scroll down – this is called “above the fold” test. The title, tagline and accompanying image are crucial to hook the reader.

## **Video Blogging Or Vlog**



A vlog, or a video blog, is a personal website or social media account, in which the host periodically posts videos. The content is mostly in video form: videos of a person expressing his/her views or covering an event. It could also be part of a blog. Some vloggers post videos on a

daily basis, telling their audience about their whereabouts and activities. Some do it weekly or space it out. A podcast is audio and/or video content that is delivered over the web periodically.

Vlogging saw a strong increase in popularity in 2005, after the advent of the popular video-sharing site, YouTube. It has grown over the years into a force in the social media landscape. The story of vlogging began in 2000, when Adam Kontras posted a video alongside his blog entry on his move to another city in pursuit of a new career. This was the first video post and became the longest-running video blog in web history. Much later on that same year, Adrian Miles uploaded another video showing changing text on a still image. He came up with the term *vog* with reference to his video blog. Filmmaker-musician Luuk Bouwman in 2002 started the now-defunct Tropisms.org site as a video diary of his post-college travels. This was one of the first sites to be called a vlog or videolog.

Open-source content management systems helped bloggers to include video content on their blogs. Soon a category of exclusive video post makers or vloggers emerged. The convergence of mobile phones with digital cameras has made the publishing of video content instantaneous and facile.

What accounts for the tremendous popularity of vlogs is the Do-it-yourself (DIY) vlog. DIY videos are suited for vlogging. Vlogs on home improvements, cooking, crafts and hobbies, travel, and personal events have stormed the internet. They are a great source of entertainment and information. Personal blogs are videos recorded of a person sharing information about his lifestyle like travelling or attending events. Blogs about news analyses and eco-political commentary are also popular. Where events go, YouTube has a live broadcasting feature called YouTube Live. This feature was also included by other social platforms such as Instagram and Facebook.

The popularity of vlogs is widely because of the live interaction with an audience. It makes it personal. Visual aids have always had a bigger impact on people because images and audiovisuals are easier to remember and recall. Vlogs are a good platform to effectively showcase your products or services in an engaging manner.

Recent trends in vlogging have become more immediate and innovative. Live videos are the mainstay still in the vlogging ecosystem. The genre in live videos that is ruling the roost is live interactions with people, making it an extremely engaging one.

Interactive 360 video is a huge trend at the moment, like Broadway musicals, sports games and iconic locations. It's the kind of immersive, futuristic video style we're expecting to see a lot more of as AR and VR

continue to grow in usage. While it is not easy to produce, it is seen as a great way to set apart product videos from competition and really captivate the customer base.

Training and education are already a huge sector of the internet that utilises video. The pandemic situation that we have because of Covid, during most of 2020, has bucked a trend that will continue to grow and will be used by brands and businesses to sell products by creating content to teach people how to use their products. Classroom teaching through vlogging is likely to become a huge trend sooner rather than later.

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## **2.6 LONGFORM JOURNALISM ON THE WEB**

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There are quite a few definitions of what longform content is. Articles longer than 700 words are sometimes considered longform writing, but for many it has to be in the word length of 2,000 and beyond to be worth the nomenclature “longform”. Longform content in magazines like *New Yorker* sometimes ranges between 3,000 to 10,000+ words. In the online version, it is usually enhanced by images and graphics, soundbytes and video clips.

In the last decade, when longform format came into its own, software was developed that would estimate the time it would take to read articles based on the word count. The formula seemed to be that the more time it took - but not an awfully long time - it engaged more with the online reader. Its popularity can be gauged from the fact that BuzzFeed, a go-to site for the youth and the millennials got itself a full-time longform editor in 2013.

Both Longreads.com and Longform.org use the time-estimating program for their stories, as does Medium. Medium, which developed an early reputation for longform journalism, distanced itself from the label. “It was not our intention... to create a platform just for ‘longform’ content,” said E. V. Williams, Medium CEO and a co-founder of – ironically -- Twitter. In fact, a new trend is emerging called the Longform Twitter, with the Twitter thread being used to tell a story in a long series of 140-character-limits imposed in each tweet.

Longform stories especially seem to work on the online platforms, hence the sudden clamour for it. That is not surprising, considering that the more time the reader stays on an online page, the more it attracts advertisers’ and media planners’ attention. More often than not, these stories give an insight into readers, who frequent these pages and stay on to finish the longform stories. The demographics are bound to be of “high” quality, because they are engaging with high-quality journalism and reading matters of substance.

The longer the story, the more scope for more advertisements alongside the article and insertions after every few paragraphs, as the reader keeps scrolling down. Surprisingly, in a longform web page, a surfeit of ads is not considered as intrusive as on regular news feed page. From the advertiser's viewpoint, longform tends to be more shared by readers on social media and WhatsApp. Those in the advertising industry would vouch that there is nothing better than word of mouth.

In the online world, the SEO is the holy cow with which articles are discovered by netizens and search engines, throwing up longform articles on top if they are relevant to the searches. That is the kind of importance SEOs accord to longform articles, which again emanates from the advertisements that they are capable of generating.

Many a time, long form articles do not have an early expiry date. Almost all, especially since they tend to be well-researched and detailed, have at least a one-year shelf life and thereby their value increases and is referred to more.

Discerning readers do not seem to mind paywalls when it comes to longform content. Unlike newspapers or other online news portals, readers consider longform writing worth paying for. Of course, it depends on the content, but platforms also matter. It is seen in recent times that longform content on YouTube is not working as well as it was earlier and the views and shares are dropping, while on blogs and other online text media, it is soaring.

Blogtyrant.com, which does longform articles, analyses the trend. It points out that "Medium, a pretty new blogging site that is largely devoted to longform content, has grown 140% since 2016. It's most popular article of the year has an estimated 10-minute reading time."

It goes on to vouch that the "*The New York Times*, which is largely a longform and detailed investigative news source, experienced a quarter one growth of 308,000 subscribers this year (2019) – their largest ever gain".

Now, longform is finding its niche in brand promotion and marketing. In the realm of content marketing, brands are full of stories of their inception, ups and downs, transformation, customer-centric tales and so on. Longform is turning out to be a great marketing tool to connect with customers, build brand loyalty and position the company and the brand.

Stories are built around the brand, and if there are stories and interesting ones at that, there will be takers for it. Storytelling creates a buzz around the brand and gets talked about. It becomes a great icebreaker and has a cool quotient about it.

Longform storytelling for brands and companies raises curiosity about them, develops an immediate connect on an emotional matrix with the customers and sets one apart from the others (read competition) in the same arena.

As in journalism, longform as a marketing strategy for brands also has a better shelf life than short-form stories. It all depends on how you want to position your brand. Short-term content of 500 words and less can exist alongside on various social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram and on blogs, but it will have to be constant and churned out regularly to keep the brand recall at a high level.

Longform content positions the brand exclusively and the story lives on much longer than short-term content. Longform gives gravitas to the brand and makes the customers proud of their association. Longform with high-quality photographs, graphs and graphics, with some video thrown in, related to the process of the brand manufacturing and employee connect...all these helps to create an image of the brand that no advertisement or short-form content, with limited shelf life, can achieve.

In big corporates, the CEOs and the top management share their personal success stories, how they came up in life and the ideas and concepts that have helped the company succeed. These connect not only with the customers and suppliers, but also with the employees, when told with compassion and humour. Marketing is subtle in these cases and when the writing (or ghost writing in some cases) is eloquent, it creates a great connect with the stakeholders.

Longform narratives work best when the story to be told of the brand and the company on it took seed as an idea and grew from strength to strength to reach the market position it is occupying now. Corporates, especially tech companies, have longform articles to forecast what is in store in the future, while tracing the strides that have taken to reach where they are today.

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## **2.7 CHALLENGES OF FAKE NEWS IN ONLINE MEDIA**

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All said and done, there is tremendous information overload these days. Apart from traditional media, digital and social network sites such as Twitter, Facebook, blogs and WhatsApp purvey information. Some of them go “viral” (instantly relayed exponentially through individual people) and are the talk of the town. A rumour, an opinion, a personal message mischaracterised, manufactured videos or spoofs taken seriously may be passed off as authentic news with serious consequences.

A credible news organisation filters the news through a system of checks and balances which includes verifying sources of information, cross-checking documents and going to the source for a confirmation or denial. This vital process is often absent in media in current times when the proliferation of information and misinformation outlets coupled with shortage of resources makes it challenging to comb through an information deluge.

Instead, rapidly evolving technology and easy-to-use editing apps help most of these “news”, especially video feeds, look “real”. With constant pressure on reporters to be first with breaking news, due diligence takes a back seat.

Fake news does not happen in a vacuum. It has grown, not only because of the spread of social media like “FB college”, Twitter and “WhatsApp university” but also because of the falling credibility of the mainstream media.

Fake news circulates in various shapes and forms. Even elected governments float fake news with an intent to show themselves in good light. This kind of yellow journalism can be defined in the realm of “misinformation” which in a mild avatar is merely inaccurate information not intended to cause harm. At its worst, fake news has acquired an alarming presence as a tool for manipulation used by organisations and governments across the world to distort reality, with alarming consequences for those targeted.

Political parties in India too have been accused of indulging in creating and actively promoting fake news to spread fear among communities and sway public opinion. This is disinformation with the specific intent to create hatred and weaken the social fabric.

Many countries have seen a proliferation of fake news around the time of the election. Usually embedded in negative messaging, fake news has contributed significantly towards ensuring lopsided political outcomes around the world.

That said, there is excellent thoroughbred journalism that calls out fake news and tries to hold the purveyors of false news accountable. Still, fake news is a growing industry, promoted by those who believe in a certain methodology and/or political ideology and is willing to discard authenticity when it serves their agenda.

For a journalist, it should be quite easy to identify fake news. Every news item emanates from a source. It must be cross-checked with at least one more source. The version of the “other” side, whether it be an aggrieved party in the story, the police or the government, has to be represented in the article.

A story is believed to be true because it has gone viral. But there have been studies conducted in the US through which evidence has shown a direct relation between inaccuracy and virality. A BuzzFeed analysis in the 2016 US elections showed that the more inaccurate the information, the more FB users engaged with and shared it.

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## **2.8 CONCLUSION**

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Online media has opened another avenue for freshers out of journalism school and those who want to pursue journalism as a profession. Till a few years back, options in journalism was limited to print and television. As things look now, online media can become one of the most lucrative media with people accepting paywalls and subscription channels for quality online content. There is also a big scope for freelance journalism to thrive in the online ecosystem.

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## **2.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

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1. How do you define digital journalism?

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2. What is social media?

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3. What is the meaning of “breaking news”?

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4. What is vlog or vlogging?

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5. What are the advantages of longform journalism online?

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## 2.10 KEYWORDS

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**Hashtag:** A word or phrase preceded by the symbol # that classifies or categorizes the accompanying text (such as a tweet). Social media has made the hashtag a ubiquitous part of Internet culture, starting with Twitter and expanding to other sites. Originally designed for categorizing posts, the hashtag can now be a tool for a supplementary coy or witty comment.

**Streaming:** The act, the process, or an instance of streaming data or of accessing data that is being streamed.

**Disruptor:** To interrupt the normal course, like disrupt with a new technology.

**SEO:** Search engine optimization, which is the practice of increasing the quantity and quality of traffic to your website through organic search engine results.

**Ecosystem:** Something (such as a network of businesses) considered to resemble an ecological ecosystem especially because of its complex interdependent parts. A complex network or interconnected system.

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**UNIT: 3****NEWS SCRIPTS****:: STRUCTURE::****3.0 Introduction****3.1 Objectives****3.2 Writing for Broadcasting****3.3 People Involved In News Production****3.4 Tips for News Scripts****3.5 How to Write News Scripts****3.6 Ethics in Broadcasting****3.7 Broadcasting Lingo****3.8 Conclusion****3.9 Check Your Progress****3.10 Key Words****3.11 References**

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**3.0 INTRODUCTION**

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News scripts are the backbone of visual news, including TV, vlog, Youtube and other channels. News scripts have to work in tandem with the visual aspect of the medium, many a times—becoming the differentiator for the news channel.

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**3.1 OBJECTIVES**

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- To prepare students in the craft of writing TV news scripts
- To know the importance of news scripts in television medium
- To familiarise with dos and don'ts of script writing for news

**On the completion of this unit, you will be able to:**

- Write scripts for TV news
- Put into practice ethics of journalism in news script writing

- Recognise the importance of teamwork in the visual medium

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### 3.2 WRITING FOR BROADCASTING

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Scripting for news is one of the most important aspects of news reporting on TV. Behind all the glamour of plush studios, news anchors and technology, which are common factors for all news channels, the biggest asset for any channel is the way the news script is written and the news is conveyed to the viewers.

Script writing for broadcasting news involves sounding direct, simple and good when it is read out. A good writer for broadcast news has to bear in mind that the story that one is writing would have a combination of visual as well as non-visual elements.

There are innumerable news channels and in India, even more, with the English and language channels competing for the audience attention; in this scenario, how one presents the news and the words spoken and the intonation matter a lot.

While writing news scripts, one has to bear in mind the visuals or lack of visuals with the story and adapt the script accordingly. If there is no visual with the story, the script is as good as a news script for radio broadcast, but as soon as visuals appear, the dynamics of story-telling change. A well-written script on TV, with visuals, has a deep impact on the audience, much more than the radio or newspaper can, because the viewer is taken to the actual scene of action and himself becomes a first-hand witness, so to speak. No wonder the impact of visual news is immense compared to any other media.

The script has to be tight and lucid. Unlike print, online stories or YouTube channels, a TV news script has to tread carefully. The story has to be told in such a manner that it is understood with coherence by the viewer the first time. There is no scope to rewind live TV news. One has to either wait for the next news bulletin, usually an hour later, or refer to other sources if one wants clarity on news. So, a lot weighs on the news scripts for TV broadcast. Remember, if the newscast falls flat because of the script, there is every chance and reason for the viewer to reach for the remote control and move on.

News scripts, like reports by a news reporter in a print or online publication, has to be unbiased and devoid of any opinion of the writer. It has to be fair and objective, with due diligence followed at every step and with no scope for any misinterpretation.

Writing scripts for TV news, like any journalistic endeavour, means having an idea about the audience and how dissemination of that news will impact the audience. This does not mean that the news has to be altered or slanted to make it palatable or sugar-coated for the audience.

A news scriptwriter needs to visualise how the news will be screened and accordingly tailor the script. The video that has to go with the news will be the “pull” factor for the audience, but it will have to be underlined by a good, tight and crisp script. The news writing will be the determining factor for the audience to remain glued to the channel rather than switch to any other. By and large, unless it is an exclusive story or news break, all channels sooner than later will have access to identical visuals. For example, in the recent massive explosion caused by a firecracker cargo in a ship in the Beirut port, all channels had almost exactly the same visuals of the explosion; so, the only deciding factor to choose between the channels would have been the news script.

As in other aspects of our daily living, technology has made even bigger giant strides in television newsroom technology. Newsrooms are of course fully computerized, and has become a great enabler in the process of reporters, producers and editors checking rundowns, preview the video clips and write the script and send it directly for approval and straight to the teleprompter, all with click of few buttons.

Technological advancement has ensured that the reporter’s presence in the newsroom is not imperative. Digital technologies have led to the growth of broadcast journalists who film with portable digital cameras, edit it in the remote locations where they are on field reporting and transmit it directly to the newsroom gizmos including the teleprompter. They can land directly with the news script and the videos packaged together at the editing or producer’s desk for final approval before going on air.

Digital advancements have proved highly significant in determining and bringing an immediacy to the news, with live broadcasting a reality in modern age of telecasting. The news environment had been significantly altered by digital and online journalism, as news organizations now have the ability to gather, produce and transmit information readily and instantaneously to the public.

Senior journalist Eric K Gromly recently said, “Some large market newsrooms hire speciality health, business and science reporters and producers who work exclusively on reports in their fields of expertise. Many major-market newsrooms also have an investigative unit of reporters and producers who spend time developing depth stories.” He goes on to say, “Speed is more important for news telecast than it is for the print. TV is almost always first with the news as a newspaper has to wait for the next morning to give the latest news while a television

channel has several news bulletins in 24 hours. Therefore, TV deadlines are more frequent than that of newspaper deadlines.”

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### **3.3 PEOPLE INVOLVED IN NEWS PRODUCTION**

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Television came to India in 1959 with one channel, which used to air only two kinds of programmes, one targeted at education and students and the other at agriculture, with an hour of daily news.

It continued in the same vein till the mid-1970s, when major cities were awarded their own stations. Also, around the same time, TV transmitted rural programmes to about 2,500 remote and inaccessible villages through a project called the satellite instructional television experiment. And so it went on...for more than 30 years since its inception, TV telecast just one channel: Doordarshan. Slowly, entertainment programmes were commissioned and telecast on Doordarshan; two of the major events beamed live were the 1982 Asiad held in India and the 1983 World Cup, which India won for the first time. Sitcoms, movies and Olympics were part of the Doordarshan programming, but its mainstay was news.

The TV breakthrough came into Indian households slowly and steadily from 1991 when, under the liberalisation policy, programming and channels were opened to private enterprises, but only in sports and entertainment. News dissemination on audio and visual media continued to be under government control. It began with a trickle, as Doordarshan commissioned news programmes for predetermined slots, such as Prannoy Roy's The World This Week, India Today's The News tonight and Aaj Tak. These programmes were produced sleekly and were not staid like Doordarshan news bulletins, which sounded like government press releases. In September, 1995, Asianet News, in Malayalam, became the first private channel to air live news in India; till then, there were Sun and Zee which beamed news, but they were not live.

India has come a long way since then. There were 1.2 million households with television sets in 1992 but now it is in excess of 150 million households, according to KPMG, the professional audit and advisory services multinational. The country which had one channel in 1991 today has 800 channels, across the spectrum, including news, infotainment, entertainment, religious, regional news and entertainment, sports, lifestyle and business.

The South, with Asianet (Malayalam), Sun (Tamil) and Eenadu (Telugu), had channels dedicated to news and current affairs much before Star News which took shape in 1998 as a 24×7 news channel. Aaj Tak of the India Today group became the first full-fledged Hindi news channel in 2000. The independence of many of the channels both in the South, the North and other regions is questionable, because they are owned largely by corporates or politicians.

Today, most channels have shown an inclination to be mouthpieces of the government, either out of fear of reprisal or because of the business interests of the management. Many of them put the government channel, Doordarshan, to shame with their pandering, but that is another story. In the last decade, there has been a deluge of laptops and smartphones but United Nations says, television still rules the roost as the largest source of video consumption.

The television transmission itself has undergone a metamorphosis from analogue to digital. When one talks of TV sets, it has seen transformation from the bulky to the less bulky and now to absolutely sleek and thin ones, with “smart” and HD options too.

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### **3.4 TIPS FOR NEWS SCRIPTS**

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TV broadcasting is a team game. We will touch upon some of the key members that come together to what we see as news on the visual medium. Key members left out here are the cameraman, the technician and the audio engineers, and we are restricting it to people involved in writing news scripts and the presentation. Like in all other media, newsroom at a TV station is a beehive of activity, fast-paced and exciting. Though on paper, there are work hours prescribed for each employee, all these go out of the door in a newsroom; journalists, when it demands, work round-the-clock and a 9-to-5 job is just out of the equation.

The newsroom is the space where stories are discussed, written, put together, edited and assembled for telecasting. The staffing of the newsroom would vary according to the size of the news channel. In a moderately small channel, newsroom could be made of just a few journalists and one or two cameramen. The bigger outlets -- the national channels or big local channels -- usually would have a huge staff though these days, with recession and post-Covid scenario, there have been staff and expenditure cuts. Bigger outlets would include journalists and reporters, an editing desk, cameramen and photographers, sound and light technicians, news desk coordinators, graphic designers.

By and large, newsrooms work in a certain pattern and protocol: Journalists pitch their stories to the senior editors, then it is decided whether the story is newsworthy and the backtiming decided, then all angles of the story are discussed and ensured that all visuals and sound bytes are in place to run the story on air. News script is finally prepared and a quick discussion how it will be shown on air, when the visuals will cut in etc are decided.

Here are the key roles in a TV newsroom:

### **News writers**

News writers write the news - it is as simple as that. These days, producers sometimes take extra responsibility of news writers in the studio.

### **News Editors**

Television news editors write scripts for anchors, apart from writing teasers for promoting stories during breaks and also produce content for the website. Their duty becomes paramount and has the ability to make or break a channel's ratings. Their scripts and conceptualisation should have the draw for the audience, compelling them to stay tuned to the channel without switching to another channel with a click of the remote. News editors have to keep track of the happenings and be quick on their feet and mind to react with alacrity to any breaking news. They ought to be on full alert. They have to coordinate with reporters, anchors, producers, make sure deadlines are strictly maintained and constantly track one's own channel and also the competitions.

### **News Anchor**

The news anchor reads out the stories, keeps in constant touch with reporters on and off air and conducts interviews – often impromptu – of experts on the studio panel and authorities. It is also the job of a news anchor to provide an insight into the stories that are being telecast. News anchors become the face of their channels and some of them become so popular that they draw their own loyal audience to their programme slots. Often, reporters work their way up to become news anchors.

### **Reporters**

Reporters are almost always accompanied by a cameraman who shoots what the reporter wants to convey. TV reporters, unlike non-visual media reporters, are easily recognisable on the streets with microphones in their hands, talking to the camera. Reporters are usually in the thick of action and need to be always ready for spontaneous interviews on camera as the news is unfolding. The aim of a reporter is to not only write and produce a story, but also package it. Reporters are familiar with both analog and digital formats, and tend to edit their own stories with the guidance and supervision of the news editor. Reporters are assigned beats and there would be reporters especially for beats such as health, courts, education and politics.

### **Producer/Editor**

The producer plans and is in charge of the newscast. He is in constant touch with reporters, who are in the field, so that he can plan the day with the news that is coming in. He decides what news get priority and is constantly on high alert. On many TV stations, the producer could be

writing scripts and editing videos too, while working as the conduit between the reporter on the field and the news anchor.

## **News Directors**

News directors plan news broadcasts. They choose and schedule content, making people most responsible for what they see on the air. The news director takes charge and controls quality control. He or she monitors stories for accuracy and sees that rules and regulations are followed. A news director takes charge of controlling newsroom journalistic standards that govern who, what, where, when and why a particular news event is covered – or not covered. News directors make certain that the journalistic integrity of the station remains uncompromised, map out coverage strategies and plan assignments that showcase the talent in ways compatible with the station's image goals. Typically, news directors think long-term and identify future scheduled events and plan coverage around them, allowing a station to take ownership of an event and shine brighter than the competition. News directors must also pre-empt and plan for the unexpected. They should be expected to respond well to any crisis. They should see that they keep the news staff focused and dedicated to their jobs, even under extreme tension and stress.

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## **3.5 HOW TO WRITE NEWS SCRIPTS**

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Since whatever written is to be heard by an audience, lucid writing, with easily pronounceable words, is the fulcrum of any TV news script. If the writing does not make any sense or tends to be too confusing, the channel will lose the audience. All stories, like any news journalism, should answer the 5Ws (who, what, when, where, why).

While writing scripts for TV, there are some broad guidelines that can be followed and can help the scriptwriter:

**Write for the ear:** This is a cardinal advice that every write-up or book on TV news scripts would give. After writing the script, experienced practitioners advise that the script be read aloud once and -- since time in cases of breaking news may not permit it -- quickly. What sounds good on paper may not always sound good to the ear. Unlike a print publication story, in which a passage, sentence or a word can be re-read to understand the story, on TV there are no second chances given to the audience to go back to figure out what they missed out. There is no rewinding on TV.

Also, be careful about using homophones or similar sounding words with different meanings, like rain, reign and rein. Of course, they cannot be totally avoided but if the visual shows a ruler standing in the rain, it is

better to say “the king’s rule came to an end” instead of “the king’s reign came to an end”. Jargons need to be avoided, and keeping it simple should be the motto.

**Stick to the active voice:** Probability of a convoluted and an awkward-sounding sentence increases manifold when it is in passive tense. On TV broadcasting, when an active voice is given to sentences, viewers pick up the meaning better when a linear sequence of subject, verb and action is followed. Follow the basic thumb rule: “The two leaders are signing a treaty” sounds better than “A treaty is being signed by the two leaders.” These are basic examples, but when it is an action-packed story, the listener should not wait till the end of a passive sentence to know what happened. Passive voice takes more words. Ensuring the active voice will ensure that you can pack in more words and hence more information within the allotted time. Also, use present tense as much as possible. Even if the event occurred earlier in the day, come straight to the news in present tense, eg: “The municipal corporation says it will impose tax on garbage...” Present tense brings an immediacy to the news. As the news script progresses, it can go into the past tense like “The announcement came earlier in the day at a press conference held at...”

**Supplement the video:** You should never forget that you are working for a visual medium. The script has to keep in mind the existence of a video, and the commentary should be in sync with the video material that is being aired. A video transports the viewers to the scene of action and it is the script that will help them to make sense of what is happening on the spot.

**Keep your audience in mind:** There is a lot of power in spoken words, tones and visuals. The combination is alluring. The script should not “talk down” to people; the spoken word should be such that it should hook them as if they are as involved in it as you. There are all kinds of stories from the viewers’ viewpoint: it could be informative, affecting their lives directly, entertaining, full of guilty pleasure, or political. Whatever it is, the story has to be told with vigour and enthusiasm that the viewer, even remotely interested, gets hooked on and does not move on to other channels. That brings us to the selection of stories. The role of the reporter, producer, news anchor and the news editor becomes crucial to selecting the story and the time that has to be allotted to each one, and it all boils down to knowing the audience.

**Follow up on the story:** Once you have owned the story, it is to step up the game. For that news, the audience will keep coming back to your channel for updates. If it is a developing story and an interesting one at that, you can leave the viewers in the lurch, so to speak. All good stories have to be followed up and constantly updated with new information.

Following a time-tested formula for a good, evenly-handed script has never failed to deliver:

- Come straight to the point. Always begin the script by informing the viewer about the main development in the story.
- Give background and context to the story. By the second line, four of the 5Ws -- who, what, when and where -- should have been answered by and large.
- Visuals should make a quick appearance and the narration should link to what is being shown on the screen.

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### **3.6 ETHICS IN BROADCASTING**

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Ethics, simply put, is a code of conduct based on moral principles. Ethics is defined as what is good for a person, people and society and has largely been dictated by religions, philosophies and culture.

Media ethics emanate from a similar moral philosophy with specific principles and standards of media, including print, TV, the online and social media, films, theatre and the arts. Media ethics assumes that values such as a universal respect for life and the rule of law and legality would be respected and followed. Media ethics defines and deals with ethical questions about how the media should use texts and pictures.

News can be manipulated. Governments and corporations may attempt to manipulate news media; governments, for example, by censorship. There are subtle yet multiple modes of manipulation. It may be voluntary or involuntary. Those being manipulated may not even be aware of this. Ethical concerns confront journalists time and again in the course of a career. Television journalism is a medium in which non-adherence to ethics can be glaring or at least get more magnified than any other media.

Ethics come in the form of coverage of issues, beginning from the time allotted to each. For a controversial anti-government story, if the story is not allotted in the suitable time, there could be a valid allegation of journalistic ethics being compromised.

As TV news scripts tend to be – and rightly so – conversational in tone, it could come across as approaching the story with casualness or trivialising it. The script and the reporter/ anchor/ newscaster have to take care that light-heartedness and banter should not be mistaken for mockery of a person or situation.

On videos, it is often seen during disasters such as the Mumbai floods, that there are – either out of acts of omission or commission – often video clips of previous major floods, yet it is not mentioned that the videos on TV screens are archive clips and not a contemporary situation being aired on the channel. This misleads viewers and is absolutely an unethical practice.

Television and celebrities are made for each other. There is the likelihood of news channels crossing the line when it comes to celeb coverage. Issues of privacy of an individual come to the fore during these times: these could include a baby being born to a celeb couple or a wedding. Salacious details of the lives of public figures is a central content element in many media forums. Broadcasting is not necessarily justified simply because the information is true. Privacy is also a right, and one that conflicts with free speech.

Central to ethics is media integrity, which refers to the ability of a media outlet to serve the public interest and democratic process, making it resilient to institutional corruption within the media system, conflicting dependence and political hobnobbing. Media integrity encompasses independence from private or political interests, transparency about its own financial interests, commitment to journalism ethics and standards and responsiveness to its readers and citizens.

Ethical journalism is expected to be accurate and fair and those practising it should be honest and courageous in news gathering and reporting. They should verify information, preferably from original sources, before disseminating it. “Reliable sources” that grant anonymity to sources is a norm in many reports these days especially in the Indian media. Anonymity should be reserved for sources who may face danger or retribution for giving out information, which otherwise cannot be obtained. Also, the report should explain why anonymity was granted to the source behind the story or information.

The death of Princess Diana in 1997 in a car accident is still counted as one of the most tragic examples of unethical media. Princess Diana died in an accident when she was being chased by paparazzi, which includes both print and TV cameramen in France. She was the toast of the British tabloids, which were demanding exclusive photos of her from freelance photographers. As a result, she was stalked and chased wherever she went with her partner Dodi Fayed, who also died in the accident.

In India, there was a trend of sting operations in the first decade of 2000. There were a series of exposes, especially by Tehelka, which led to resignations of Union ministers.

In August 2007 Live India, a news channel, conducted a sting operation on a Delhi government schoolteacher forcing a girl student into prostitution. After the “expose”, the teacher was attacked by a mob and was suspended by the Directorate of Education, Government of Delhi. Later investigations revealed that there was no truth to the sting operation. Live India was dragged to the Delhi High Court.

The court proposed a set of guidelines to be followed by news channels and electronic media in carrying out sting operations. The guidelines direct a channel proposing to telecast a sting operation to obtain a certificate from the person who recorded or produced the same, certifying that the operation is genuine to his knowledge. The guidelines propose that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting should set up a committee, which would have the powers to grant permission for telecasting sting operations. The permission to telecast a sting operation should be granted by the committee only if it is satisfied about the overriding public interest to telecast the sting operation. The guidelines mandate that in addition to ensuring accuracy, the operation should not violate a person's right to privacy, "unless there is an identifiable large public interest" for broadcasting or publishing the material. However, the court failed to define what constitutes 'larger public interest'.

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### 3.7 BROADCASTING LINGO

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TV broadcast has its own lingo, and it is imperative to know it for smooth operations on the news floor for all. Here are some of the most prevalent lingo:

**Anchor:** The person who hosts the newscast sitting (or standing, for that matter) in the studio. They are virtually the face of the news channel and are involved actively in the presentation of the news. He or she must be good at diction, understanding of the news and its implication and editing on the go. They must also be good at interviewing studio guest or their reporters, experts or authorities in remote locations.

**Back timing:** A convenient way of counting down the length of a newscast. This tells you how long each story must run in order for your newscast to end on time.

**Beats:** Specific areas of news activity assigned to a specific reporter in the general reporting department (not to be confused with sports and business reporting departments), for instance, high court reporters, health reporters and education reporters.

**B-Roll:** Video that is shot for a TV news story and used to visualize the script the reporter or anchor has written.

**Bumpers:** Small teases (with or without audio/video) that come at the end of one newscast segment, often previewing what is coming up in the rest of the newscast.

**Cold Copy:** Or Rip-n-Read, is a script not seen by an announcer until the moment s/he reads it.

**EZ News:** The newsroom computer software. It allows you to create news rundowns, write stories for newscasts, print scripts and keep teleprompters, all from the same location/server.

**Feed:** A live or recorded report, or a set of recorded reports sent to a station or newsroom via satellite, phone, or other devices for inclusion in a news programme.

**Headlines:** A kind of "tease" read at the beginning of a newscast.

**Lead-in:** Broadcast term for the beginning of a story. A news anchor reads, introducing the story and/or person reporting it.

**Lead story or lead:** The first story in a newscast or segment (in broadcasting) or a story that is above the fold in print. This is considered the most important news story of the day.

**Live shot/Live Report:** A TV news story, during which a news anchor or reporter is live at a remote location. Within this report can be included an SOT, VO/SOT or PKG.

**Natural Sound - aka Nat Sound, Nat S-O-T, or Ambient Sound:** Background voices, music, machinery, waterfalls, and other environmental sounds are recorded on the scene and used to create a sound bed for a recorded or live report. It is primarily used for setting a mood or providing atmosphere for a report. This technique is frequently overused, but when used properly, it adds immeasurably to a story.

**On-Set Appearance:** A reporter appears on set and is introduced by a news anchor. The reporter can then introduce his or her news package or report a story from there.

**Outcue:** Usually the last thing a reporter says in either a live or recorded news story.

**Package (PKG):** A report from a correspondent that contains a sound bite inserted between the introduction and the epilogue (usually inserted after the reporter's second or third sentence). These need an in-studio lead for the anchor.

**Reader or Rdr:** A story read by an anchor without any audio or video.

**Rundown -aka; Lineup:** A chronological outline or order of stories or segments to be used in a newscast. This is the producer's blueprint for the newscast.

**Running Time:** This refers either to the estimated time or the actual time of a newscast. Producers or editors should always estimate the running

time of a newscast based on the actual time of each recorded report and her or his best guess as to the time of each intro and each story to be read by the anchor.

**Satellite feed:** This can be either news or programming feed that is generated from a distant remote location and is transmitted via satellite. Very often, live interviews with news makers or other news people are conducted this way.

**Sound Bed aka natural sound (natsot):** A type of background audio that complements the news report. For instance, the sound of protesters is played underneath the reporter's in-studio story concerning the opening of a nuclear plant.

**Sound bite (SOT):** Edited slice of a newsmaker speaking. Similar to actuality in radio, except that the person can be seen. Often, several SOTs can be spliced together with the edits covered with the video. These can be included in PKGs and VO/SOTs or can stand alone.

**Stand-up:** Part of a package with a reporter on screen reading or presenting information.

**Voiceover (VO):** A TV news story, during which a news anchor or reporter reads a script live as a video is played.

**Voiceover-to-sound (VO/SOT):** A TV news story, during which a news anchor or reporter reads a script live as a video is played up to a place when a news maker's video or audio sound bite is played. At the end of the SOT, the reporter or anchor resumes reading with or without additional video.

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### 3.8 CONCLUSION

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A United Nations report says that despite the spread of streaming and other social media platforms, the television is still the most influential visual media. The importance of news scripts in television news cannot hence be overestimated. Scripting for television news, more than the video clips, is the key functions in a newsroom, and it can make or break the connect that the channel has with its audience.

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### 3.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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1. What is the main reason that TV news script has to be lucid and clear while airing live news?

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2. When did TV come to India? How many channels were being aired?

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3. How many channels approximately are there in India today?

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4. What is the role of news editors at a TV station?

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5. Is the tone and tense important for TV news scripts?

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### 3.10 KEY WORDS

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**RDR:** It stands for Reader, which basically in broadcast lingo means that the anchor reads a script without any video or any external sound byte.

**Vlog:** A blog that contains video material.

**Pandering:** To act in a manner to provide gratification for others' desires.

**Homophone:** One of two or more words pronounced alike but different in meaning or derivation or spelling (such as the words *to*, *too*, and *two*)

**Ethics:** The discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation.

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**UNIT :4****COPYWRITING FOR ADVERTISING  
AND PR****:: STRUCTURE::****4.0 Introduction****4.1 Objectives****4.2 Introduction to Copywriting and Copywriters****4.3 Introduction to Advertising****4.4 Introduction to PR****4.5 Tips for Copywriting****4.6 Role of Copywriting in PR During a Crisis****4.7 Copywriting and Longform****4.8 Conclusion****4.9 Check Your Progress****4.10 Key Words****4.11 References**

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**4.0 INTRODUCTION**

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Everyone advertises and markets their business and organisations. Both non-profit and for-profit organisations have to be seen and heard to reach out not only to their target audience of customers but also to investors. Copywriters are the key to organisations putting forward their thoughts and information to the outside world. Good and persuasive writing, backed by good creative design and other elements, are imperative to both advertising and PR.

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**4.1 OBJECTIVES**

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- To explain how advertising and PR industries work
- To understand copywriting in each industry
- To explore content for all platforms

**On the completion of this unit, you will be able to:**

- Get acquainted with a copywriter's functions
- Understand the semantics in advertising and PR
- Write for advertising and PR in good times as well as in times of crisis

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## **4.2 INTRODUCTION TO COPYWRITING & COPYWRITERS**

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Copywriting is creating content for advertising and marketing a company, a product or a service. Copywriting would involve creating print and other advertisements, brochures, billboards, lyrics for advertisements, sales communiques and promotional messages. Traditionally, that was copywriting.

In the modern world, with social media and online content growing exponentially, copywriting has evolved into web content developers. Copywriting has expanded into website content, e-newsletters, blogs, content generation on FB, Instagram and Twitter among several social media platforms. Most companies hire copywriters who can meet the needs of clients on both social media and traditional content.

Copywriters should be extremely skilled in their writing, so that information is conveyed in a manner that it hits bull's eye for the targeted audience. Both advertising agencies and PR firms employ copywriters, with freelancers also available for specific projects.

Copywriters conceptualise words for any advertisement from small online ones to full-fledged campaigns. Copywriting involves not just words but thinking strategically and creatively and assisting creative directors and designers with visual ideas.

As a career option, the beginner's level is the junior copywriter, graduating slowly to becoming a copywriter, then senior copywriter and then assistant creative director.

While advertising agencies have copywriters on their full-time payroll as part of their creative and art team that ideates and pitches for campaigns, many agencies and PR firms may hire freelance copywriters on a project basis rather than on full pay scales with employee benefits.

Copywriters produce good, clean and readable copies of course, but it has to be enticing enough content for advertisements and marketing. It goes without saying that the language, grammar and accuracy of facts should be adhered to as much by a copywriter as a journalist.

Most organisations hire freelance copywriters they are comfortable working with, but the same copywriter may not be suitable

for the needs of different projects. Organisations need to hire the right copywriter or agency for the campaign. Many journalists go into copywriting in the latter part of their careers.

While hiring a copywriter, it has to be ensured gauging from earlier works -- that he or she has a good command over the language, a repertoire to write for different audiences, contexts and scenarios, pays attention to details and meets deadlines.

Copywriting for marketing and advertising focuses on communicating a new concept or idea and makes it attractive, while for PR it has the basic objective of dissemination of information to stakeholders, which would be investors, employees, clients and the media.

Advertisements are paid for always and are published wherever the client desires them to be, while PR information is published without the client or company having to pay for it if it is of relevance to the media outlet. Many press releases, issued by a PR firm, may not even be carried by any media if it is not considered 'print-worthy'.

Copywriters and agencies are done and dusted with advertisements once they are created and made public either through ads in newspapers, magazines or any other media or through outdoor ads, but any PR material can be open to questioning from the media before publication. Both require extensive research by copywriters. PR content has to be backed by data, which can be readily scrutinised by any publication.

A copywriter for an advertisement has to think like a customer, who is the target audience of the product or service, while a PR copywriter has to put himself or herself in the shoes of a journalist, who should see a valid and interesting story in the press release or information put out by the PR agency. No journalist worth his salt would publish a press release as it is, unless it mentions corporate results. So the PR agency has to "sell" an overall story, in which the client and company it is representing are also featured prominently.

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### **4.3 INTRODUCTION TO ADVERTISING**

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For understanding and knowing copywriting, it is necessary to get in-depth knowledge of what advertising and PR entail. In this section, we will get a grasp of advertising and in the next, PR. After the two sections, it would be only to underline the importance of copywriting in both the fields.



Marketing guru Philip Kotler says, “Advertising is any paid form of non-personal presentation & promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor.” The Advertising Association of the UK defines it as “any communication, usually paid for, specifically intended to inform and/or influence one or more people”.

Advertising is communicated through various mass media, including newspapers, magazines, television, radio, outdoor advertising or direct mail; new media through search results, blogs, social media, websites or text messages.

Commercial ads target enhancing consumption of their products or services through "branding". They automatically link a product's name or image with specific qualities that would get associated in the minds of consumers. On the other hand, ads that intend to elicit immediate sale are known as direct-response advertising. Non-commercial entities that advertise more than consumer products or services include political parties, interest groups, religious organisations and governmental agencies. Non-profit organisations may use free modes of persuasion, such as a public service announcement. Advertising may also help to reassure employees or shareholders that a company is viable or successful.

Worldwide spending on advertising in 2015 amounted to an estimated \$529.43 billion.

Above the line, below the line and through the line are three types of advertising; they are classified as such according to their level of penetration. Above-the-line includes activities that are general and reach a wide audience. These are usually done through newspapers and magazines, television and radio channels and hoardings. Below-the-line advertising targets are more focused, trying to reach a specific audience through direct mailers, trade shows, catalogues and digitally, cookie-based advertising. Through-the-line combines the other two strategies and the integration is crucial in today's world of tech evolution and the 360-degree blitzkrieg that is imperative for getting noticed.

There is a third form – an informal one -- and considered probably the best form of advertising: it is mouth-to-mouth advertising, in which individuals, who have tried out a product, brand or service recommend it to others.

Modern-day advertising takes shape in forms of product placements in films, social media marketing and sponsored articles, or what are called branded content. The latter form of online advertising is one of the major trends in promoting one's brands or products these days. Businesses write quality articles on topics related to the products and services they offer. It helps them publicise their offerings in the form of articles written by copywriters.

Advertisements become the weapons that can enhance brand awareness as well as its exposure in a particular market. Informing

potential customers about the brand and its products is the first step to attain business goals.

So, every business or vocation advertises. Even announcing the name, profession and educational degrees in an office signboard facing the road is advertisement, so one can say that doctors and lawyers too advertise. Signboards on shop fronts are also advertisements, letting pedestrians, motorists and communities in and around know what the shop is peddling.

Any business – organisation, brand, retail chain, or small retailer – feels the need to advertise to create awareness about themselves and attract attention.

Advertising has numerous advantages, especially while launching a product and achieving economies of scale by increasing the consumer demand and the market. Brand building through advertising helps in creating awareness for a product and retaining customers.

Everyone needs to advertise, though only the magnitude, and accordingly the medium, varies. A big brand may use the entire media for promoting its products— billboards, newspapers, television, radio and online. A niche brand may do just targeted advertising through social media. A small retail business may just be able to afford doing up the shop front, though most these days are on Instagram or Facebook to publicise themselves. Many small businesses become successful because of mouth-to-mouth advertisements, when customers talk positively about their products or shops.



The sole purpose of a business is to sell products and services to earn profits. Advertising helps business to earn profits by enabling more people to know about products and services, thus resulting in more sales. The consumers, on the other hand, will never get to know about the products and services if they are not advertised.

This has further led to the development of new advertising techniques and an increase in the number of advertising agencies available today. The

aim of every promotional campaign is to enable products to reach the right people by increasing awareness about a product and its benefits. This is important for the success of business.

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#### **4.4 INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC RELATION**

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A major component of advertising is copywriting; it is equivalent to a reporter's job in journalism. An advertising copy is basically the main text with the catchphrase and headline in any advertisement and this is what communicates to the potential customer about the product/services/brand. Unlike

the reporter's copy, the text in advertisement is crisp, short and to the point to capture the essence of the product or a company's vision. For a TV advertisement, the text could be just a few seconds, conveyed through a conversation or voice-over; for publications, it could be a pithy sentence or punch line to draw the attention of the reader; for online, it could be both a video and a poster ad. The copywriter's job is that of dialogue and script writers combined.

The product's job is to satisfy the customer, and the copywriter's job is to make the product satiable and irresistible to the customer.

As in journalism, what catches the attention of the reader/viewer is the headline and then the text: a crisp one that captures the merits and qualities of a consumer product that is the most popular. That is not a hard and fast rule; as ad guru David Ogilvy says, "People do read lengthy advertisements if they are skilfully written."

A tremendous amount of research and brainstorming over the target audience and other factors, including competition and their positioning goes behind a good ad copy. Inputs are needed from all possible sources, both external and internal, before a copywriter can start on the job of producing an impressive ad copy for the campaign that is planned by the agency and the client.

The ad copy would be fun, comic, vigorous, with the right punch lines and catchphrases and, at the same time, must come across as honest, so that it exudes trust in the product. It should also be in line with the guidelines and ethics as laid down by the advertising's governing body of the respective country.

There are various methods to present an ad copy to influence the minds of the target audience. Some of the time-tested types of advertisement copies are:

- **Human interest:** appeals to the five senses and emotions rather than the intellect, usually includes edible products.
- **Institutional:** promotes an organisation, builds goodwill in the minds of the customers and its clients/retailers/suppliers. Helps in the run-up to an IPO.
- **Suggestive:** conveys a message directly or indirectly and leaves much to the imagination of the reader.
- **Expository:** is straightforward and has clarity. Any new bank scheme to be launched needs to be to the point.
- **Reason why?:** The justification to possess a product makes it compelling for the potential customer. Usually testimonials, third-party certificates like approvals from authorities and success in other regions carry weight.
- **Educational:** The consumer needs to know details to make an informed decision, such as an insurance scheme or tax benefit scheme.

It is important for a copywriter to understand what is branding and positioning, in order to be better at delivering what a product requires.

Branding promises positive user experiences for a client's products or services. Positioning, by creating an image of a unique or different product, makes it compelling for people to show an inclination to your product and brand rather than that of a competing brand.

Branding and positioning are two important marketing terms. But while they are related to each other, they have very distinct meanings important for business leaders to understand. Even the smallest companies need to spend time considering how they would like to be perceived by their desired market segments. The first step, of course, is determining which markets to serve, who is already serving those markets and how these competitors may differ.

Then organisations need to consider how they wish to be perceived by certain market segments, understand how they are currently perceived and take steps to close those gaps. Positioning involves claiming a position or reputation in a market--or several markets--for a company, product or service.

The first step in positioning is specifically identifying the markets to be served; these can be local, regional, national or even international.

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## 4.5 TIPS FOR COPYWRITING

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Public relations (PR) is the method through which organisations and companies, and these days even individuals (celebrities mainly), communicate with people through the media, both traditional and social. In other words, the practice of maintaining a healthy relationship between an organisation/company/individual and its target audience: employees, stakeholders, investors or banks is called public relations. Public relation activities ensure the correct flow of information between an organisation and its target audience.

There are specialised PR firms, which are employed by organisations and companies if they want to convey any new project, their point of view on any topic, or disseminate any information to the media and the public. This is done usually through press releases, press conferences, seminars, the organisation's website and social media platforms.

The main aim of PR is to create a good public perception. Usually, companies think of PR when there is a full-blown crisis, like Nestle had with Maggi a few years back, Cadbury's with its worm-infested chocolate in the early 2000s and Vedanta Resources' regular tryst with controversy, in Odisha and Tuticorin in Tamil Nadu.

The Public Relations Society of America defines public relations as:

- Anticipating, analysing and interpreting public opinion, attitudes and issues that might impact, for good or ill, the operations and plans of an organization.
- Counselling management at all levels in the organization with regard to policy decisions, courses of action and communication, taking into account their public ramifications and the organization's social or citizenship responsibilities.
- Researching, conducting and evaluating, on a continuing basis, programmes of action and communication to achieve the informed public understanding necessary for the success of an organization's aims. These may include marketing, financial, fund raising, employee, community or government relations and other programmes.
- Planning and implementing an organisation's efforts to influence or change public policy. Setting objectives, planning, budgeting, recruiting and training staff and developing facilities — in short, managing the resources needed to perform all of the above.

A PR professional helps the company create a strong image in the eyes of the customers, media and investors; the positive public image thus created helps in forging a strong relationship between the brand and the customers, which in turn leads to increase in sales.

Many journalists, with many years of experience and a vast network of friends among journalists, go for a second career in PR. Companies like to hire them because of the access they have to the media and also because they should be able to pitch a story when there is one.

In India, a central publicity board set up by the then British-ruled government during the first World War (1914-1918) is recorded in authoritative textbooks on PR as the first organized PR/Information set up. It was renamed as the Central Bureau of Information, later renamed as Bureau of Public Information.

In the private sector, it was the JRD-headed Tata Group that was the first, in 1943, to have a full-fledged PR department, which was helmed by Minoo Masani.

Most companies and organisations these days outsource the function of public relations. An external agency is chosen to represent the company for PR activities. There are some companies which still have in-house PR departments.

Clear communications objectives have been set by the PR department, and that should include the target audience, which could range from shareholders, employees, bankers and investors to the general public, and the form in which the information will be shared, whether through press releases, press conferences or an exclusive interview with the journalist of a leading publication. For any PR to be successful, budgets would have to be allocated and campaigns has to be constantly on the radar of the team.

Campaign messages are an important component of the plan and copywriters should ensure that the messages are direct and lucid. They communicate information that help to influence the target audience. The heart of public relations is not to sell any product, but to create a positive image of the company and improve it, if necessary. To repeat it is a deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organisation and its stakeholders.

Effective public relations requires a knowledge, based on analysis and understanding, of all the factors that influence public attitudes toward an organisation. While a specific public relations project or campaign may be undertaken proactively or reactively (to manage some sort of image crisis), the first basic step in either case involves analysis and research to identify all the relevant factors of a situation. In this first step, the organization gains an understanding of its various constituencies and the key factors that are influencing their perceptions of the organization.

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## **4.6 ROLE OF COPYWRITING IN PR DURING A CRISIS**

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PR writers, like journalists, need to have an impeccable language. In fact, PR writers have to be that much extra careful about their writing, because journalists would roast any bad copy reaching them. Also, PR writers more often than not would have the luxury of a sub-editor correcting their copy.

PR writer's job is all the more difficult because they have to write effectively, make their pitch easy to understand and yet engaging to impress the journalists and increase the probability of it reaching the newspaper or any other publication, which is the ultimate aim.

Planning the pitch with regard to the objectives, the target audience and the list of publications that could achieve these for you is a good beginning. It always helps if the journalists are subtly navigated to the relevance of the pitch in the bigger context. So the storytelling by the PR writer has to be spot on to make journalists interested.

The career marketplace is always looking for good writers in both PR and journalism. A PR specialist is usually required to have a relevant type and level of education such as a Bachelor's degree in communications or journalism. A PR specialist needs certain skills (they are acquired through additional education and training) in the first place, including excellent writing and verbal communication skills. But a PR specialist also must know to work under pressure and be able to answer a variety of questions including unpleasant ones. For example, if the client is under a public "attack", a PR specialist needs to establish a control over the situation and protect the client's good reputation.

Corporate communications is all communication activities undertaken by the organisation. Internally, it is to keep the information flow smooth and boost the image of the company or organisation with all the employees. An internal newsletter, printed or emailed, lets each employee know what is happening in each department, or alerts staff to any upcoming event in the organisation. Externally, the functions of a corporate communication team could include writing annual reports to participating in community outreach programmes.

Corporate Communications and Public Relations work closely with each other, with almost the same target audience and messages. Both depend on each other to position an organisation in the eyes of its stakeholders, clients and consumers.

Corporate Communications mainly deals with the written and, at times, oral communication that needs to be done in order to keep all the stakeholders informed of a company's vision, mission and strategic objectives. For communicating externally, website, social media, advertisements, brochures, newsletters and annual reports are the mediums while within, emails, minutes of meetings and intranet are the preferred platforms.

As far public relations is concerned, one works closely with management in identifying, building and nurturing relationships between the company and various stakeholders. Obviously, good communication is inherent in this capability – both written and spoken. The key to building these relationships is promoting your organisation's reputation through highly visible channels, using reporters and editors to communicate to your employer, based on the information you provide.

A natural communicator is an invaluable resource for all internal and external communications. It's more difficult if you have solely corporate communications experience – and no experience working with media – to fill a public relations position that requires media relations expertise. Like most relationships, building a credulous relationship with the media takes

time and many organisations will favour established relationships while hiring for PR positions.

If writing is a passion, interacting with the media is exciting. If you have an analytical and business bent of mind, you can enjoy managing and overseeing outreach programmes, while corporate communications could be an attractive and paying career. Moreover, use of advanced technology tools like digital and social media, as well as data mining to arrive at targeted messaging and get better results for the efforts would make the profession seem rather cool. Staying ahead of the curve in the digital world, whether it be mobile applications, social media or hashtags, virtual reality and other immersive technology would go a long way in ensuring success as a corporate communications professional, like a copywriter.

### **Role of copywriting in PR during a crisis**

When a crisis hits a company or organisation, it doesn't come with a warning. It is sudden and becomes full-blown before you realise it, especially in these days of Twitter and Facebook. As sudden as it is, the response also has to be swift, and on all platforms.

The PR agency should ensure that there is a constant information flow soon after the crisis has cropped up. The response should be honest and has to be seen as honest. Lying or subterfuge will only worsen the situation, so keeping it simple and straight should be part of the strategy. That will show that the company is aware and gripped of the situation and is concerned. Information should be shared with the public, employees and stakeholders swiftly and constantly, through newspapers, visual media, websites and social media platforms.

Faced with a crisis, a PR professional will evaluate it and the surrounding context, so that a well-thought out solution can be presented to manage it. For example, a PR professional could advise the organisation about which audiences they should address first while making a public announcement, which terms they should avoid using and how they should consider getting their message out to the right people.

When an issue involving a crisis is in the public domain, a public relations executive working with the company has to go on an overdrive and have responses in place to mitigate the damage. This means that they respond to what's happening in the media and offer constantly updated advice on how to handle a situation. For instance, they might draft support materials and statements on behalf of the client, so that the company is ready to answer any questions presented by publications or journalists connected to the industry.

On the other hand, a PR professional might take over making statements on behalf of the business entirely, while simultaneously scheduling meetings and interviews with the press to make sure that the company is shown in a good light. It is PR executive's responsibility and expertise to advise the company ways to tackle the crisis without the brand losing its customer loyalty or faith of the other stakeholders like investors and

stakeholders. Once the crisis has blown over, that will not be the end of it for the PR agency. They will have their hands full in planning strategies for the client to get their reputation back. For instance, they might create a plan for a marketing strategy that draws more attention to the positive aspects of the brand's personality.

One of the strategies would involve organising press interviews with leading publications and writing out smart and persuasive press releases to divert and make forget the crisis that rocked the company a while back and getting across the message that "all is well". If handled well, the experience could become a case study for managing any other crises that may arise in future.

Each crisis may differ and hence the response would also differ. Some crisis may require the organisation to respond aggressively and take on the perpetrator or originator of the crisis head-on. Some may prompt an unconditional and honest apology to mitigate the situation. Some may require taking legal action. Some may need wooing the customers with offers and deep discounts.

The media and social media have to be involved at all stages of these crisis mitigation exercises. Not only should media be aware of the steps that a company is taking so that it can in turn inform its readers, but there should also be direct communication from the company to its employees and shareholders.

In India, there have been instances of PR disasters. In June 2015 to be precise, Nestle faced a major crisis when its flagship brand Maggi Noodles was banned across the country, after government authorities said that their lab tests found that Maggi contained high levels of lead and MSG. It then had 63% market share in the Rs 5,000-crore noodle segment. The ban gave entry points to competitors like ITC and the new entrant and emerging player of the Patanjali group headed by Baba Ramdev. It was only after two months that Nestle got a mandate from the courts to continue production under strict supervision.

Massive damage had been done in the interim period; a brand trusted by mothers to feed a quick tasty meal to kids had lost its credibility. The response from the company initially was poor; it could have nipped it in the bud in April 2015 when it got a notice from the FDA regarding lead levels, but it didn't even care to respond to the FDA before it became a full-blown crisis. Even after it became a crisis, the company didn't initially communicate with either consumers or the media. It was only later that the company launched a blitzkrieg convincing the public of the safety and worked with the media to put out information on the steps they had taken to satisfy the courts and the FDA. Today, it has regained its market share.

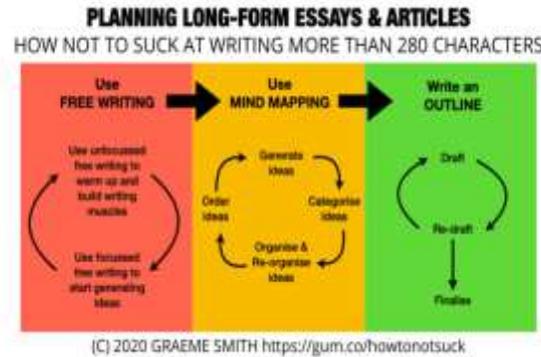
Another PR disaster took place in 2003, when worms were found in Cadbury Dairy Milk in Mumbai. Cadbury stopped advertising for a month and went into an overdrive mode to show consumers that they cared. They imported state-of-the-art machinery for Rs 15 crore, changed the packaging and roped in Big B to assure the public of the quality

practices they had undertaken. The also started Project ‘Vishwas’, an education initiative for 200,000 retailers.

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## 4.7 COPYWRITING AND LONGFORM

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Longform comprises articles which are usually 1,500 words or more, and are considered a major differentiator and game changer in journalism. Longform has found its niche and place in journalism for telling

in-depth, well-researched stories articulated with panache, to hold the reader enthralled through the entire 2,000-4,000-word piece. Now it is finding its niche in brand promotion and marketing. Copywriters who can specialise in longform or can do both longform and regular/conventional content are a major asset to the organisation and the agency.

In the realm of content marketing, brands are full of stories related to their inception, ups and downs, transformation, customer-centric tales and so on. Longform is turning out to be a great marketing tool to connect with customers, build brand loyalty and positioning of the company and the brand.

Stories are built around the brand, and if there are stories and interesting ones at that, there will be takers for it. Storytelling creates a buzz around the brand and gets talked about; it becomes a great ice-breaker and has a cool quotient about it.

Longform storytelling for brands and companies raises curiosity about them, develops an immediate connect on an emotional matrix with the customers and sets one apart from the others (read competition) in the same arena.

If a copywriter can produce longform content from time to time, apart from the short, smart and chic content, the person is looking at a long-time and successful career.

Like in journalism, longform as a marketing strategy for brands also has a better shelf life than short-form stories. It all depends on how you want to position your brand. Short-term content of 500 words and less can exist alongside on various social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram and on blogs, but it will have to be constant and churned out regularly to keep the brand recall at a high level.

Longform content positions the brand exclusively and the story lives on much longer than short-term content. Longform gives gravitas to the brand and makes the customers proud of their association. Longform with high-quality photographs, graphs and graphics, with some video thrown in the process of the brand manufacturing and employee connect...all

these help create an image of the brand that no advertisement or short-form content, with limited shelf life, can achieve.

As in journalism, longform for brands and companies as a marketing tool gets to be up there on SEO ratings. Google search results throw up longform on its first pages. Moreover, longform gets shared more by customers on social media platforms and that – word of mouth coming from customers who have put faith in the brand -- is the best marketing strategy possible.

Two online media audit companies -- MOZ and Buzzsumo – came together a few years back, analysed over a million articles and found that longform content gets shared five times more than shorter form. Its study found that articles of less than 1,000 words had around 2,800 shares on social media platform, while articles of more than 1,000 words to 10,000 words got around 13,500 shares. That, by any standards, is mighty impressive.

In big corporates, the CEOs and the top management share their personal success stories, how they came up in life and their ideas and concepts that have helped the company succeed. These connect not only with the customers and suppliers but also with the employees, when told with compassion and humour. Marketing is subtle in these cases and when the copywriting (read ghost writing) is eloquent, it creates a great connect with the stakeholders.

Longform narratives work best when the story to be told of the brand and the company, on how it took seed as an idea and how it grew from strength to strength to reach the market position it is occupying now. Corporates, especially tech companies, have longform articles to forecast what is in store in the future, while tracing the strides that have taken to reach where they are today.

Ann Handley, an expert on online platforms and content marketing, says: “We marketers have a lot of noise to contend with. I’ve been talking a lot recently about the need to approach business and marketing with a mindset of As Slow As Possible (ASAP). I view the trend toward long-form and substantive content as another example of the shift toward slow marketing and slow content marketing.”

She goes on to say that “slow content marketing is slowly conceived, well-executed, substantive work that tells a memorable story. It sustains both marketers and our audiences long-term.”

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## **4.8 CONCLUSION**

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Copywriting is a great career with job opportunities in varied and interesting fields. There is immense dearth of good copywriters in both advertising and PR industries. Though the designation nomenclature is the same, “copywriter” job profiles required for the two industries are a world apart; the copywriter needs a different mindset and skills for each industry.

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## 4.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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1. Do copywriters need to be adept at both traditional and social media content writing?

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2. What are the three broad parameters of advertising?

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3. Do copywriters need to know marketing and advertising concepts of branding and positioning?

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4. Does a copywriter need to do research before getting on to writing?

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5. Does copywriting in PR involve only putting out positive stories?

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## 4.10 KEY WORDS

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**Non-profit organisation:** Not conducted or maintained for the purpose of making a profit. **Semantics:** The language used (as in advertising or

political propaganda) to achieve a desired effect on an audience especially through the use of words with novel or dual meanings.

**Dissemination:** The act or process of disseminating or spreading something like, in this context, information and news.

**Human interest:** A quality that attracts attention because it involves the experiences of real people. **Marketplace:** The world of trade or economic activity; the everyday world.

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**:: STRUCTURE::**

- 5.0 Introduction**
- 5.1 Objectives**
- 5.2 What is a Business Report?**
- 5.3 The Significance of Business Reporting**
- 5.4 Types of Business Reports**
- 5.5 Integrated Business Reporting**
- 5.6 Vision and Mission Statements**
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**5.0 INTRODUCTION**

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Business reports are an integral part of any organisation. They provide the information, analysis and numbers for the business, its present health, future growth and expansion. Business reports also form the regulatory process and mandatory documentation. Business reports have to be concise and easy to read and bring to fore writing skills, which are lucid and reflect clarity of thought.

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**5.1 OBJECTIVES**

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- To prepare students in the craft of business reporting
- To know the importance of business reporting
- To familiarise learners with various types of business reports

**On the completion of this unit, you will be able to:**

- Write business reports for all types of organisations
- Make points lucidly with graphs and illustrations
- Write mission and vision statements

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## 5.2 WHAT IS A BUSINESS REPORT?

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Business reports are an integral part of any corporate structure or businesses. Business reports assess and analyse a problem or situation and provide suggestions and solutions by application of business concepts.

A business report fits any business-oriented purpose and objective. It uses internal and external business information to guide management teams to take steps and decisions in the right direction for business to flourish. In the long run, it helps to reduce costs and wastage of time and avoid reinvention of the wheel.

There are business reports that are regulatory in nature and have to be submitted to the authorities, usually in a format that is predetermined. Internally too, there could be a template for practical reasons:

1. If there are reports of the same nature regularly produced, then it is easier to compare.
2. Employees could keep changing and there is consistency and continuity, without having to reinvent the wheel.

Business reports usually help to examine problems and tackle them effectively. During the academic years, all the business and management lessons one learns can be put to use in a practical situation and that is the most essential part of business reports. A business report not only provides the solution but also expands on the methodologies, analysis, logic or reasoning and assessments applied to recognise problems and enlist the various alternatives that were under consideration to resolve the issue.

The idea of showing the various solutions that were available is to weigh the cost and the benefits for each option; this helps in creating a template in case a similar problem arises and if the options have to be explored again.

Business reports give insights that can track the performance, growth, indicate trends and even be pointers to any misappropriation of funds or

other deviations. Business reports encourage transparency in organisations.

Readership for business reports may vary according to the issue; the reader could be anyone from the CEO, managing director and board of directors to shareholders.

The objective of a business report is to give critical inputs, to keep abreast of the performance in each department and profit centre of the organisation and holistically too. Business reports provide the instruments to assist in taking decisions for the leadership teams in the company and solve vexing issues. Business reports help in monitoring and measuring performance in almost all the areas of the operations.

These reports have to be concise, to the point, and easy to comprehend. Usually, they are not in a running text with chunky paragraphs, but instead are full of highlighted points, preferably bulleted. Wherever it merits, it is supported with graphs and tables. Though the points of both the problems and suggestions are bulleted, it does not mean one can take liberty with the language and have half sentences. Both in terms of grammar and presentation, there should be as much simplicity and brevity in presentation as good English.

After the presentation is made, based on the information collected and reviewed, results and steps to be taken are placed before those in leadership roles for a decision and the next course of action.

All in all, business reporting helps to set the goals and achievements – vision and mission statements – for the company, strategise and follow the growth trajectory and comply with regulations and adhere to good practices.

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### **5.3 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BUSINESS REPORTING**

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It is extremely important to know how to structure a business report. In fact, knowing the structure would facilitate and ease the actual writing of the report.

Irrespective of whether the report is formal or informal, the grammar, spellings and information have to be spot on. When it is informal, it is so only in the manner of dissemination – say via email and not printed documents, which are circulated – or through tone, when it is a short report to the department juniors. So it can be differentiated as business letter and business report.

Business letters are often just a page and never go beyond two or three pages. Business reports are lengthier and follow a format with a contents

page, introduction, overview, heading and conclusion, with graphs and charts thrown in for good measure across the report.

Many a time, companies and organisations have a template for business reports. Formats serve a dual purpose of ensuring continuity and consistency if there is turnover of employees or managers who oversee the reports and secondly, similar reports on a recurring matter make them easily comparable.

If there is no format, you can devise your own style of writing reports. A few sequences should be borne in mind while writing business reports.

Start with the subject/headline. It should announce the issue that is being tackled, eg: “Report on sales promotions”. The date or at least the month and year of the report should be mentioned, along with the author of the report and the designation.

If it is a long report on a complex matter, you would need to have a contents page; obviously it would be the last part of the report to be keyed in, because it is only after the report is done that you would know the name of each section or chapter and the pages they are appearing in.

The report would start then with a brief introduction, which generally would summarise the problem and give an overview of how it is affecting the company/organisation and how resolving it would reap benefits. It could be followed by a page of glossary, abbreviations used and their full forms.

The report should begin by identifying the issue that is plaguing the company and detail how it has had an adverse impact on the functioning of the organisation. Then, it should suggest various ways to tackle it, with inputs from various departments. It should also list the pros and cons of going with each answer to the problem in hand and suggest the best option to resolve the crisis. The document should be so thorough that it should be self-evident that the matter has been investigated threadbare, including statistical data, all opinions, and solutions.

Graphics, tables and other illustrations along with relevant information should be judiciously used.

The next chapter would be the conclusion, which would be the summation of the findings and recommendations.

If there are appendices to include any maps, charts or book extracts, it could be attached to the report in the end. Each appendix should be clearly marked and demarcated for easy reference.

## **Section 2: The significance of business reporting**

Business reporting plays a stellar role in the decision-making process of any organisation and company. It is a key ingredient in a successful,

result-oriented company. These reports give an overview and insight into the top management teams on crucial aspects, such as expenditure, bottom line, profits and future projections.

A well-rounded, in-depth and well-analysed report goes a long way in predicting future trends in the industry and for the company, prepare marketing strategies, point towards wasteful spending and resultant cost-cutting, and plan for sales pitches and shoring up revenues.

Those in supervisory and leadership roles make good use of business reports, as it points towards trends and problem areas and helps track business progress and suggest growth areas. These reports help in taking informed decisions.

Good business practices like transparency are also encouraged, apart from meeting legal requirements, such as filing of annual reports, audited data, declarations to the regulatory bodies like stock exchange and other key information about the company. Business reports can help benchmark the organisation vis-à-vis its peers and competitors from time to time.

Business reports help track the work culture and work activities in the organisation. A detailed business report captures the entire workings of all the departments; in behemoth organisations it is virtually impossible to take full advantage of business reports, but you can still have an overview of the functioning and rely on detailed business reports whenever issues crop up. Once problems arise, business reports can help in big organisations to dissect them in the department where it is happening and find solutions. Once the solutions are available, the experience can be shared with other departments to adapt to, whenever similar situations arise.

Business reports tend to become part of a company's culture and good practices and are more often than not used to bring about improvement and betterment in workplaces. Business reports, which are the encyclopaedia of each and every aspect and activity of the company or the organisation, help in motivating its workforce and try to maximise teamwork and get rid of silos.

Significance of business reports cannot be overestimated, as they monitor and highlight issues that are plaguing the company and help in aiming for higher growth and profits.

Especially in modern workplaces, which have almost become paperless, business reports are looked down upon. The process of preparing and reading reports may seem a tedious exercise for both the managers and the team, but if you want a high-performance and motivated organisation,

reports have to be an integral part of the grind. To make it more palatable to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century workplace, business reports are nothing but data analytics.

It brings all employees on the same page and makes them feel invested. It helps working in unison towards resolving the same issues and achieving the same goal.

With an incisive analytics and business intelligence in place, the company tends to benefit immensely with the value the business reports bring in. It impacts positively the workplace environment and the way decisions are taken, with full knowledge and awareness. Business reports, to emphasise again, help in increasing productivity, lead to employee satisfaction overall, improve decision-making processes and analysing issues and factors affecting the company and integrate the organisation, making it more collaborative.

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## 5.4 TYPES OF BUSINESS REPORTS

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Business reports take various forms and shapes, and each has its specific ends. It could be broadly classified to target analyses of the market, the trends, finances, operations, inventory and performance. The basic types of business reports include:

**Business plans:** A business plan is a detailed document that is created before the business is set up. It lists the promoters of the business, the logo, the nature of the business, the market and demography target, the money that would be required initially and at every stage of the business, goalposts for the business and how to achieve them. It is a road map for a new business, and the detailed text would be accompanied by excel worksheets full of numbers and permutations and combinations over several years of spend and incomes. Business plans form the basis for finance from investors and/or banks.

**Inventory reports:** Inventory management is one of the keys to the success of any business. Maintaining up-to-date records of inventory is a must. Every detail regarding entry and exit of inventory, including the time in the warehouse has to be recorded accurately. This helps in detecting any theft, or loss, and in inventory management by keeping track of dead stock and other information.

**Growth projection reports:** This involves tracking the market and projecting the future for the company. Analysis of the market, gathering information from the retailers, wholesalers and own sales team should be a constant endeavour for any company and will lead to better planning – both strategically and budgetarily to have an edge over competitors.

**Trend analysis reports:** Statisticians and analysts in the company have to monitor macro trends such as changes in consumer tastes and any tectonic shift in demographic groups. In the field of entertainment, with

new streaming platforms, producers and programmers have to keep changing their content with changes in the preferences in mind and coming up with fresher ideas and programmes to satiate the demand.

**Financial reports:** These are prepared without fail by all companies, both as a mandatory requirement and also to keep track of the revenue and as indicator to profit achievements. These are compared with the cause-and-effect of budgeted amount to the revenue as also any major deviation from the forecasts made in the business plans.

**Productivity reports:** Any productivity report would expose the efficiency or the lack of it in any company and should lead to changes in the operations to improve productivity. A detailed business report can expose the lacunae in the system, which is keeping down the productivity and can suggest remedial measures.

**Performance reports:** No business can thrive without setting benchmarks and business objectives. So, it has to keep producing reports that will track its performances over a period of time and from time to time, and keep changing goalposts.

Considering all these reports, business reports carry out the task of documenting and tracking the path of progress of the company and the organisation by collecting all kinds of data. It is the guiding light for strategies, decision making, budget planning and forecast planning for future months and years.

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## **5.5 INTEGRATED BUSINESS REPORTING**

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Integrated reporting is a statement that helps in value creation of the organisation for the short, medium and long term. It spells out the company's prospects, planning, performance, strategy, troubleshooting tactics and corporate governance.

Integrated reporting brings together all aspects of business reporting into a holistic presentation, giving an insight into the functioning of the organisation and its operations in a lucid, compact and accessible manner. Lots of business organisations, in spite of the best of efforts not to, work in silos. An integrated business approach will bring all the stakeholders on the same page in matters of company strategies, governance issues, growth and performance, employee and customer satisfaction and the entire gamut. It is the best way to break down the silos that inevitably exist in all organisations and bring about a sense of amalgamation of profit centres, resources and functions. Integrated reports allow for retrospection – looking back at past performances and learning from them. Introspection of present performance and challenges can help to shape the future of the company and create sustainable brand value for the long term.

In these days of venture capital investments, disclosure norms become extremely crucial and information should be on fingertips for putting to rest any doubts that the investors – both existing and potential – could have. Information has to go beyond the financial statements and accounts books in today’s disruptive world, to attract funds from investors based on valuation and future projections.

Investors need to have complete information on risks ahead on all fronts including government regulations and competition, innovation and adaptability, logistical scaling up, human resource management and cost-benefit analysis.

In an interview to an Indian business daily in 2017, Richard Howitt, Chief Executive Officer of the US-based International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC), said: “Over the last decade, many businesses and investors realised that conventional reporting is too complex, lacks relevance and wasn’t enabling them to communicate with each other sufficiently. Annual reports had evolved to be backward-looking and much more for the regulator than for the business itself.”

He goes on to say: “Integrated Reporting turns that on its head. First and foremost, it is a vehicle for long-term value creation for and by the business itself. It helps them think, plan and report the story of their business.”

In the Indian context, Howitt says: “India is fast growing as an economic player in the world, with its own capital markets developing and Indian companies becoming major global businesses in their own right. It is no coincidence that the BRICS economies – including India – are some of the leading countries for implementation of Integrated Reporting. It can help ‘fast track’ good international reputation for companies and for the whole country. It can help overcome concerns about corporate governance and demonstrate responsible leadership. It can put Indian companies at the heart of today’s international debates about maintaining trust in business, shifting to long-term investment and of inclusive capitalism.”

The IIRC, in partnership with communication consultancy Black Sun, had recently conducted research on “Realizing the benefits: The impact of Integrated Reporting”. The research concluded that integrated reporting has had a significant and positive impact on businesses who have taken a lead on “making their corporate reporting and thinking fit for purpose”. The council said: “Integrated reporting in these companies have ensured that both performance and value creation is better understood by the business itself, their providers of financial capital and their key stakeholders.”

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## 5.6 VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS

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Both mission and vision statements are important parts of business reporting. Mission and vision statements could be said to be starting points of business reporting, which lay down the path for performance, growth, customer relations, employee participation and value proposition of the company.

A mission statement is a concise and simple declaration that proclaims the organisation and company's goals for all its stakeholders—investors, management, employees, customers and the community.

Over a period of time, a succinct and lucid mission statement becomes an integral aspect of the company's culture. If the company is on the right path, every person working in the company from the top management to the freshest recruit would have faith in the mission statement and become ambassadors of the company to spread and make true its mission.

A vision statement envisages the growth and future of the company and what it aims to be by a certain age. Typically, it reveals the ambition of the company in five to 10 years, and is the mantra for employees only.

A mission statement is not more than a sentence, as also a vision statement, which never exceeds a sentence or two.

A vision statement puts forth the plan for the organisation for the long term, spanning five years and beyond, and mostly targeted internally at the employees, so that they can follow and believe in the path that has been laid out in the vision statement and participate productively in its objectives. It is a short statement.

Both the mission and vision statements give a clear big picture to the stakeholders – investors, shareholders, bankers, employees, suppliers and customers – of what the company is about, the values it would pursue and inculcate, what the business means to it, its profits, its commitment to the community and other factors.

Vision statements are so forceful that it inspires the workforce to invest in the organisation, keeping a firm focus on future plans and growth.

A strong vision statement also works to help differentiate a company from others. All companies want to become profitable, but a company that can set an agenda to achieve that goal is going to set itself apart and inspire others.

A lot of effort and brainstorming among the organisation's founders goes into preparing both the mission and vision statements. In a sole

proprietorship or partnership start-ups, the founders draw up the vision statement even before setting up the company around the time the idea has germinated. In bigger companies, input is taken from a wide range of senior managements before drawing up the vision statement.

Feedback is taken from a wide range of employee bases through workshops, slogan contests and/or suggestions through intra emails.

Once the vision statement is adopted, it is the duty of the top management to implement it to the core and imbue it into the company's DNA. A vision statement is something the employees should be putting their hearts and souls into, which would lead to dreams envisaged by the company turning into reality.

Just as in life, companies and businesses too need a purpose and an ambition to be successful. While trying to achieve that, it should not lose sight of values and general good, which is where a strong mission and vision statement can help to keep the focus of the company.

### **Writing mission and vision statements**

There is no boilerplate for either mission or vision statements. A few simple tried-and-tested steps should do the trick for both the statements. Once you tick all the boxes, the mission and vision statements will automatically flow from that.

#### **Mission statement**

**Know your product:** You need to know your customer and why he would be compelled to buy your product. For instance, when you are pitching to an investor, the question they want answered 99 out of 100 times is: "What need are you fulfilling in the market?" It gives you a clear picture of what your product and business is about and what it is not about.

**The customer connects:** It could be something as simple as, if you are a bookshop, "making reading accessible for the neighbouring community"; it need not always be for the entire country. Bring out something that will make it unique and special for the customer to be loyal to you or, to begin with, relate to your company.

**Keeping your word:** Employees and customers will judge you by whether you practise what you preach. If your mission statement explicitly says you care for ecology, but your business practices do not reflect that, you will lose respect and your business and product will suffer. So, if you do not mean it and do not intend to follow it, avoid making any fantastic claims. If you claim diversity in your workforce, it is there for all among the staff to see whether you are following your professed motive or not.

**The lingo matters:** Like any writing, even mission statements, which is just about one sentence, needs to be looked at again and again, reworked, edited, reviewed and rewritten till it sounds perfect. Mission statements are lifelong and etched in stone, so taking as much time as one needs and figuring it out is energy and time well spent.

Remember, mission statements are targeted only at customers, but employees should feel a sense of ownership for you to achieve the goals set in your vision statement, so living up to the mission becomes critical for productivity and performance.

### **Vision statement**

What one has to keep in mind to make a good vision statement is including the following attributes:

**To the point:** Brevity is the key. Do not be verbose and make it difficult to memorize. The idea is that it should be simple, to the point with bare minimum essentials, and articulated easily and accurately.

**Clarity:** Do not be all over the place. It should have a clear-cut vision on the focus of the organisation and stick to just the major objective.

**Timeframe:** Any vision statement ought to set the timeframe by which the goal is hoped to be achieved. Usually, it can be anywhere from three to 10 years.

**Untouched by disruption:** The vision statement envisages a long-term goal that goes on undisturbed, irrespective of disruptive businesses that may emerge; that doesn't mean that one should not adapt to new business practices, but the objective should remain the same.

**Be realistic:** The goal should not be run-of-the-mill. It should be perceived to be great and unique, but still not be elusive realistically.

**Motivational:** The vision statement should be so inspiring that it should fire up the employees to work in unison to achieve the goal envisioned.

**No adlib:** Vision statements are for employees to follow in an inspired direction, not to sell products. There should be no ad-libbing.

### **Top examples of Mission and Vision statements**

In simple terms, a mission statement is a mantra that inspires every day, while a vision statement is the goal looking ahead into the future.

As mentioned above, a mission statement underlines the values that are guiding the company and organisation. A vision statement proclaims the dream of the organisation and how it sees itself a year, three years, or five years down the line and beyond.

Vision statements could be preposterous, as any dream should be. Mission statements should talk of general good, like environment,

making a difference in the customers' lives and improving the world through the company's product or service.

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## 5.7 FAMOUS MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS

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**Starbucks:** Establish Starbucks as the premier purveyor of the finest coffee in the world while maintaining our uncompromising principles while we grow.

**Coca Cola:** To refresh the world...To inspire moments of optimism and happiness...To create value and make a difference.

**Infosys:** To achieve our objectives in an environment of fairness, honesty, and courtesy towards our clients, employees, vendors and society at large.

**3M:** To Improve Every Life through Innovative Giving in Education, Community and the Environment.

**Ferrari:** To make unique sports cars that represent the finest in Italian design and craftsmanship, both on the track and on the road.

**Uber:** Uber is evolving the way the world moves. By seamlessly connecting riders to drivers through our apps, we make cities more accessible, opening up more possibilities for riders and more business for drivers.

**Apple:** Apple designs Macs, the best personal computers in the world, along with OS X, iLife, iWork and professional software. Apple leads the digital music revolution with its iPods and iTunes online store. Apple has reinvented the mobile phone with its revolutionary iPhone and App Store, and is defining the future of mobile media and computing devices with iPad.

**Netflix:**

Becoming the best global entertainment distribution service. Licensing entertainment content around the world. Creating markets that are accessible to film makers. Helping content creators around the world to find a global audience.

**Nirma:** Nirma is a customer-focused company committed to consistently offer better quality products and services that maximise value to the customer.

**Ikea:** To create a better everyday life for many people.

**Famous Vision Statements:**

**Tesla:** To accelerate the world's transition to sustainable energy.

**Infosys:** To be a globally respected corporation that provides best-of-breed business solutions, leveraging technology, delivered by best-in-class people.

**Microsoft (at inception):** A computer on every desk and in every home.

**Disney:** To entertain, inform and inspire people around the globe through the power of unparalleled storytelling, reflecting the iconic brands, creative minds and innovative technologies that make ours the world's premier entertainment company.

**Amnesty International:** A world in which every person enjoys all of the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments.

**McDonalds:** To be the best quick service restaurant experience. Being the best means providing outstanding quality, service, cleanliness and value, so that we make every customer in every restaurant smile.

**LinkedIn:** Create economic opportunities for every member of the global workforce.

**Nike:** Bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete\* in the world. (\*If you have a body, you are an athlete.)

**Amazon:** To be earth's most customer-centric company; to build a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online.

**TED:** We believe passionately in the power of ideas to change attitudes, lives and, ultimately, the world.

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## 5.8 REGULATORY REPORTING

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An important aspect of business reporting is to adhere to regulatory bodies overseeing various industries and businesses. Proper maintenance of reports – most of which are statutory by nature -- is of utmost importance to avoid any run-in with authorities, which can cause embarrassment to the company; good business reports can save the organisation and company loss of reputation among its stakeholders.

All businesses have to comply with a set of rules, safety standards, quality standards (if in food and beverage business), other equity-related regulations set by monitory agencies and the government. Non-compliance can lead to imprisonment, huge monetary penalties and bad publicity that comes along with that. Officers in the compliance overseeing departments in government agencies like income-tax, goods and services tax and export-import are tasked with the responsibility of making sure that businesses comply with the rules and regulations set by the government. There are compliance licences that are issued from time to time depending on the industry; some industries have to take licences annually, others get more long-lasting ones.

A broad outline of the various statutory reports:

**Book-keeping:** This is the most basic of regulatory reports to be maintained. It is as simple as keeping the invoices and bills – both received and given. Each country will have its own rules of backdates that the accounts have to be maintained for. Having the details of transactions accessible for scrutiny is imperative in any business; it goes without saying that the documents maintained are accurate and not fudged.

**Procedural:** Each time guidelines set by the authorities and by the company have to be adhered to. All the documents have to be kept handy for reference and inspection as the case may be. There will be several

forms that one may have to fill within the company, especially with the legal department, and it can be a tedious process, but it is unavoidable and ultimately would be for the good of the organisation. Procedural reporting will range from elaborating on the guidelines to be followed with the organisation to setting “terms and conditions” when a customer is buying a product.

**Training:** In many industries like insurance and investment banking, constant training to employees are part of the regulatory process. On-the-job training is the norm across all levels of management.

The regulators and watchdogs expect information that is comprehensive, accurate and consistent, and also that the reports follow a set pattern. The steps taken for regulatory reporting goes a long way in protecting the organisation against any legal cases filed by the government, competition authority or tax departments. It also builds a reputation for the company in customer care and after sales.

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## 5.9 CONCLUSION

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Business reports are the backbone of all organisations, companies and non-profits. Right from the time of inception when one has to conceptualise the mission and vision statements and through the functioning of the organisation, business reports light the path. Business reports lay down the ambition and the road to it.

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## 5.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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1. Do business reports have to be long?

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2. Are financial reports mandatory?

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3. Are potential investors given all the information about the company?

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4. Is a mission statement meant for employees?

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5. Can vision statements be broad-based to address all stakeholders?

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### 5.11 KEY WORDS

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**Productivity:** The effectiveness of productive effort, especially in industry, as measured in terms of the rate of output per unit of input.

**Inventory:** A detailed list of all the things in a place like a warehouse or shop, including the amount of goods and their value.

**Mission statement:** Something that states the purpose or goal of a business or organization.

**Vision statement:** A sentence or short paragraph that succinctly describes the goals of a company, non-profit, or some other entity. It states what you are trying to build and serves as a touchstone for your future actions.

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### 5.12 REFERENCES

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Business Strategy Essentials You Always Wanted to Know by Callie Daum

Shaping the future by William P Belgard and Steven R Rayner

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#### Vision statement

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**UNIT : 6****FEATURE REPORTS****:: STRUCTURE::****6.0 Introduction****6.1 Objectives****6.2 What is Feature Writing?****6.3 Features vs. News Reporting****6.4 Longform Journalism****6.5 How to Ideate For Feature Reports****6.6 Interviews as Feature Reporting****6.7 Legendary Worldwide Feature Publications****6.8 Specialisation in Feature Magazines****6.9 Brand Loyalty and Feature Magazines****6.10 Feature Journalism on the Web****6.11 Economics of Feature Journalism****6.12 Conclusion****6.13 Check Your Progress****6.14 Key Words****6.15 References**

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**6.0 INTRODUCTION**

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Feature reporting is a significant part of print and online journalism. It is totally different from news journalism. The creative writing skills needed for feature and magazine journalism makes it a completely different field. Feature reporting also includes long form journalism.

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## 6.1 OBJECTIVES

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- To introduce the process from concept to print of a feature story
- To train students on how to interest readers with important research-based stories
- To help students explore the qualities of storytelling and how they differ from news

**On the completion of this unit, you will be able to:**

- Focus on a well-articulated singular theme
- Know the importance of language and observation in creative journalism
- Conceptualise and write on many types of feature stories

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## 6.2 WHAT IS FEATURE WRITING?

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Feature writing is a branch of journalism. If you look at a newspaper or magazine, you'll see that it's made up of different kinds of writing: short pieces, not-so-long pieces, reviews, leader articles, opinion and analyses, snippets, cartoon strips, crosswords, and of course, news reports. In a short, crisp and matter-of-fact way, news reports keep you up-to-date and tell you what you need to know.



Feature articles primarily are what you may want to know. They give you an insight into the world behind the headlines, the visible scenes, and deal with topics in great depth and at great length. Many a time, the news report gives quick snapshots, while features intend to deliver the complete portrait. Often, it might even be immersive. It would communicate with your head, heart and senses. That is the point in which you become aware that you are actually on the scene of the action and are getting a birds-eye-view understanding of what actually is going on.

A feature article would usually be a minimum of 800 words and the topic and the writing have to be engaging enough to sustain the reader's interest for the length of the article, unlike a news report, which can be wrapped up in even just 250 words.

The best journalism engages as it informs. When articles or scripts achieve their success at this, they become the *features* or contain diverse elements that make up the actual story. Part of the trick is writing compelling feature articles, substantive non-fiction stories that often look at a minuscule part of a news and follow it to the maximum, usually from the aspect of what is known as human interest stories.

Like news, features are built from facts. Nothing in them is made up or embellished, except maybe the language, which the writer has the liberty

to play with. But in features, these facts are embedded into or interwoven with scenes and small stories that show rather than simply tell the information that is conveyed. Features are grounded in time, in place and in characters who inhabit both.

Very often, features emanate from personal experiences of senior editors and journalists; it could be how the education system is affecting their kids, a visit to an hospital, driving through the city or just dining out and discovering a new menu.

News reports stick to the facts, do not dish out opinions or even shroud it in flowery language. On the other hand, features believe in narrating a story with a lot of vigour, with the language and construction of each sentence making it enticing to stay on in the story and coming together at the end of it as a story waiting to be told and heard.

Feature writers are expected to find and frame their own ideas, right from the conceptual stage, information gathering and interviews to the writing of the final piece, all with the concurrence of the Features Editor. “The feature writer who doesn’t have two or three projects bubbling on his own stove is doing only half a job,” author William Blundell says in his book *The Art and Craft of Feature Writing*.

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### **6.3 FEATURES vs. NEWS REPORTING**

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If a hardcore news reporter were to read a feature writing, he or she would dismiss it as unnecessary information and long-winded. The beauty of features writing is its leisurely pace and dramatization, wherever possible. Both the news reporter and the features writer deal with facts but one gives out the information as it is and the other gets into areas in and around the news and the information to give a different and holistic perspective.

One draws the reader in through the details. The details included are relevant, entertaining, to the point and written in the pithy sentences that stand for most good journalism.

Magazine writing, however, tends to present both fact and a little of the writer’s opinion, which sets the tone for the piece.

In feature writing, the writer must strive to present facts that are correct, and an opinion that is balanced and informed. Everything they write must be gathered from interviews and research.

Newspaper or daily journalism is usually cut-and-dried information with all the due diligence and both sides of the views given in the article. Feature writing uses quotations to support or dramatically oppose the argument underlying the piece. There are interviews not just with experts or authorities, but also the use of personal stories and unusual, offbeat personalities.

Magazine/feature writing makes use of all the literary devices common to fiction writing, including rhetorical questions, metaphors, similes, and bathos. These would be missing, and even inappropriate, in hard news journalism.

Unlike news articles that provide the 5 Ws (who, what, where, when and why) and H (how) in the first paragraph, the opening in a feature often withholds this information for later, first hooking the reader with storytelling, and then producing the hard facts later. Generally, each paragraph presents one or two hard facts, whereas in newspaper writing you have up to four or five facts per paragraph.

The point of view taken may be personal, whereas in news reporting, this would be highly improper. News reporting is almost always in the Third Person, e.g. “He said...; She said”. In news reporting, the first person is a strict no-no, while in features writing, it is even welcome in especially humour and intimate columns.

News reporting makes use of a writing style that could be described as factual, formal and crisp. Magazine writing, on the other hand, may be informal, personal, or even colloquial. For instance, slang and colloquial expressions are common in this genre. However, the style of writing remains plain and accessible, rather than the poetic, meandering writing that the novelist might indulge in.

Tone in news reports has to be equanimous even when the story is full of drama and hyperbolic. A feature report can wear its heart on the sleeve, so to speak, and can be persuasive, irreverent, argumentative, sentimental and emotional, but certainly not at the cost of fact and information.

While news reports have to wait for something to “happen” and present factual coverage of events, the writer of magazine articles is encouraged to be original, creative and edgy.

Many magazine articles, like a work of fiction, unfold like a movie with characters, plot, dialogue, climax and a sharp ending. The magazine piece often works to first establish setting and character, and then, once the reader is hooked, introduces the facts. In newspapers and daily reportage, you just cut to the chase.

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## **6.4 LONGFORM JOURNALISM**

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In the past decade, as declining ad revenue constricted editorial space in print publications, online publishing offered journalists freedom from some of their limits. A story could be as complicated as its subject required, and as lengthy as necessary, though the ancient caveat still applied: your readers might not stick with you until the end. Websites such as BuzzFeed, whose content seemed to assume a newly attention-deficient readership, occasionally published pieces of narrative nonfiction, whose word counts ran into thousands. Online publishers began to label such stories “longform.”

It might seem obvious, but there are many different definitions of what longform content truly is. Some people consider articles longer than 700 words to be longform, whereas others think that articles have to be in excess of 1,800 words and going up to as many as 20,000 words to be

considered longform. Longform content in magazines like *The New Yorker* sometimes range from 3,000 to 10,000+ words.

Newspapers and magazines in India, just around the time of the online onslaught, had prejudged that the reader does not want to spend more than a minute in each article, and so most articles were cut to size of less than 350 words. Instructions were issued in many media outlets that because of the attention span of the readers and millennials, articles should be restricted to 350 words or thereabouts.

In India, the *Caravan* magazine has created a niche for itself in longform journalism and has got a traction among readers, both young and old. In the US media, in the past decade, as declining ad revenue constricted editorial space in print publications, online publishing offered journalists freedom from some of the limitations imposed in terms of space and word length. A story could be as complicated as its subject required, and as long as necessary, though the ancient caveat still applied: your readers might not stick with you until the end. Websites such as BuzzFeed, whose content seemed to assume a newly attention-deficient readership, occasionally published pieces of narrative nonfiction, whose word counts reached into the thousands. Online publishers began to label such stories “longform.”

During the longform decade, software developers created programmes that translated word counts into estimated reading times. Both Longreads.com and Longform.org use the programme, as does Medium. For their first assignment, students of the late *New York Times* media critic, David Carr, wrote stories with estimated reading times of fewer than five minutes. BuzzFeed, which is the go-to site for youngsters, hired a “longform editor” in 2013 to oversee a section of the site devoted to such stories. The longform editor described his section as “BuzzFeed for people who are afraid of BuzzFeed”. Medium, which developed an early reputation for longform journalism, distanced itself from the label. “It was not our intention... to create a platform just for ‘longform’ content,” said E V Williams, Medium CEO and a co-founder of, ironically, Twitter. In fact, a new trend, called the Longform Twitter with the Twitter thread, is being used to tell a story in a long series, with a 140-character limit imposed on each tweet.

When the media for short-attention span audience is thinking on lines of promoting longform journalism through series of tweets, that is vindication by itself.

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## **6.5 HOW TO IDEATE FOR FEATURE REPORTS**

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Ideas for feature stories do not come out of thin air. A lot of brainstorming in the newsrooms, reading books and other publications and, most importantly, keeping in touch with one’s contacts and meeting authorities and experts are some of the time-tested methods employed by journalists to ideate for stories. Get the idea?

This is easier said than done. First and foremost, one has to be abreast of the happenings in one's city or target area of the edition. Reading competition and an eclectic mix of local, national and even international media, blogs from locals and reading books help develop story ideas.

Many a time, the best feature story ideas come from regular people; everyone has a story to tell. Interacting with fellow human beings/friends/contacts will help in the quest for a story idea. But before that, practice your listening skills and every time you hear something interesting, take notes, and think about how you can create a story about it. It might not always be a huge scoop, but this simple conversation may give you some inspiration for a great magazine or feature article.

Local newspapers are great sources of information for feature ideas; it needs the right eye to spot it and a good writer and editor to expand it to a great feature story.

A great way to get familiar with a subject or about a market is attending shows and exhibitions. These are, by default, places where all the pioneers in any industry are coming together just to make sure that they brief everyone about new product launches, trends, and more.

Curiosity is another attribute every journalist, and especially a feature or magazine journalist, should have. Whenever something is happening, there is one question a journalist should ask: Why? By doing so, you are basically giving yourself the fuel you need in order to broaden your spectrum and think out of the box.

Have you noticed a trend rising? Ask yourself why. Do you have the answer? Write about it. For instance, if there is data that a country's tourism figures have increased dramatically, you need to figure out why this is happening. Many writers tend to stick just to the facts. The "whys" will help in going beyond and getting a good feature story.

Nowadays, there is a study for almost every single thing which is accessible easily online. From the use of social media to human relationships, science just can't stop giving us food for thought and inspiration. Through an online search, you will be able to find both solid and experimental data that can be developed into a full-fledged feature report. Scientific journals like *Lancet* are many a time fodder for news stories and feature stories.

There are currently more than 440 million blogs. No matter how good or bad their content might be, they definitely provide some food for inspiration to generate great newspaper story ideas. If you come across an interesting story in another magazine or on another website, it should be considered as an idea to take forward and not ignored out of ego. How have things changed? Is this story still relevant today? The power of following-up is often overlooked.

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## **6.6 INTERVIEWS AS FEATURE REPORTING**

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One of the hardest skills for any reporter to master is interviewing. It takes a fair amount of preparation and persistence to conduct a good

interview. The Q&A format looks simple and easy when one is reading it, but ask any journalist and he or she will tell you that it is a tough task in reality.

There are steps to follow for conducting an interview. The first obvious one is to come up with the person to interview on a relevant subject in the news. If the hot topic of the day is climate change, it is important to get an activist or climate expert for the interview.

If the subject is urgent and against a tight deadline and the interview cannot be done in person, then set up a phone interview.

Next, you have to research extensively. The more specific your questions are, the better. Make the interviewee talk.

Become familiar with your questions before you go into the interview. It should be as smooth as giving a good speech, which you have to prepare for and often rehearse to perfect it.

You have to come with the usual journalistic paraphernalia: a pen/pencil, notepad, a recording device. One should make sure that one is punctual for the meeting, apart from being well prepared. If you have never been to the place where your interview is taking place, go early and scout it out.

During the interview, one has to be courteous to the subject, including looking at the person straight in the eye while posing questions. It helps to listen intently to the answers because it could lead to more questions than the ones that you have written down; it also means one shouldn't mechanically read through the questions one after another, as if you want to get it over and done with. Supplementary questions or counter-questions will arise out of the answers that are given by the interviewee during the course of the Q&A session.

In spite of technological advances, it is never a bad habit to take down notes even if you are recording the conversation. Don't try to write every word that is said. It will slow down the interview. Just take down the highlights.

After the interview, while the details are still fresh in your mind, write everything down you can remember about the person you interviewed. Don't forget to make a note of the sounds in the background. Take note of what was happening around you. Write it all down as soon as possible.

At home, expand your notes by following up on things you learned in your interview with more research. If there are one or two residual or follow-up questions, a phone call to the interviewee or another visit should be made to get the answers.

How to write an interview is an art by itself. Usually, the Q&A format is followed as a practice; even in a Q&A format, a descriptive introduction about the interviewee, the circumstances in which the meeting was set up and held and the main issues that were discussed make for a good read. Some interviews are not published in the Q&A format and instead may read like running text, with observations of the writer and with quotes in the format of "he said" or "she said".

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## 6.7 LEGENDARY WORLDWIDE FEATURE PUBLICATIONS

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**Playboy:** Playboy is a US-based lifestyle and entertainment magazine targeted at men. It was founded in Chicago in 1953 by Hugh Hefner and his associates and funded in part by a \$1,000 loan from Hefner's mother.



Notable for its centrefolds of nude and semi-nude models, *Playboy* played an important role in America's sexual revolution that began in the 1960s and remains one of the world's best-known brands. While Hefner claimed his company contributed to America's more liberal attitude towards sex, others believe he simply exploited it. It has boasted since its

inception of publishing short fictional works by legendary writers like Arthur C. Clarke, Ian Fleming, Vladimir Nabokov, Saul Bellow, Chuck Palahniuk, P. G. Wodehouse, Roald Dahl, Haruki Murakami, and Margaret Atwood. Another major aspect of *Playboy* was its interviews with a famous personality; they were usually researched for months and interviews were conducted over a period of time in several sessions. The comprehensive interviews with directors, sportspersons, politicians, activists and feminists, dealt with wide-ranging subjects, including their own fields of achievements, contributions to civil rights and to life and death.



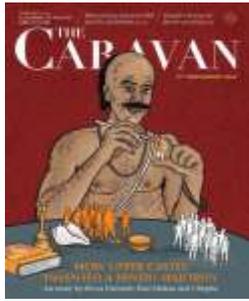
**India Today:** *India Today* is a weekly Indian English news magazine published by Living Media India Limited. It is the most widely circulated magazine in India, with a readership of close to 8 million. The magazine was established in 1975 by Vidya Vilas Purie (the then owner of Thompson Press), with his daughter Madhu Trehan as its editor and his son Aroon Purie as its publisher. The magazine also has its language versions, in Hindi and the

four south Indian languages. It has a significant TV presence, with news channels in English and Hindi. For the last three years, the control of the company has gone into its third generation, with Kallie Purie, Aroon Purie's daughter, at its helm.



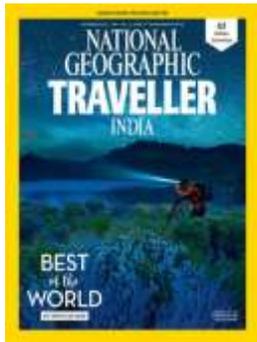
**Outlook:** *Outlook* was another Indian general interest weekly magazine that was launched in 1995, to challenge its 20-year-old competitor *India Today*. *Outlook*, owned by the Rajan Raheja Group, had Vinod Mehta as its first editor-in-chief. Like any general interest magazine, it covers the entire gamut of politics, cities and regions, sports,

crime, performing arts, art etc. It has a tremendous following on the social media.



**The Caravan:** *The Caravan* is India's first long-form narrative journalism magazine. It was relaunched in 2010 as a journal of politics and culture dedicated to meticulous reporting and the art of narrative. It is recognised now as one of the country's most respected and intellectually agile magazines. Their stories are based on months of reporting and research and are crafted into dramatic narratives. It has created a niche for

itself, thanks to its highly readable and in-depth stories.



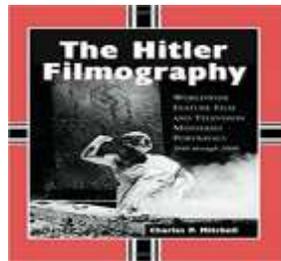
**National Geographic:** *National Geographic* is the official magazine of the National Geographic Society. It has been published continuously since its first issue in 1888, nine months after the Society itself was founded. It primarily contains articles about science, geography, history, and world culture. The magazine is known for its extensive use of dramatic photographs. Controlling interest in the magazine has been held by The Walt Disney Company since 2019. The magazine, available in

print and online, is published monthly, and additional map supplements are also included with subscriptions. The magazine had a global circulation of approximately 6.5 million per month, down from about 12 million in the late 1980s.

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## 6.8 SPECIALISATION IN FEATURE MAGAZINES

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In general, there are three categories of magazines: consumer, trade and organisation. A feature writer is a major asset for writing for all these kinds of magazines. The use of the designation 'feature writer' or 'feature editor' is for the consumer or general interest magazines. One would rarely find its use in trade and organisation magazines, though they may require

similar skill sets.

Consumer magazines are on newsstands and in grocery store aisles everywhere. They can be bought as single issues or by subscription, and they are marketed like any other product (using advertisements and special promotions). There are actually fewer consumer magazines than any other type, but the consumer magazines generally have the largest audiences. Consumer magazines can be broken down into a large variety of specialised categories, such as men's, women's, entertainment, regional, political, general interest and so on.

The most lucrative ones over the years have been the consumer magazines. In the Indian context, general interest magazines did quite well during their heydays, but are struggling now. The specialised magazines are of all sorts, and because of the niche, some of them continue to do well. The specialised categories include broadly: lifestyle, food, travel, women's issues, arts and culture, business and finance, sports, health and science, pop culture, music, fashion and so on.

A trade magazine specialises in a particular business, so its content is focused on job-related subjects and its readers have specific occupations. Many of these magazines are provided at no cost to a controlled audience. Because trade magazines are able to deliver a highly desirable audience to advertisers, they are able to charge higher advertising rates.

There are various kinds of organisation magazines. The association and society magazines are often provided as part of the membership in the organisation. The purpose of these magazines is mainly to enhance the organisation. They can provide unity and a forum to discuss issues and to draw members closer to one another, like a religion magazine. Association and society magazines may carry advertisements, and they may be sold through reader subscriptions (which may be incorporated into membership dues). Regardless, the basic purpose of these publications is still to enhance their organisation rather than make a profit.

Organisations and companies publish public relations magazines for self-promotion, and they may each have more than one such magazine to do this. For example, an internal publication may target the employees of a company (to keep them abreast of the progress of the company and help them to feel a part of it), while an external publication may target the same company's clients (to explain how the company works and to provide a better understanding of the company's philosophy or mission). Traditionally these magazines do not have advertisements and are provided at no cost to the readers.

The third type of organisation magazine is the custom or sponsored magazine. A client may receive a magazine of this type as a result of purchasing a particular product or using a particular service, or it could be like an in-flight magazine. Typically, custom magazines are distributed free of charge, and are rarely sold on newsstands or through subscriptions.

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## **6.9 BRAND LOYALTY AND FEATURE MAGAZINES**

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The job of a feature writer thrives on magazine journalism, or it did in earlier times. Now, there are avenues like blogging and online magazines. Still, print and online magazines are the mainstay for feature writers and to get a fix on the future of feature journalism, one should get a sense of what lies ahead for magazine journalism.

Magazines or any print publications even in these ephemeral days have better loyalty among readers than online publications. Niche publications are on the rise, but what makes them so successful?

On paper, the numbers don't add up. The critical mass that any magazine publisher would want to see when ticking the 'sustainable business' box is simply not there. But somehow, where niche magazines are concerned, the absence of a sizable audience is mirrored by a fierce loyalty among those who make the purchase.

So what are the challenges? As is often the case, 'opportunities for' and 'threats to' a business are often the same beast wearing a different mask. Niche magazine's readerships are frequently small but very loyal. This can be an anomaly for marketers and those buying advertising space.

More and more, feel advertisers and companies, that quality matters as much as quantity. The demographics of a good quality features and longform magazines offer much more to many advertisers and their clients than as mass market high-circulation product where the quality of readership may not be their target.

But selling advertising space is not the only struggle against mainstream publications. Space on the newsstand also poses a challenge.

By default, niche magazines have smaller circulations and are therefore not able to compete with consumer magazines on the newsstand. A very large part of the reading public is never exposed to the variety of excellent niche magazines that exist. That is the harsh reality in most markets.

Then again, niche magazines tend to be successful in their online version with impressive reader engagement numbers. Brand building can, at times, be easier for niche magazines/websites than the general ones, which are a dime-a-dozen in the market.

Interestingly, it is easier for niche magazines, usually run as a tight ship, to ride out the recession storm, rather than the big circulation newspapers or magazines. During the peak of the previous recession in 2009, when the global economy was on the verge of collapse and circulation figures for magazines in the UK were generally down, Charlotte Philby, a writer for *The Independent* in Britain, discovered what she called 'a wave of emerging titles' that were bucking the trend and drawing readers into more closely defined niches of interest.

The only thing holding one back from launching a new magazine or growing one's existing brand's popularity is the increasing cost of the paper needed to print it. However, the cost of paper is minuscule compared to the cost of reinventing a brand for an increasingly digitally savvy audience and investing in it.

The common strand with these and all the other magazines is that they aren't the multi-million glittery launches of old. They're appealing to a smaller, highly engaged, often commercially 'sweet' audience, so their profitability and their chance of success is a little brighter.

So, the magazine industry isn't dead. It's different. If in earlier days, the choice for advertisements were print, outdoor, TV and audio, now it's

split across so many distribution channels – Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google, TV, digital TV, streaming TV, radio, internet radio, bloggers, vloggers -- it's a bloody battle for ad revenue.

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## **6.10 FEATURE JOURNALISM ON THE WEB**

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Is magazine content already a print Dodo? Consider the MailOnline, now the home of all celebrity news, which has a global audience of 14.8m unique visitors a day. It's clear that the appetite for standard celebrity content has never been stronger. The difference is that the distribution of this content and the way the audience can access it have changed considerably.

Digital technology has become a disruptor in the business of feature and magazine journalism and has made sure the traditional media reinvent itself.

The art of storytelling was changing: the tech was there, the talented teams were there, but to deliver strong, digital content was not without a heavy price tag and for many the change never happened. Many were not convinced they could make digital publishing pay in the same way that print has in the past. So, the wilderness years ensued, many magazine titles were left floundering with a tide of technology eating away at their sales. They did not grasp just how quickly this tech was going to rip out the paper hearts of their beloved magazines without as much as a backward glance.

For years, it had been declared that 'print was king', when in fact 'content was king' and as technology seeped into every corner of daily routines, readers changed their behaviour when it came to consuming content.

The person who showed the way was Martin Clarke, the brain behind today's MailOnline. It was launched in 2003. For three years, it languished and then in 2006, Clarke became editor and then publisher in 2008. The rest is history.

MailOnline had its own unique take on coverage of celebrities and showbiz world and it kept on growing in popularity. It would not only cover UK news but keep aggregating weird and viral news and videos from across the world, it had become a go-to site for netizens from across the world. Its worldwide appeal is unique. Readers from all over the world took "guilty pleasure" from it.

It turns out that the audience was always there. It was only ever going to be bigger than the print audience, because online content allows people to access what they want when they want it.

MailOnline's success just showed that the arrival of the internet as a news provider and the growth of social media as a news distributor meant that anything in print was under threat. Those at the helm needed to find a new way to succeed in journalism.

Others have found their formula on the web, with serious and "non-tabloidish" content. Longform, as mentioned in an earlier section, has seen moderate to good success in the online world. There are websites,

again with worldwide appeal, which pursue serious journalism and put out in-depth and incisive articles and analyses.

There are also purely opinion sites which have experts writing on wide-ranging topics from defence to healthcare to foreign affairs, and these websites have a dedicated following.

The magazine's success depends on creating a niche and revenue formula, with paywalls, advertisement revenues and readers' crowdfunding.

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## **6.11 ECONOMICS OF FEATURE JOURNALISM**

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There is an existential threat to magazine journalism, especially in the print form. A good quality serious in-depth magazine needs investment and there is cost to each and every story that is produced, whether it is online or print. There is indeed a paradigm shift towards consuming news and information in non-print format but how many can risk raising a paywall? The choice for online magazine journalism is to have a subscription model

Even for daily newspapers, one really cannot read in the newspapers what one has seen several times over on TV the previous evening or read on the smartphones.”

According to Pitch Madison Report 2017, print grew at 7% in 2016, with dailies registering a growth of 8%, while magazines saw negative growth. Demonetization resulted in leading print advertisers holding back on spends in the last quarter. In 2017, the print advertising market was expected to grow by 9.5% to come close to Rs 20,000 crore, with dailies and regional publications leading the growth.

Despite the negative growth registered by magazines, industry players are hopeful that the format will get redefined and re-imagined and witness another golden era in the times to come. In a recent interview to a media watch portal, Raj Chengappa, Group Editorial Director (Publishing), India Today Group and President, Editors Guild of India, said: “The biggest challenge is how technology has made news available anywhere and anytime, especially with the proliferation of smartphones. However, it has its own limitations. If you look at most of the news items on the net. It follows the cookie cutter approach as one item looks like the other. There is no discrimination between news items, while print is all about display, size of the headlines, the pictures that we use and even the graphics. Also, there is too much of news. The scope of having credible news has diminished and people are getting confused by all this. What people are looking for is relevant and credible news.”

Magazines that are highly dependent on consumer product advertising have been more adversely hit. For magazines, the other big challenge is that of distribution. Experts, especially in India, believe that readers are willing to buy print publications if they are available at a convenience to them. The problem with magazines is that part of the media industry has not been able to somehow ensure as effective distribution as it should

have. The industry counts on the reader to make some efforts to buy a magazine while the active involvement from the publishers' end on that front is missing.

Now to the brass tacks of the human resources side of running a magazine. On the editorial side, one needs an editor-in-chief, other editors, staff writers, graphic and other artists, photographers and layout designers. On the business side, it requires a publisher, people for handling finance, marketing, administration or operations and production. On the editorial side, many of these functions are not kept on payroll nowadays, and magazines instead make do with freelancers.

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## **6.12 CONCLUSION**

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Feature reporting requires basic journalistic skills, apart from a command over language, an incisive mind and ideation of the regular and highest kind. Even though journalism -- and print in particular -- sees a decline, feature and long form journalism are seeing a revival, especially if the ideation and digging new information are topnotch.

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## **6.13 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

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1. Are feature reports found only in magazines?

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2. Is feature writing more creative than news reporting?

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3. Is long form writing part of features?

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4. Is it easy to launch a print magazine now?

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5. Is it true that *Playboy* magazine was well-known for its interviews?

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## 6.14 KEY WORDS

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**Due diligence:** Used more in businesses, it means research and analysis of a company or organisation done in preparation for a business transaction (such as a corporate merger or purchase of securities). In journalism, it means investigating and confirming all the facts before going to print.

**Ideation:** The capacity for or the act of forming or entertaining ideas.

**Brainstorming:** A group problem-solving technique that involves the spontaneous contribution of ideas from all members of the group.

**Dodo:** An extinct, flightless bird; in general context behind times.

**Mainstream:** A prevailing current or direction of activity or influence.

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## 6.15 REFERENCES

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### Books

*The Art and Craft of Feature Writing* by William Blundell

*Feature Writing: A 60-Minute Masterclass* by Rob Orchard

**Online** : <https://www.henryharvin.com/blog/top-ten-tips-to-write-an-interesting-feature-articles/>

**UNIT : 7****COLUMNS****:: STRUCTURE::****7.0 Introduction****7.1 Objectives****7.2 What is a Column?****7.3 How to Be a Columnist****7.4 Role of Columns in Journalism****7.5 Types of Columns****7.6 Blogging and Columns****7.7 Columns and Podcast****7.8 Five Well-Known Columnists in the World and India****7.9 Conclusion****7.10 Check Your Progress****7.11 Key Words****7.12 References**

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**7.0 INTRODUCTION**

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Columns are by-lined articles in newspapers and magazines – both print and online – in which the writers give their opinions, suggestions, analyse and assess situations and events. They can also write on personal experiences in the first person. They differ from news, in which the reporter has to take care not to cross the line of objectivity, wherein his or her bias creeps into the report. Columns are becoming one of the mainstays of modern-day journalism.

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**7.1 OBJECTIVES**

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- Familiarising the reader to the concept of columns
- Explaining the significance of columns in journalism
- Introducing various topics for columns

**On the completion of this unit, you will be able to:**

- Understand the craft of column writing
- Gain expertise in the subject of your interest to contemplate a column
- Recognise a column potential to commission one

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## **7.2 WHAT IS A COLUMN?**

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In newspapers and magazines, apart from the news stories, there would always be columns. Usually, they would be associated with opinions by experts on subjects such as politics, state administration and international affairs. Over a period of time, columns developed from only news-related items into write-ups on personal experiences such as cooking, travel and parenting.

In newspapers, traditionally, there would be pages for news and pages for opinions. There would be two pages: The Edit page and the Op-ed page. The edit page would have the unsigned edit pieces or leader edits, and the readers' letters column. The rest of the page and the Op-ed page would be opinions written by senior editors and columns.

Columns always carry the names of the writers and, in most cases these days, their mugs. Columns are personal opinions of the writer, which otherwise would not find space in the news pages. The columnist has the liberty to pass judgments (sometimes even bordering on libellous), gossip, go back in time to evaluate an event, talk in first person, have conversations, be humorous, or be irreverent.

Each column, if slotted and chosen well by the editors, is unique and gives the reader an entire gamut of topics to read about. In recent times, columns have moved out of their dedicated edit and Op-ed pages. Sports and business pages have their own columns. Some of the city pages carry their own local-centric columns, usually on Mondays, when the Sunday news flow is quite poor. Beat reporters tend to have their columns appearing on Mondays. This once-popular trend is going out of vogue in Indian newspapers.

These apart, most columns are written by experts on the field. Like a medical column would be written by a doctor, policy column by an academician and so on. When one says column, it more or less means that it is a recurring theme in newspapers or magazines, written by the columnist week after week (if that is the regularity) and in the same space allotted to her.

Column writing demands a discipline and rigour and is considered one of the most rewarding journalistic writing, with scope for creativity in both topic and writing style, apart from the independence to write one's thoughts in many cases. The columnist owns the column and it should show through that the column "belongs" to the writer. A column reveals a lot about the writer, his or her views, personal life, tastes and preferences; the columnist puts himself out there.

In many publications, especially in the US and Canada, columnists have a *carte blanche* about the topic and their views; the only restriction would be the word length. Recently, *Toronto Star* editor Kathy English wrote, "The *Star* grants its columnists this right of fair comment (freedom of expression). Once granted what is undoubtedly the privileged perch of columnist status, columnists are relatively free from interference. They can write what they think and believe, subject to editorial oversight regarding accuracy of the facts at hand, standards of taste — always a subjective judgement call — and laws regarding hate speech and libel."

She said, "The fact is it would be an outrage if any columnist was fired for expressing disagreeable opinions. As I have tried to explain to many readers over the past 12 years, all *Star* columnists have the wide latitude to express their own views and, whatever my own views, I must defend their freedom to offend." Then she added, "As I have also said repeatedly: The opinions they express are very often not the views of this institution, as expressed in the *Star*'s editorials."

Very popular writers have their own syndicated columns. Syndicated columns are those which are not exclusive to a particular publication but open to publication to multiple news outlets, which have subscribed to the syndicated column. The exclusivity would probably be to the language or the region. For example, only an English newspaper and a language edition in a city like Mumbai may get permission to carry the syndicated column, while the same column may be carried by another newspaper in, say, Delhi.

With online publication proliferating, many experts do not feel the need to go to a media publication with a column idea. Many of them have their own blog pages and are extremely popular. They have a huge fan following and, with Google Ads, earn quite a sum based on their unique page views. Many a times, media outlets reach out to these bloggers to start a column in their publications.

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### **7.3 HOW TO BE A COLUMNIST**

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Before even embarking on launching a column, both the editor and the proposed columnist should have a threadbare discussion. The brainstorming should help in giving confidence to both that the columnist

has the ability, knowledge and the rigour to dish out 700 to 1000 words week after week, with an interesting read on the subject chosen for the column.

Once some basic questions are answered, the process of writing will be easier. The editor and the columnist have to consider while contemplating the column: Why (the reason and thinking behind it), for whom (audience and readership), what (the subject matter), how (the format), and having answered all that, whether it is sustainable or not. A column should be launched with a tacit understanding that it is sustainable for at least a year, unless its perceived popularity is not achieved and it has to be dumped.

**The why:** What is the gap it is filling in the paper? Is it a requirement for the readership? Maybe there is scope for an agony aunt to have an interactive column to show the popularity of the paper and the columnist. Maybe a gossip column is tailor-made for a tabloid and a well-known diva or a recognisable face among the glitterati may boost the image of the tabloid.

**For whom:** The publication should have a broad sense of the demographics of their readership. Usually, the marketing departments undertake surveys to determine the demographics. If the readership is young couples and families, a parenting column could be an option.

**Content:** The subject matter is of immense importance. It should be enticing enough for readers to eagerly await the column week after week, like a popular TV series. Most publications – print and online – have many columns whose subject matters overlap, such as cinema, music, books and politics. The idea is to be more edgy to stand out.

**Format:** The writing style and presentation are other important factors to lift the column up from the run-of-the-mill kinds. Some columns, such as Agony Aunt, follow the “Q&A” format, while some humour columns follow the conversational and dialogue format to get the laughs. Others may run a personal experience column in the first person. An accomplished columnist may want to show off different formats week after week to engage his readership.

While doing any of these, the writer should not lose sight that the content has to be razor-sharp because style over substance is a losing proposition in the long run. The column should be informative, give an interesting viewpoint and put forth credible arguments. References, quotes and good recall of events to bring out similarity or comparability add to the gravitas of the column. If it is a current news event that is the topic of a column, it is important to give a different perspective of what is in the discussion perimeter. Remember, opinions are being given dime-a-dozen through social media by everyone; all the more reason the columnist’s perspective has to be above all that.

Any columnist needs to have lots of ideas and an incisive thought process. If he wants to make his column interesting and engrossing, he will have to put a lot of thought, keep abreast of information and news around the world and put in a lot of effort to write lucidly and impressively.

From the publication's point of view, submitting one's column before the deadline will go a long way in endearing himself to the editor and editorial desk, apart from leaving room for playback and any changes that need to be made. Last-minute submissions may force the desk to go to print with it immediately and could have embarrassing consequences for the writer, especially since a regular reader knows that not much is edited or changed in a columnist's piece.

It is better to avoid clichés and jargons, and technical words are a strict no-no unless it is being written for a technical publication. Rambling to fill space will kill the interest in the column. One has to be succinct and each word and sentence has to be worth its weight, to make it an exciting read that whets the readers' appetite for the next one.

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#### **7.4 ROLE OF COLUMNS IN JOURNALISM**

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A regular column has a fixed place and time in a newspaper or a magazine. Unless it is a by-invitation column for breaking news of the day or a special day such as a Budget Day, when several experts are invited to write one-off piece for the publication the following day, the day and place of the appearance of the columns are set in stone.

Columns reflect the viewpoint of the writer, usually an expert in his field. It finds space in newspapers as a juxtapose to the news pages, in which reporters are not expected to give their opinions and report objectively. The columnist, by and large, can give his opinion unhindered and without any restriction, unless it attracts libel. Most columnists get to choose their column names.

Through their columns, the columnists give their observations, opinions, suggestions and criticism. Most columnists, apart from being experts and knowledgeable in their topics, have a good command over the language and kick up a storm if any change is made to their columns. Even if there is that rare glaring spelling or grammatical mistake, most of them would insist that they be told before it goes to print. A playback of their column with the headline that has been given by the editorial desk is a must for all columnists.

The newspaper makes it clear at the outset that the views expressed in the columns are those of columnists and it is not necessary that the newspaper subscribes to the viewpoints. Readers may like or dislike the

views of a columnist but if it's interesting and the arguments compelling enough, then the readers would keep coming back for the column, as long as it makes the discerning reader think.

Many a newspaper has attracted readership because of the columnists they can boast of. It is a crucial role that a column plays in journalism. Many columnists have a good standing in society and their field of work, and what they write impacts the readers.

Many columnists are non-journalists and though experts in their field of study, journalism is a new foray, so once their column gets traction in the media world, then new experiences open for them, such as being called for TV debate panels. Several columnists, once having established their columns as experts on television shows, have had a makeover of their brand image and reaped benefits in their core competence.

The importance of columns in journalism cannot be overemphasised, as it can give scope to the publication for having varied and wide-ranging opinions. The readers can have the advantage of reading many viewpoints and make up their own minds on various issues, or at least be better informed on a huge variety of subjects.

Editors take a lot of care before choosing, especially their political columnists. If the newspaper readership has a more secular and multi-ethnic outlook, it will not make sure that it doesn't allow extreme right-wing views get into the paper, and even if it wants opposing viewpoints to the Left liberal, the editor would make sure that the columnist is a moderate.

The importance of columns and opinions is growing by the day, especially with news dissemination being extremely quick and easily accessible these days on multiple media options. The edge that a newspaper, magazine or an online portal gets is from the columnists and the opinion writers that it has on their publications.

*Chicago Tribune* columnist, Mary Schmich, who has a column running for more than 25 years on the trot, said recently: ““Columnist” has always been a big tent of a word, but the definition seems even broader now. Blogs. Facebook. Online comment boards. Anybody with an Internet connection can be a columnist of sorts. In this new world, traditional columnists have to adapt.”

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## 7.5 TYPES OF COLUMNS

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**Editorial:** An editorial leader is an article written by the senior editorial staff of a newspaper, magazine, often unsigned, presenting the newspaper's take on current affairs. Every newspaper has

an edit page, in which two to three such articles without any byline are carried on a daily basis. These leader articles in a national daily will address important developments that have taken place in the country and in the world.

**Current Affairs:** Unlike other columns, there could multiple columns running parallelly in the same newspaper and even on a daily basis. This is probably the most obvious and the most popular column. Within this, the scope could include all the other columns, because every topic has a current affair issue in it. So under the broad current affairs canvas, one can write on politics, music, television, travel, gender issues...just about everything. The columnists in current affairs could include senior editors and journalists from the publication, and outside writers too who have an edgy viewpoint and are articulate.

**Advice:** An advice column is in a question-and-answer format. Usually, a reader, mostly anonymous, might write to a media outlet posing a question and gets a response. The responses are written by an advice columnist, like an agony aunt. Amy Dickinson, the New York based author of the syndicated *Ask Amy* column, which appears in more than 150 newspapers including *The Denver Post* and *Chicago Tribune*, says she leverages her columns, making them critical-thinking exercises, if she is asked to address middle schoolers. She brings in questions she has received from other kids and has students come up with their own responses. “I think that’s a really great exercise because honestly, underneath it all, I think that my goal for others is that they should really develop their own, strong internal voice that tells them that they already know what to do.”

**Book:** Usually written by a book critic or an academician, it goes beyond review of newly released books, which are done by invitation for each book. A book column talks of backlists, authors, writing styles and anything and everything to do with books.

**Fashion:** Fashion columns are extremely popular and have found a place even in general interest publications. Earlier, fashion columns could be found only in fashion magazines, but with good photographs and illustrations of daily wear fashion, giving both historical and contemporary perspectives, such columns are finding readership.

**Travel:** Travel has been a multi-billion worldwide industry. Travel columns are hence a popular part of any media outlet these days. Also, a good travel column or travel section attracts advertisement revenues from airlines, countries and travel operators.

**Women’s issues:** Gender issues have been a talking point in almost every household. A feminist or even a woman’s viewpoint on various happenings around the world make for interesting reading.

**Food:** Food, like travel, has grown into a behemoth industry. People are eating out, cooking exotic dishes at their homes, and travelling with food as a primary attraction like never before. All these have made food columns commonplace in all publications.

**Gossip:** A gossip columnist is someone who writes a gossip column in a newspaper or a magazine. Earlier, it would find space only in a film or entertainment magazine, but nowadays, almost all mainstream media – both print and online – have a celebrity/gossip column. These columns are written in a light, informal style, and relates to the personal lives or conduct of celebs from showbiz, sports stars or also the very rich and famous.

**Legal:** This column works in two ways. It could be an interactive one in which the columnist breaks down the legalese and explains issues to readers' questions. Or if someone is facing a personal problem, the columnist explains the law. The other is a column on various legal matters that are headlining during that week or so, or dissecting judgments, both historical and current.

**Music:** Music columns are critiques of new albums, historical pieces and musicians. Many bloggers have earned a name for themselves through their musings on music of all kinds and musicians.

**Tech:** Technology and innovation are big aspects of modern-day life. It is impossible to imagine a general interest publication or portal without a tech column, which explores new technologies, privacy issues and tech businesses.

**Humour:** This is probably the most difficult one to pull off. There is no readymade material to start with. The columnist has to be highly imaginative and innovative to write a humour column week after week and hold the audience's attention for at least 500 words. And what sounds funny or humorous may fall flat on paper.

**Sports:** A sports columnist is a writer whose primary job is to give his or her opinion on sports. He or she is typically someone who has many years of experience and therefore has developed credence and respectability within the sports community that his or her opinion is highly regarded. Again, the blogging world has seen a proliferation of good sports columns.

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## 7.6 BLOGGING AND COLUMNS

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Blogs are gaining in popularity in the online space because of the randomness of discovering it, the expertise and wide range that the writers bring to their output and the direct interactivity between the reader and the writer. At first look, there seems to be no difference between blogs and columns, but on closer scrutiny, both have many distinct features.

Bloggers and columnists both own their writings and their personality is and should reflect in those opinions and experiential pieces.

Blogs are highly interactive, are not dictated by space or even time, in the sense that they do not have to be produced like columns have to be at predetermined intervals daily, weekly or fortnightly. Bloggers do not have the pressure of a deadline and can produce whenever they feel like writing. Bloggers can track how the column is being received and if it is

doing well, they could probably add on to it to create more buzz. They do not have to wait like columnists writing for media houses another week or so for their next piece. Bloggers can also correct any mistakes or factual errors that may be pointed by a reader immediately, and not wait to issue a corrigendum in a publication.

Bloggers may not have the discipline and rigour of columnists and hence can easily fall into the trap of writer's block. He produces an article whenever he feels like, and with discipline, it can be thrice a day, twice a week or once a month. If the blogger is keen that readers keep coming back to his blog, he has to produce articles at least thrice a week. The advantage bloggers have is they do not have to adhere to word length, unlike columnists, who are given a strict word length, which they can neither exceed nor fall short of.

Readers usually keep track of their favourite blog by going to the site often. Or these days they follow the blogger on Twitter or Facebook and know when he posts his new article there.

In the modern media world, experts recommend that columnists should also pursue blog writing intermittently to keep his online presence going. Blogging can be a lonely experience while writing a column can be, if the writer decides, a collaborative exercise, brainstorming with the editor or interacting with the sub-editor, an

editorial desk hand, who is giving the column a once-over before it goes to print. Whether it is a blogger or a columnist, both "own" their columns and blogs, they personalise it, readers keep coming back again and again for their views...they become a brand by themselves.

Experts feel it is easy and even imperative for columnists to blog, so that they have a digital presence and can encash on their familiarity with readers. Right now, columnists tend to post their print columns on a blog site that they may create, but that does not add to much since their columns will be available in the online version of the publication. All columnists can be bloggers, but all bloggers cannot be columnists.

Another edge bloggers have over columnists, especially print columnists, is that they can have the web page full of photographs and illustrations interspersing the article and giving it an attractive look. Print columnists have to be content with one photograph, usually chosen by the editorial desk and one that is hopefully relevant to the article. Columnists usually give suggestions for the visual along with the article, but finally they are at the mercy of the sub-editor/s.

Even as the bloggers have interactivity with their readers, the connect that exists or existed in pre-internet times between the readers and the columnists was remarkable. Readers wait for the day when their favourite columnist's column was expected to appear. That is a special bond which bloggers cannot hope to achieve, as there is no timetable that they follow, which the readers await for eagerly. The best example of this is closer home, in Mumbai's evening dailies, *Mid-Day* and later *Afternoon Despatch and Courier*. They were hot sellers because many readers

would just wait for the day's paper to read their favourite columnist Busybee.

There is also a flip side to the interactivity and instant feedback one gets when one has an online presence. As much as one gets kudos that one craves for comes one's way, there is also a great likelihood of getting roasted. If one writes on a controversial subject and takes a clear stand on it, one can be sure that there will be a surfeit of hate mail and correspondence. There have been many occasions in recent times, when there has been name calling on social media. Many publications moderate their letters and feedback sections and make sure trolls do not creep in. There are also AI trackers, which filter mails that use foul language.

Columnists, in such cases, have to develop a thick skin and not take the trolls and hate mails personally.

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## **7.7 COLUMNS AND PODCASTS**

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*Cambridge Dictionary* defines podcast as “a radio programme that is stored in a digital form that you can download from the internet and play on a computer or on an MP3 player”. Hence, a podcast can be defined as an episodic series of oral word digital audio files. They can be downloaded by a user to a personal device and listened to easily. A podcast series normally has a couple of recurring hosts who would get into a debate related to a specific subject or contemporary event.

That makes podcasts a perfect tool for dissemination for columnists. Columnists have the expertise and material to make it work on podcasts. Podcasts are now created by individuals with absolutely no experience or knowledge in broadcasting.

Podcasts are like blogs. They do not have a timetable like a newspaper or online column, and can be created whenever one is struck by an interesting idea and has enough material to engage the audience. It would be easier for established columnists to find the audience for their podcasts and for a newcomer, though it could be a struggle initially. But the fact is that digital audio files are easy to produce and do not cost much, as most software is free and easily downloadable and easy to distribute on the internet. The cost mainly, for a new entrant, would be advertising through paid adverts, though even that can be brought down by spreading the word through social media and word of mouth.

There has been tremendous improvement in the last five or six years in affordable recording and editing equipment. From the listeners' viewpoint, with smartphones, wi-fi and cheap data, podcasts are easily accessible.

Those who broadcast podcasts earn their revenue from advertisements which are, unlike other audio mediums like FM and radio, less intrusive. The advertisements are usually subtle and not loud, as they usually are on FM and radio.

Another source of revenue for podcasts is sponsorship, which will present itself if and when the podcast becomes extremely popular and gains traction. The base of listenership may be small, but what the sponsor and advertiser look for is the quality of the audience. If the topic of the podcast and hence the audience are relevant to the product or service, the client would follow automatically.

Journalist Ben Hammersley explains that podcasting has brought people into broadcasting. These are people who would normally never have seen the inside of a recording studio. "There are of course professional podcasters, but there are many more people who create quality content and do it for nothing," he says.

When one is new to podcast production, the columnist, if somewhat technologically challenged, can start off with simple and easy-to-use tech apps, but if one wants to upgrade oneself in producing high-quality podcasts, there are many platforms and apps that can be accessed and self-taught.

More and more people are producing slickly produced content in a medium where quality trumps quantity. The quality of sound varies a lot from smartphone mics to external recorder to digital voice recorders. Some recorders are so sensitive that they pick up the slightest extraneous sound and quality could suffer. In podcasting, one has to take care of the recording equipment, the space where the recording is taking place if it is not a professional studio and make sure that editing skills are used to the hilt to cut out any unwanted sound.

Many freelancers refrain from podcasting, because they feel that the technological aspect, such as recording high-quality podcasts and sound editing are too complex. Like any other field, if you want to ace it and produce quality output both technically and content-wise, the practitioner or columnist has to show a lot of patience and self-train on various aspects of podcasting. It still remains the cheapest medium for people, who can also be self-taught on all aspects of broadcasting.

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## 7.8 FIVE WELL-KNOWN COLUMNISTS IN THE WORLD AND INDIA

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**Sid Hartman:** The longest serving newspaper columnist is Sid Hartman, who has written for the *Star Tribune* in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA, since 11 September 1945, for a total of 74 years and counting. Sid Hartman began a weekly sports column in September 1945 and continues to write his weekly columns even as he celebrated his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday in March. This citation is attributed to the

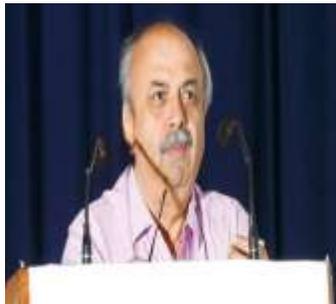
Guinness Book of World Records.



**Khushwant Singh:** Khushwant Singh was an Indian author and an editor. His book *Train to Pakistan* in 1956 became one of the most well-known novels written by an Indian in English. He ran a syndicated column titled “With malice towards one and all”. It was one of the longest running columns in Indian journalism. It followed a format of three or four short pieces on various topics from history to literature to politics to anecdotes, and would always end with a snippet which would be a joke, many of which poked his own community of Sikhs. He was one of the most erudite persons India has ever seen. He died in March 2014.



**Busybee (Behram Contractor):** Under the pseudonym Busybee, Contractor wrote one of the longest running daily columns (except Sundays) called Round and About. Humour is arguably the toughest act to pull off in journalism and to do it everyday was a grand feat. He worked within two or three formats to convey his point, but mostly did it in a conversation between himself (in first person) and another character in each column. His column was quintessentially Mumbai and life in that megapolis; it first appeared in the city paper *Mid-day* launched in 1979, but it moved to the competing daily *Afternoon Despatch and Courier*, which he himself founded in 1985. Contractor died in April 2001.



**Sachidananda Murthy:** Sachidananda Murthy is Resident Editor of *Malayalam Manorama*, New Delhi, a national newspaper with headquarters in Kerala. He is a seasoned journalist who writes on international and national politics, and governance. He is a weekly columnist with *The Week*, a weekly magazine of *Malayalam Manorama* since its inception in 1982.



**David Brooks:** David Brooks has been a columnist for *The New York Times* since 2003. A conservative in a liberal paper, he writes on political and cultural issues. The editor was looking to replace William Safire as columnist after a long stint and was looking for a conservative “who wouldn’t make our readers shriek and throw the paper out the window”. Brooks started the column on September 3, 2003, and by his own admission, “The first six months were miserable. I’d never been hated on

a mass scale before.” But his incisive writing and ideas won over his audience and made it compelling reading, even though most of them were on the other side of the political spectrum.



**Maureen Dowd:** Dowd became a columnist on *The New York Times* op-ed page in 1995. Dowd's columns have been described as letters to her mother, whom friends credit as "the source, the fountain of Maureen's humour and her Irish sensibilities and her intellectual take." Dowd herself has said, "She is in my head in the sense that I want to inform and amuse the reader." Dowd's columns are distinguished by an acerbic, often polemical writing style. Her columns display a critical and irreverent attitude towards powerful, mostly political, figures such as former Presidents George W. Bush and Bill Clinton. Dowd tends to refer to her subjects by nicknames. For example, she has often referred to Bush as "W." and former Vice President Dick Cheney as "Big Time". She has called former President Barack Obama "Spock" and "Barry". She is a recipient of many prestigious awards including the Pulitzer Prize.

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## 7.9 CONCLUSION

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With social media and WhatsApp, news now travels faster than ever and has become universal. The columns that each media outlet carry distinguishes from the competition and becomes the differentiator. As technology keeps moving at hectic pace and with it, the spread of information, columns will be more sought after by the discerning readers.

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## 7.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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1. What are the opinion pages in a newspaper called?

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2. Do the publications take responsibility for the views of the columnists?

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3. Name five topics for columns.

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4. Are all columnists journalists or ex-journalists?

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5. What are the two main differences between blogs and columns?

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### 7.11 KEY WORDS

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**Column:** A piece of writing in a newspaper or magazine, usually on a particular subject, that is always written by the same person and appears regularly.

**Blog:** A regular record of your thoughts, opinions, or experiences that you put on the internet for other people to read.

**Op-ed:** Used to describe a piece of writing that expresses a personal opinion and is usually printed in a newspaper opposite the page on which the editorial is printed.

**Deadline:** The time or date by which something must be done.

**Podcast:** A radio programme that is stored in a digital form that you can download from the internet and play on a computer or on an MP3 player or on a smartphone.

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### 7.12 REFERENCES

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Business Strategy Essentials You Always Wanted to Know by Callie Daum

Shaping the future by William P Belgard and Steven R Rayner

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<https://www.janetmurray.co.uk/how-to-land-a-regular-column-in-a-newspaper-or-magazine/>

**UNIT : 8****ANALYSIS****:: STRUCTURE::****8.0 Introduction****8.1 Objectives****8.2 What Is Analysis?****8.3 The Key Elements of Analytical Writing****8.4 Rewriting is Imperative****8.5 Skills Needed For Critical Thinking and Analysis****8.6 Analytical Writing in Journalism****8.7 Analytical Writing in Times of Fake News****8.8 Conclusion****8.9 Check Your Progress****8.10 Key Words****8.11 References**

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**8.0 INTRODUCTION**

Analytical writing is one of the key intellectual elements in an academic career or any writing career, including journalism. Analytical skills help in developing one's own unique and individualistic points of view as well as for critical and incisive thinking. One can have knowledge but without any analytical ability, one would be just an information bank.

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**8.1 OBJECTIVES**

To prepare students in the craft of analytical writing  
To familiarise with arguments and research  
To understand the importance of applying analysis in almost any field

**On the completion of this unit, you will be able to:**

Employ analysis in all forms of writing  
Realise the importance of critical thinking and analysis  
Gain a well-rounded thinking process for analytical writing

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## 8.2 WHAT IS ANALYSIS?

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Analysis is a key attribute in academic life, in journalism and arguably in any form of writing, including fiction, technical writing, theses, grant proposals and college applications. By enhancing your analytical abilities, you will bring to the fore your unique individual point of

view and make effective contributions both academically and professionally.

Analysis means examining every point of an argument or theory minutely and threadbare. It brings lucidity to any argument and helps not only in professional fields but also in tackling personal travails. It helps in observing and understanding many aspects of disciplinary, professional, and public issues. Analysis is looking at issues, theories, or any aspect of one's chosen field with a toothcomb and finding details that have earlier either been overlooked or not even attempted.

If and once you apply analysis and analytical thinking, you can solve many day-to-day and complex problems and help make decisions on important matters. In corporate life, ability to analyse situations and issues can improve the productivity of yourself and others, thereby enabling you to achieve goals and targets.

Analytical writing is arguably the most important aspect of GRE tests – apart from GMAT and TOEFL -- that Indians have to give for studying in the US. The GRE essay section, also known as the GRE Analytical Writing Assessment (AWA), actually comprises two parts: the Issue essay and the Argument essay. You are allotted 30 minutes for each essay. Both test your ability to write a cogent thesis statement that you must defend over the course of several paragraphs.

The application of analysis or analytical writing is paramount in academics, and it needs rigorous practice, backed by solid research, writing and rewriting. An analytical mind goes beyond the obvious and digs deep beneath the surface to unearth what is unusual, unique and unseen. To make analysis interesting both for yourself and the reader, the subject chosen should be of some significance and also engaging.

If the subject itself is boring, you may dig as deep as you want but it may not lead to much, even if you discover something. Depending on the subject, there are several ways and modalities of research that can be employed, each unique to the field. A socio-economic issue may require a different set of eyes and thinking for analysis, while a scientific problem or theory will have a totally different way of tackling analysis. One of the most crucial facets of analysis is recognising the cause-and-effect

synergy. Another facet is gaining practical knowledge through trial and error.

Even while we elaborate on what constitutes analysis, any analysis should have certain attributes including presenting a point of view, scrutinising each aspect of an argument or theory, understanding the importance of each aspect, discussing cause and effects and finally rounding it off in a lucid conclusion.

While writing analysis, it should not be confused with a summary. One may think that one is being succinct even while making one's point, but analysis expects much more than that. Analysis means breaking down a theory or an argument into various elements and then posing questions on how you reached the conclusions and why you are arguing a point in the first place. Analysis is your opportunity to contextualize and explain the evidence for your reader. Your analysis might tell the reader why the evidence is important, what it means, or how it connects to other ideas in your writing.

In a summary, no argument or conclusion is presented. It highlights the main points and makes a cursory mention of the statements and thoughts others have expounded on the subject. Analysis, on the other hand, makes a thorough examination of the area of the study and interprets each aspect. It discusses threadbare why each aspect of the study is significant and connects the dots between various elements of the study. It should have an elaborate discussion on the arguments – whether one's own or of others, its strengths and weaknesses, the merits and the demerits, the efficacy and inefficacy.

Analysis is crucial for us to understand why things happen the way they do. It is like opening the Pandora's Box and digging deep inside. Analysis searches for things that are not obvious at first look and may seem to be hidden on a cursory survey or inspection. Analysis reveals the unknown and something that is hidden beneath the clutter. Not all subjects are worthy enough to be scrutinised for an analysis; the right subject has to emerge with an interesting narrative waiting to be told.

Analysis is a type of primary research that involves finding and interpreting patterns in data, classifying those patterns, and generalizing the results. It is useful when looking at actions, events, or occurrences in different texts, media, or publications. Analysis can usually be done without considering most of the ethical issues discussed in the overview, as you are not working with people but rather publicly accessible documents. Analysis can be done on new documents or performed on raw data that you yourself have collected.

While writing a fictional work, analysis functions at a different level. An analysis of fiction is not simply an identification of literal images or events in the story. Those literal images or events are facts of the story, and you would present them as part of your plot summary or as support for your analytical conclusions. The analytical conclusions you make are the essence of analytical writing about fiction. Some analytical conclusions might be who the central character is, whether the central

character is static or dynamic, what the central conflict is, what the climax is, what the tone of the story is, what a symbol in the story means, and so forth.

When you begin the analysis process, you must ask and answer some key questions:

WHO are the characters or forces that inhabit the story?

WHICH one is the central character?

WHAT is the problem or conflict that leads to a climax?

WHERE and WHEN does the story take place?

WHY does the character behave as he or she does? What is the motivation, key trait, or imbalance that leads to the exterior conflicts?

When you are able to answer these questions about a story, you have made a fair start of the analytical process.

Be aware that literary analysis is not the same as plot summary. A plot summary tells what happens in the story. The events are known as the facts of the story. A literary analysis tells how the author has used certain basic elements of fiction such as character, conflict, and setting. An analysis uses facts of the story to support logical conclusions about the story, such as whether the central character is static or dynamic.

Whether is fiction, academic or journalistic work, an analysis explains a thing or an idea and is crucial element in the final product. In any of the fields, you cannot begin to analyse the subject unless you have a well-thought-out idea of the overall meaning and effect of it. An analysis of a thing or an idea is always backed up with references to the key aspects of the thing itself.

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### **8.3 THE KEY ELEMENTS OF ANALYTICAL WRITING**

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Doing analysis is a time-consuming yet rewarding process. If one follows a few basic steps of analytical writing, especially for a research paper or academic writing, it may not look as onerous.

**Choosing the subject:** Analytical writing requires clarity of thought, right from choosing the subject to execution. Once the topic is chosen, one should have a clear idea of the elements and the areas of the topic one wants to cover and analyse. Now that you've collected your primary data, it's time to figure out what that data means and what you can learn from it. The keys to analysing your data are to pull out information that is the most pertinent to your writing, information you can highlight and discuss, and information that will support your claims (if you are making any).

Firstly, one has to deconstruct the subject that one wishes to or has to analyse. In a typical scenario of an issue, for example, like demonetisation, you will have to collapse the subject into various relevant parts and elements that you wish to analyse. In demonetisation, there was the social impact and the economic impact, there were also the short-term impact and the long-term impact, an ethical consequence to the entire exercise and case studies of people who were affected. The dismantling

of the subject will lead to a clear understanding of the path one needs to take in analysing the issue.

**Have a game plan:** You should set out the task in a systematic manner, including setting yourself a deadline, finalising the format and submission. Have a checklist which you can go back to at the end of finishing the thesis or research report. Do not be overoptimistic about the deadline; give yourself enough time to submit the analytical report. You need to give time

to plan, research, write, rewrite and conclude with the final product. Have an estimate of the word length, so that you do not overdo either the information gathering or the writing part.

**Know who you are writing for:** You have to consider the recipient/s of the tome that you are going to produce it for. Their basic understanding of the subject or their expertise should determine the language used in the academic writing. If it is for the consumption within the academia or for a peer-review journal, one can tend to be more technical and jargon-oriented, though it is better to avoid it. Whenever one is writing an analytical paper, it should not be too dumbed down for a layperson nor too technical for only an expert to follow. A middle ground would help in making the writing interesting. Also, it will help in the long run if you want to develop the concept in a book for general interest.

**Prepare the ground:** Once you have decided that you want the analysis to go the academic research way, it should be occupying your mind 24/7. All types of reading including journals, books and online material should be devoted to gathering information and references for the report. Maintain a diary either handwritten or online and note down the important sources that you would like to go back to when you get deep into it through the months. Note down the points that may run contrary to your viewpoint so that you can incorporate it and even argue against it as you go along. Treat this exercise as the preliminary research before you make sense of all these materials in the course of researching and writing in later months. Brainstorming with colleagues and experts from across the world, especially in an internet-driven universe, can help in the preparations.

**Prepare a vision statement:** This is akin to a vision statement for corporates and organisations. This will form the basis of why and what you are doing while pursuing analytical writing. The statement should explain in two or three sentences the purpose behind the paper and your original thought vis-à-vis the subject you have chosen. The statement should be concise and lucid. This statement will be your guiding light throughout the process of writing a research paper; it does not mean you can tweak the statement as you go along and discover more on the subject.

**A brief outline:** Supplement the statement with a concise outline of the topics that you plan to cover, the arguments for and against, and the references and evidence that you hope to present. This will be the roadmap that will aid in making the writing process efficient and smooth.

**Now, get started on the draft:** It is time for your first draft. Work on it in right earnest and start writing as you had envisaged your research paper. Get all the sections, graphs, references and arguments into your draft. It is not necessary that you start with the first chapter or the introduction. You can start whichever part you are comfortable with; remember, this is just the first draft and will definitely need to be polished and rewritten. Follow a certain protocol while writing the first draft, such as: 1. Just write. 2. Have clarity of thought while writing. 3. Get the flow and organisation of the paragraphs right. 4. Have all the references and arguments ready and in logical sequence. One of the benefits of combining primary research with secondary research is data triangulation. Data triangulation is when a piece of data, a finding, or a generalization is able to be verified with several different research methods. This helps add to your credibility and makes your findings stronger.

**Work on a concise but elaborate introduction:** Keep your introduction restricted to answering two main questions: What and why. These are clearly specified in the writing of a thesis or dissertation and one cannot deviate much from that. This is not the place to make your arguments or at least hold forth on them. Introduction, as it suggests, is just to make the reader aware of what to expect and convince that person that it will be worth his or her while to go further to read the entire report. In the introduction, one should be specific about the topic of the paper, introduce the background and define terms such as theories and historical references. You should write briefly about the new discoveries you have made in the course of your research and the insights that you have to offer.

**Writing the actual thesis:** Now you can get on to present the information that you want to. Write precisely, lucidly and incisively. Give evidence and reference at each point. Give credit where it is due; do not plagiarise or seem to be not quoting content without attributing it. Write chapter and section headings and stick to the themes while fleshing them out. It will make your job easier too. Keep referring to your notes and outline – as suggested in the earlier paragraphs here to be maintained at the preparation stage -- from time to time.

**Conclusion:** Recap the analytical paper in a concise manner and round it up to reiterate your arguments. It will be like a final bow to a wonderful performance where you proved your point. It is bragging without actually

bragging. Make sure not to raise any fresh points or arguments; it should give the reader and student a closure to the topic.

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## **8.4 REWRITING IS IMPERATIVE**

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Once you have written the first draft, probably after weeks and weeks of research, cross-referencing and detailing, you may think the hard work has finally paid off and your work is done and dusted. No, there is no substitute to revisiting what you have done at first go and rewriting and polishing the draft. You ought to do it; there is no escaping the second and probably more drafts. Your reputation is at stake with this analysis and there should be no loose ends.

This is the time to reiterate what analytical academic writing is about to yourself: academic writing is clear, concise, focussed, structured and backed by evidence. The reader should get a clear understanding of your objective in pursuing the research paper. The tone and the writing has to be formal but that does not mean convoluted or complicated words and sentences will impress the reader with your vocabulary and command over the language, which you should anyway show off in your brevity and lucidity.

Now coming back to the second draft, make sure that your vision statement created during the preparation before the first draft aligns with it. Make sure all arguments are well justified and backed by evidence and if not, do not be afraid to junk them. Do not approach the first draft with a closed mind; be ready to re-sequence the chapters and section. Ensure there is a smooth flow of ideas one after the other.

The idea behind the exercise of revision and second draft is that old ideas that seem out of place can be removed and new ideas that may occur to you during the course of the weeks of writing can be included in the research paper. Ultimately, the report should be eloquent, readable and understandable.

There are some time-tested practices to make sure that the report covers all the facts and figures, remains readable and misses no point. You should:

- Always take printouts for checking
- Read it out to yourself
- Have a pencil/pen handy to make notes and correction on the printout
- Annihilate all spelling errors, which should be a strict no-no
- Get it read by a trusted colleague

If it is an academic analytical writing document, you have to ensure that you have properly formatted citation within the text for each and every nugget of information from an outside source. If there has been any query from your guide or professor, it should be addressed. Go through the introduction thoroughly and make sure it gives a sense of what your topic

is, why it has significance, both short-term and long-term, and how you will be going about presenting and arguing it.

There should be continuity, in the sense that each paragraph should have a smooth transition from the preceding and to the subsequent ones. Each paragraph and section should have a well-thought-out topic headline for easy reading or reference. After making sure that the purpose of the second draft and revision – including additions, deletions, corrections, rearranging paragraphs, sections and chapters -- have been met, it is time to go back to the checklist that was created initially. Once – and only after – you have ticked every point in that checklist, which one assumes is comprehensive, can you be satisfied that the research report can be submitted.

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## **8.5 SKILLS NEEDED FOR CRITICAL THINKING AND ANALYSIS**

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Analytical writing, whether in the field of journalism, academia or blog, works better when it is structured to a fault, planned, focused, formal and backed by evidence. A research report must reflect the writer's knowledge and expertise.

The foremost skill you would need to bring to the table is the ability to argue a point well. It is your viewpoint, and you know best how to express it. Your individualism should shine through in your writing, your discussion, interpretation and evaluation of the sources. Your sections and paragraphs should ideally begin with your assessment and assertions and then the evidence, references, and arguments counter to yours with attributions should follow.

Each of your sections should reflect the originality of your thought and your argument. Once you have your argument clear, then you would know how to structure your arguments and counterarguments, and back your viewpoint with evidence. So that would mean reading up a lot of material on the subject and taking notes. The skills that you would need at such times are discipline and rigour.

Arguments have to be made logically and thereby structured. You should know how to develop the argument and take it to a logical conclusion. The arguments you make should run across the research report; there should be no let-up and all the material should be central and relevant to that.

Your bias should not be obvious. Both sides of the arguments have to be presented as also your thoughts on the subject and the arguments, while bringing together all the different and disparate ideas and elements.

You can show the merits and demerits of your argument, pre-empting any questions that the reader may have. But by giving different sets of evidence, you can make amply clear where you stand and why your argument has a validity that has not been explored before.

Next, you need to aim for a conclusion by analysing and balancing the evidence and disclosing the acceptance of a few ideas, although many

others are dismissed. You need to take a stand in the end of the analysis, which will disclose your real viewpoints.

Some academic writing, such as lab or business reports, will have a rather rigid structure, with headings and content for each section. However, there might be variations in other formats, even though the main structure of introduction, main body and conclusion remain the same.

When you start writing, you should have a clear idea of what you want to say. Create a list of your main points and think about what the reader needs to know and in what order they will need to know it. To select the main points you want to include, ask yourself whether each point you have considered really contributes to answering the question. Is the point relevant to your overall argument?

Select appropriate evidence that you will use to support each main point. Think carefully about which evidence to use. You must evaluate the information, as not everything you find would be of high quality.

Make your point clear in the first or second sentence of the paragraph, so that you can help the reader to follow a line of reasoning. Analytical writing must be supported by evidence such as data, facts, quotations, arguments, statistics, research, and theories.

The presentation of the evidence will demonstrate your understanding of the general concepts and theories on the topic, show that you have researched widely and know about niche areas of interest.

You should be well-skilled in the use of language and grammar. While incorporating other people's work, you should know how to paraphrase, summarise and quote. You should be able to use the language skilfully and appropriately to use a combination of these techniques throughout the article or research paper.

Usage of verbs should be done expertly, by switching back and forth between passive and active.

Research, ideas and arguments have to be accessible and open to challenge. Hence, it becomes crucial that your language accepts it.

In any analytical piece of work, you should not present something as a fact that might not be so. While writing articles or journals or even academic papers, you can use language that is often referred to as hedges. Use words like "definitely" or "proves" rather sparingly, and instead go for "It is possible" and "somewhat".

For an analytical piece related to a work of fiction, the argument can be from the perspective of the characters and their motivations. A turning point in a story, a passage, or even a sentence can be made into a bigger argument to drive home one's analysis and point. In a piece on a historical event, the argument could be based on the forces colliding and merging with unfolding events.

In scientific research, it has to be data that is methodically and scientifically researched to show cause and effect. It should reach a conclusion of the analysis and present the results.

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## 8.6 ANALYTICAL WRITING IN JOURNALISM

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When one talks of analysis in journalism, it is usually assumed to refer to political and business journalism. The business analysis would largely be number crunching, while political analysis has to go beyond pure numbers and read nuances and the undercurrents. This does not mean that analysis does not have any value in other beats; it does play an important role in dissecting civic affairs, health, crime or just about any other beat – even human interest -- especially when one wants to do an in-depth or long-form journalism.

News analysis has a unique position in publications. It is not news article nor editorials and not features; usually it will carry a slug called “news analysis” which means they are in-depth into a current affairs issue and analyse the circumstances around the issue and explain it. Such articles require a thorough and deep knowledge of the issue, the context surrounding it and the characters involved in it. News analyses are usually written by experienced reporters who have spent several years covering the beat or the subject.

Analytical journalism tends to break down complex issues to facilitate better understanding on the subject among its readers and public. It could be in the form of investigative journalism or data analysis, in other words, explanatory mode. Analytical journalism has to go through a more rigorous due diligence in collecting evidence, presenting them in a lucid manner for readers to understand and also diligently and safely storing the evidence in case of any future litigation.

Analytical reporting is used in journalism usually to explain and expose some misdeeds of the government or any other authority, though in many cases such as the annual reports of a corporate house, it can also make readers understand the stability or otherwise of the company and where it is headed. Analytical journalism puts into context all the information and data available at hand. It brings together seemingly unconnected details and data that may not be evident to the reader or make it clear that the dots are connected. Analytical journalism collates information that may not necessarily be kept out of public purview but may be dispersed.

In business journalism, analytical thinking and writing are effectively used to show how industry is growing. It also shows the link between GDP and the economy, future prospects of a company based on its quarterly results and similar data. In business journalism, stock market and stock performance of an industry or a company are areas where analyses are often applied.

The other area of journalism where it is applied with regularity is political writing. During elections, psephology involves deciphering numbers, permutations and combinations. That would be data analysis. But a seasoned reporter would go beyond the numbers and would analyse the candidate's party, the ideology it represents, the religion and caste of the

candidate and those in the fray and many underlying factors that may decide the outcome. Political reporters are usually clued in on all these factors and their analyses bring a punch to the reporting on the matter. During non-election time, the decision taken by the party in power and the reasons for opposition to take on the government on those decisions will have to be analysed to make the readers understand the nuances of the tussle.

Evaluating the data that is available is part of the analytical process that a journalist has to follow. To begin with even if it is an “expert” who is making a declaration, it is not necessary to accept it at face value. A journalist’s job is to question. Even when an expert draws a conclusion, it is for the journalist to ensure to know and make a judgment whether the methodology followed by the “expert” are valid. So, a diligent journalist would look for another “expert” who has drawn a different conclusion on the subject matter and juxtapose both the opinions together.

A good analysis will take care that the topic largely relevant to the general reader, the questions that it aims to answer and clarify are clearly thought out, the analysis itself is in-depth, well-structured and logically argued, supported by credible sources and data, leading to a logical conclusion.

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## **8.7 ANALYTICAL WRITING IN TIMES OF FAKE NEWS**

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The information overload these days is immense and comes from all kinds of sources, unlike earlier days when it was just newspapers, radio and television. With new sources like Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter and other social media and online platforms, the credibility of the news is often suspect. Many news sites have come up just to bust the fake news that are being peddled by many other news websites and outlets. Even so, information literacy to help people to critically assess online news and data is few and far between.

Critical or analytical thinking, as a major aspect of information literacy, provides a means to

engage with online content by looking for evidence to support claims and by evaluating the plausibility of arguments. There is an urgent need to investigate the current state of knowledge on the use of critical thinking to identify fake news.

People no longer rely on television and print media alone for obtaining news, but increasingly make use of social media and news apps. The variety of information sources that we have today has contributed to the spread of alternative facts.

User-generated information continues to contribute majorly to the social media without any check and balances. So false claims, deliberately mischievous news, conspiracy theories, hate news and hoaxes are perpetrated on gullible audience, especially on Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp. Any person with a smartphone – with cheap data costs – have

access to news on the go and more often fake news, which is not only consumed but also distributed.

It is only recently and rather reluctantly the social media platforms have taken baby steps to curb the spread of fake news. Most of their users tend to believe the half-truths and total falsehoods with ever determining their authenticity.

Fake news is akin to yellow journalism or rumour-mongering of an earlier era but the dissemination was limited then. Nowadays, the fake news spreads exponentially, sometimes more than the real news because it is spread systematically among people with similar ideologies or what is called the “echo chamber” which keeps out any alternative thoughts or ideas. This emergence came about as news media transformed from one that was dominated by newspapers printed by authentic and trusted journalists to one where online news from untrusted sources is believed by many.

Critical thinking covers a broad range of skills that includes the following: verbal reasoning skills, argument analysis, thinking as hypothesis testing, dealing with likelihood and uncertainties as well as decision-making and problem-solving skills. Since we are concerned with the evaluation of the credibility of online news, the following definition will be used: critical thinking is “the ability to analyse and evaluate arguments according to their soundness and credibility, respond to arguments and reach conclusions through deduction from given information”.

The idea is to develop the skills as part of information literacy to help identify fake news better. Information literacy demands that the person not only has access to information but also has other accessories like credibility and accuracy to process the information. Information literacy is important skill not only for identifying fake news, but also for navigating life aspects that require managing and scrutinising information and creating a narrative of being objective and reliable news creators.

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## **8.8 CONCLUSION**

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Analytical writing is a skill that is an asset to possess in the field of writing, whether it is in academia, research, journalism or books. There is information overload with the proliferation of news channels and news through almost all platforms including social media, streaming and blogs. In such a scenario, where all kinds of information reach a reader unfiltered, credibility can be gained through analytical thinking on the part of the reader and analytical writing on the part of the writer. If news is to survive, in-depth analysis of important news breaks is the primary way to win over the readers.

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## 8.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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1) What kind of writing is analysis applied in?

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2) What is a key difference between a summary and an analysis?

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3) Does analytical writing be backed by any supporting evidence? Why?

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4) How would you describe critical thinking?

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5) What is the importance of analysis and analytical writing in journalism?

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## 8.10 KEY WORDS

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**Analysis:** A detailed examination of anything complex in order to understand its nature or to determine its essential features; a thorough study

**Academia:** The life, community, or world of teachers, schools, and education.

**Psephology:** The statistical study of elections and trends in voting.

**Information overload:** Exposure to or provision of too much information or data.

**Echo chamber:** a room with sound-reflecting walls used for producing hollow or echoing sound effects —often used figuratively

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## 8.11 REFERENCES

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### Books

**A Handbook for Analytical Writing: Keys to Strategic Thinking** by William E Winner

**On GRE Analytical Writing: Step-by-Step Guide to the Issue Task: Solutions to Real Prompts** by Monika Chang and Keul Media

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**UNIT: 9****TRAVELOGUES****:: STRUCTURE::****9.0 Introduction****9.1 Objectives****9.2 What are Travelogues?****9.3 Tips for Writing Travelogues****9.4 Ethics in Travel Writing Journalism****9.5 Types of Travel Writing****9.6 Best Travel Writers in the World****9.7 Best of Travelogue Books****9.8 Conclusion****9.9 Check Your Progress****9.10 Key Words****9.11 References**

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**9.0 INTRODUCTION**

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Who does not like to travel? And if your passion is also writing, then you have landed in the perfect dream job. Travel is a fast-growing industry; of course, though currently it is badly hit by Covid-19 pandemic and may take a long time to resuscitate. But that should neither discourage anyone from writing or reading about travel. Good travel writing can transport the reader to the destination and that is what matters.

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**9.1 OBJECTIVES**

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- To prepare learners of the craft of travel writing
- To introduce different genres of travel writing
- To expose students to the best of travelogues

**On the completion of this unit, you will be able to:**

- Get the complete lowdown on travel writing
- Understand the difference between various types of travel writing
- Grasp the dos and don'ts of ethical travel writing

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## **9.2 WHAT ARE TRAVELOGUES?**

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Travel writing or travelogue is a popular genre. It is so popular that there are magazines and publications dedicated to just travelling while newspapers and magazines have a separate section on travel. There are also guidebooks dedicated to cities and countries. People refer to travelogues to know about a particular place before deciding to visit it.

Travel writing, in the most traditional sense, gives detailed information about a destination which people and families would be interested in going to for their vacations. This genre of writing – better known as guidebooks -- serves as a diary and a repository of ready reckoner of the place, the hotels and restaurants there and generally the dos and don'ts. There is a more evolved travel writing, which gives an account of the place's history and contextualises it in the country and region it is in, tells us about customs and social milieu, and give an in-depth analysis of its culture and arts. These are also travel writing or travelogues that have, as against the cut-and-dried guidebooks, evolved into one of the best non-fiction categories. In these writings, the history of the place, its contemporariness, an insight into the society and living and other hidden facets of the place are explored and narrated. Reading travel books or travelogues can be a way of getting virtually transported to a place without having any plans to go there. Many travelogues are timeless and are read over decades and even centuries after they were written so that people can be transported to a world that does not exist anymore.

A travelogue is a well-articulated writing or recording of the writer's views and impressions of the places that he or she have been to. It is like a diary of the innermost feelings felt by the writer when visiting a place which may have scenic beauty, history or culture, with comments on the attractions or otherwise. A travelogue is also termed as literature of recorded facts, literature of recorded impressions and feeling during travel.

Within the genre of travel writing, there are works related to nature writing, guidebooks, historical tours, walking tours, adventure writing and so on. Travel writing is as old as travelling. For centuries, men and women have travelled for business and trade, on diplomatic missions, on pilgrimages, to spread religion or purely for exploring new worlds.

Among the early travel writers – dating back to 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries – were the Chinese Fa Hein and Huen Sang, followed by Marco Polo, Ibn-Battuta and Al-beruni. They travelled across the world including India and wrote books on their travels. Among modern-day travel writers, the

names that are on top of the mind recall include Graham Greene, George Orwell, V S Naipaul, Pico Iyer, Alexander Frater, Paul Theroux and Bill Bryson. There have been many intrepid women travellers throughout history like Isabelle Eberhardt (who explored the Sahara Desert in the 19<sup>th</sup> century dressed as an Arab man), Freya Stark, Isabella L Bird, Emily Hanh, Mary Kingsley, Beryl Markham, Devla Murphy and Kira Salak.

For almost all those writing for travel magazines or working on a travel book, it is like mixing business with pleasure. If you love travelling and exploring new places and love writing, there is no better job than this.

Some love the prospect of exploring new places and writing about them so enticing that they bootstrap their venture without even any commissioning by editors for a magazine or a book. Many do not even bother about it as they write for their blogs and are quite popular in the cyber world.

Travel blogs, especially once it achieves popularity and a following, can be self-sustaining with embedded advertisements and affiliate marketing. Ethics of travel blogging and affiliate marketing dictates that there is full disclosure from the blogger that the hyperlinked hotels, restaurants, museums etc. earn him or her money when clicked. Being upfront about it is a good journalistic practice.

Good travel writers are observant, have an open mind, keep themselves abreast of latest information about the land they are visiting and try to be free of any prejudices with the objective of recording what they see as neutral observers and present the facts and details. With smartphones equipped with good cameras, the modern travel writers provide excellent pictures to accompany their story but also giving technological input with google maps and accurate distances to benefit their readers. It is imperative in the modern context that there is a lucid and knowledgeable description of the culture, cuisine and customs practised in a particular part of the world.

A new genre of travel writing which is both exciting and thriving is in the form of graphic novels. The comic book and the graphic novel as an art form have not yet been given the attention, they deserve in the field of travel but it is developing into a great visual experience on both print and online platforms.

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### **9.3 TIPS FOR WRITING TRAVELOGUES**

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Ibn Battuta hit the nail on its head when he observed: “Travel - it leaves you speechless, then it turns you into a storyteller.”

Till a decade or two back, travel writing was not accorded the importance in literature it deserved. It was regarded as “light reading” and nothing more than biographical essays from famous writers.

As much as you may love travelling and writing and find this the best job in the world, there is a lot of hard work, research and planning involved. It may seem an easy job, but it is extremely hard. The enthusiastic traveller tends to tell everything about his trip and that is a pitfall. The

reader is not interested in learning each and every minute detail, and knowing what we already know.

The reader knows Niagara Falls is awesome and that Venice has canals. Many travel writers think that they are first to put down on paper insightful thoughts about a particular place or culture but that is a fallacy. The writer has to bring something more personal and different to the table and his writing.

A travel writer is a combination of story-teller as well as an informer about the living experience and skills having the keen observance of being a researcher so that he can access facts and figures, a novelist so that he can provide an insight using attractive language skills and a reporter to share the facts and figures acquired by him. A travel writer must have the creativity and visual imagination, to live in past as well as the present to offer a subtle and a communicative picture of the place.

The style of writing is the other aspect. There is always a lurking danger of use of superlatives by the writer after being impressed by a new place in the world that one has had the opportunity of seeing. Platitudes and adjectives overuse will make readers cringe. Phrases like "...where old meets new", describing the "quaintness" of a place are all done to death and best avoided. Words have to be chosen with utmost care; there is every chance that cliches will creep in as they are tailor-made for travel writing, like "romantic", "charming", "exotic" or "surreal" topping the charts.

It does not mean that one should look for newer and fairly unexplored places. One should not be afraid to write about a destination that has been extensively written about, say New York. The fact is that it is New York, the way you view it and bring a fresh perspective to it.

Some of the time-tested protocol to follow before you embark on the journey of travel writing include:

**Research the place:** The place that you plan to visit and write on requires thorough research. So before venturing out on the journey, it is better to read up whatever material you can lay your hands on, whether it be newspaper articles, magazines, books or online material.

Reading up on the information, history and culture is only to equip yourself with prior knowledge, but this should in no way cloud your opinion or writing. As you are planning to visit the place yourself, explore it first-hand and unearth your own gems and information by talking to the local historians and people, with the handed-down information and your own explorations, you can be well prepared to write your take for your audience.

**Give a Photographic Description:** Writers are artists. They present a picture through their words. Hence, show your artistic talent by describing the place in such a complete manner that the reader actually visualises it. Spin a beautiful picture so as to make the reader want to visit

that place. If you could get a picture of it then you can take its help to give an apt description. So, giving a photographic description will make your travelogue that much more appealing.

**Highlight Various Attractions:** In travel writing, highlighting the various attractions of a place is of great importance. There has to be more than one “pull” factor to make a destination attractive. A place may be “picture postcard” beautiful but there has to be other added attractions like eateries, night life or worship places to make it a go-to place.

A place may be very beautiful in its scenic beauty, but until and unless it doesn't give us any other attractions related to sports or similar fields, few people will be tempted to visit it. So, include in your travelogue all the available attractions of that place to lure the maximum number of visitors.

**Mention the Ways and Means to Reach the Destination:** After having drawn the reader's interest to look at the place you have written on, there is more job at hand. Reader needs to be informed about the various ways and means of reaching the destination and a ballpark travel cost using multiple mode of transports. Every information regarding travel including airlines, train or road transport should be accompanied by the likely and comparative fares for each and also with the link on how to book.

**Places to stay:** Zeroing on a place to stay is a major make-or-break for most travellers. A list of good luxury and budget hotels will go a long way in convincing the reader to make the trip. Also, it is important to mention the distances to and from the hotel to airport and the city centre or where some of the main attractions are. The hotels should be mentioned keeping in mind that the reader could be from any economic strata, so there should be budget hotels for the middle class to cheap dormitories for the backpackers and lower middle-class families to luxury hotels for the rich.

**Off-the-beaten track attractions:** Not all travellers are alike. There are many who like to explore the non-touristy attractions and always look forward to going on the offbeat paths in the destination. It could be hiking trails, secluded and remote hamlets, local winery or even a shopping area with unique or bargain stores away from the city centre. The travelogue will create a niche for itself if it appeals to the traveller who likes to stay away from the usual.

**Give Some Cultural Background:** Giving some cultural background of a place makes your travelogue richer in its content. People like to know the background and culture of a place they are planning to visit. It gives them a distinctive idea of what to expect from it. It also helps them in their choice of clothes and accessories. It is better to list some dos and don'ts of the place, so that a person does not make a cultural mistake. Say

a person is planning to visit the Middle East or places like India and Pakistan. “Appropriate’ dressing in these places would be to avoid wearing anything skimpy, especially for women, and to not indulge in PDAs (public display of affection). Demanding beef in India or pork in a Muslim country could be considered offensive. Hence, understanding the dos and don’ts of a particular place makes a person abide by all her/his etiquettes, even as the sights and sounds of a place are fully enjoyed.

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#### **9.4 ETHICS IN TRAVEL WRITING JOURNALISM**

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It may be the best job in the world for budding journalists and writers when you travel and write about it. But below the surface of the “best job” tag lie several unspoken realities that challenge journalistic ethics. Many a time, it is difficult to gauge from the article if the travel writer has gone on a junket (free all paid-for trip by the organisers or the country attracting tourists) or a trip paid for by the magazine or self.

*New York Times* policy states, “The Travel Section will not publish articles that grow out of trips paid for or in way subsidised by an airline, hotel, tourist board or other organisation with an interest, direct or indirect, in the subject of an article.” Many reputed publications avow similar policies. The problem is that self-regulation, if practised strictly, does not always work, especially when the budgets of many publications are under stress, due to shrinking subscriptions and advertisements.

To gather enough information to write a story, travel writers must travel, stay in hotels, eat meals, and see attractions, to give an accurate account of what is store in the destination. Travel writers or any journalist do not earn enough to spend their own money to follow their calling, and publications rarely put up the money to fund the sojourns.

Junkets are the option, with a country’s tourism department wanting to promote its destinations in another country (say Australia wants to lure Indian tourists to its shores) or a corporate house in India is struggling to increase its media presence or show off its plant abroad, along with some major attractions in that country. It may organise an all-paid-for trip for a team of journalists. Many times, it could be a combination of several institutions – such as the airlines, the hotels or museums contributing to a journalist or travel writer exploring their city or town.

Junkets may seem like a vacation, however, it is anything but that. Usually, the itinerary is so jampacked that it would entail waking early, then moving from one attraction to another, with the writer having to take notes and clicking pictures, so that one may actually forget to enjoy the place and its cultural hubs. Even your meals would be taken with local historians and others discussing key pointers and information to perk up the article.

Writing after junkets will test the writer’s experience and professionalism. He or she has to make them count. Professional travel writers would not even mention, leave alone praise, each and every hotel or restaurant that hosted them. A less professional writer – many a time

an upstart blogger – go along with the promotion peddled by the junket organisers and tend to think that the all-paid-for trip to an exotic location is a reward by itself.

Professional journalists blogging is a different ballgame altogether and they can be expected to check facts and turn out high quality and well-researched material. But wannabe journalists turned bloggers produce shoddy work with their “thrill” at getting a free trip gives them a feeling of having “arrived”. There is little or no research and fact-checking, and it is a long monologue on the sight-seeing, opinions and photos.

Travel writers have a responsibility to their readers and establishing their credibility -- with thorough research, giving out accurate and honest information and not letting bias creep in because of a favour or junket -- is paramount.

With bloggers, one way of earning money is what is called affiliate marketing. They just hyperlink references to any hotels or museums within their story for earning a few valuable – and sometimes lucrative -- bucks. Usually, the ethical blogger would put out a prominent declaration on the page that says, “I will be compensated from the hyperlinked links when clicked,” or “some of the links below are affiliate links. If you click on these links and choose to purchase, I will receive a commission with no additional cost to you.” In the US, it is imperative, as per the rules and guidelines issued by the Federal Trade Commission, for the blogger to disclose affiliate links.

According to professional travel editors, the way to deal with disclosure for both bloggers and travel writers on press trips for print publications is to disclose the support they get from the destination, airline or hotel. This kind of full disclosure not only allows the reader to be more informed but, by default, usually compels the writer to be more accurate and less fawning.

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## 9.5 TYPES OF TRAVEL WRITING

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**Day trippers:** Are you one of those people who gravitate toward articles about the perfect day trip? Local or regional attractions are great for this type of piece. This is a mashup of a few ways to pursue travel writing — it can be an outdoor expedition, recreational indoor activity, weekend getaway, or a combination. It is a destination piece with an element of adventure that gives the reader a glimpse of what they could be doing this weekend.

Consider whether the piece would be family-oriented or not, what are some interesting things to do outside the must-see attractions, how to get the most out of the day or weekend, along with descriptions of the scenery and facts about the activity. Whether it is water sports, glamping or packaged adventures if you live it, why not write about it? This can also be a version of roundups (see below) and may include additional specifics on a destination’s happy-hour specials, shopping, food, drink, the arts, and nightlife.

**Roundups:** Very popular these days, roundups are bullet-point lists that collect information on different destinations with a common theme, such as the ‘10 Best B&Bs in San Francisco’. It is brief and usually presented in bullet points to highlight the must-sees and other features of the destination. It follows the format of listicles and makes it easy to read. Roundups should be accurate and well-researched to produce quality pieces (even better is visiting the destinations and providing original content).

**Festival writing:** A travel story involving holidays and special events, such as New Year’s or Germany’s Oktoberfest should be pitched and planned well in advance. It need not be big-ticket event; local fairs and festivals could also be very interesting and exotic for many travellers.

**Off-track destinations:** These are what are known as side trips. These are interesting travel spots which are short trips en route or near a major destination. These are not on the usual tourist maps but make for interesting stopover because of its idyllic surroundings or boutique shops or unique style of living. For example, near Iowa in the US, there is a small Amish village who live without any modern amenities and coexist in their own traditional way of living. Side pieces detail how to get there and attractions and details such as hours of operation, so the readers can know what to expect while visiting. Side trips are usually day trips.

**Destination pieces:** Destination pieces that are feature articles are usually very in-depth. They find the right angle to draw the reader into the painting the travel writer creates and entices them to visit. Features can be seasonal but should always be relevant. Often, editors assign these to established writers or those they have a working history and familiarity with. Well-organized pieces seamlessly integrate facts, anecdotes, historical information, encounters, storylines, and the ‘Five W’s’ of who, what, when, where, and why (and sometimes how). The challenge remains, as with all popular attractions, of finding a fresh way to retell something many others have done before.

It is usually told in the first person and the voice is more of a delivery tool than the focus. Destinations can also highlight overlooked attractions and little-known gems.

**How-to guides:** These guides give most pertinent advice and information to fellow travellers. It helps solve readers’ travel problems before they occur, and this alone will generate more shares if it is relatable and reliable.

A how-to can focus on just one aspect of travel, such as how to get around complex international airports, for example. How-to advices are in listicle form and one of the most searched topics – like “How to get best discounts in hotels” -- online. A good “how-to” travel article gives

trustworthy tips for readers to take advantage of and goes beyond the destination's attractions; it is a great value-add.

**Foodies' treasure hunt:** This is a prized gig for foodies—exploring diverse cuisines, cultures, and dishes, all the while visiting interesting places. This is a staple in the travel writing industry because there are evergreen opportunities to explore. If you have a genuine interest in food and basic cooking knowledge, this dream job can lead to interesting discoveries, making for well-rounded pieces.

Food and travel articles are not reviews and are more than just why a meal is great or where it falls short or the restaurant's location. It's the presentation, the ambience, the way this dish makes you feel, the amazing hole-in-the-wall gems.

You get to write about how in some places food is passed on as inheritance, such as how it can be the marking of a culture and its people, and also explores the history and traditions passed on down generations.

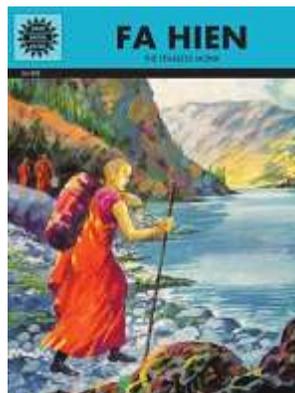
**Personal travel essays:** A well-written, insightful personal travel essay is every editor's dream, but it is not always in demand or easy to write. A distinct voice, a great backstory, a universal theme and/or lesson and the ability to tell a travel-related story imbued with metaphors and comparisons that reach the reader, are all part of great personal travel essays.

A personal travel essay is rich in perspective and a balanced travel narrative. The travel aspect should not hide inside your personal essay, your purpose should live amongst its storyline. Places can often invoke revelations that arise through reflection, writers learn about themselves, explore emotional issues, and make hidden connections.

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## 9.6 BEST TRAVEL WRITERS IN THE WORLD

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**Fa-Hein:** Fa-Hein or Faxian was a Chinese Buddhist monk and translator, who travelled by foot from China to India, visiting sacred Buddhist sites in Central Asia, the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia between 399-412 to acquire Buddhist texts. He described his journey in his travelogue, *A Record of Buddhist Kingdoms*. In 399, Fa-Hein set out with nine others to locate sacred Buddhist texts. He visited India in the early fifth century. He is said to have walked all the way from China across the icy desert and rugged mountain passes. He entered India from the northwest and reached Pataliputra. He took back with him Buddhist texts and images sacred to Buddhism. He saw the ruins of the city when he reached Pataliputra.

Fa-Hein's visit to India occurred during the reign of Chandragupta II. He is also renowned for his pilgrimage to Lumbini, the birthplace of Gautama Buddha (modern Nepal). However, he mentioned nothing about the Guptas. Fa-Hien wrote a book on his travels, filled with accounts of early Buddhism, and the geography and history of numerous countries along the Silk Road as they were, at the turn of the 5th century. He wrote about cities like Taxila, Pataliputra, Mathura and Kannauj in Middle India. He also wrote that inhabitants of Middle India also eat and dress like Chinese people. He describes Pataliputra as a very prosperous city in his writings.



**Ibn Battuta:** Ibn Battuta (1304-1368/1369) was a Muslim Moroccan scholar and explorer who, over 30 years, visited most of the Old World, including Central Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, China and Iberian Peninsula. Near the end of his life, he dictated an account of his journeys, titled *A Gift to Those Who Contemplate the Wonders of Cities and the Marvels of Traveling*. He travelled more than any other explorer in distance, totalling around 117,000 kms, surpassing Zheng

He with about 50,000 kms and Marco Polo with 12,000 kms. In June 1325, at the age of 21, Ibn Battuta set off from his hometown on a *hajj*, or pilgrimage, to Mecca, a journey that would ordinarily have taken 16 months. He would not see Morocco again for 24 years.



**Pico Iyer:** Siddharth Pico Raghavan Iyer, known as Pico Iyer, is a British-born essayist and novelist known for his travel writing. He is the author of numerous books on crossing cultures including *Video Night in Kathmandu*, *The Lady and the Monk* and *The Global Soul*. He has been a contributor to various publications including *Time*, *New York Times* and *New York Review of Books*. Iyer's writings build on his growing up in a combination of English, American, and Indian cultures.

Travel is a key theme in most of his works. In one of his works, *The Global Soul*, (2000) he takes on the international airport as a central subject, along with associated jet lag, displacement and cultural mingling. As a travel writer, he often writes of living between the cracks and outside fixed categories. Many of his books have been about trying to see from within some society or way of life, but from an outsider's perspective. He has filed stories from Bhutan, Nepal, Ethiopia, Cuba,

Argentina, Japan, and North Korea. Some of the topics that he explores in his works include the revolution in Cuba, Sufism, Buddhist Kyoto, and global disorientation.



**Kira Salak** (born September 4, 1971) is an American writer, adventurer, and journalist known for her travels in Mali and Papua New Guinea. She has written two books of nonfiction and a book of fiction based on her travels and is a contributing editor at *National Geographic* magazine. At the age of 24, Salak took a year off from graduate school to backpack around Papua New Guinea, the Pacific Island nation, and became the first American woman to cross the country. Her first

book, *Four Corners: One Woman's Journey into the Heart of Papua New Guinea*, describes that journey. After the book was published, an editor of *National Geographic Adventure* magazine asked her to write for the magazine and Salak's career as a freelance writer began. Salak gained a reputation for being a tough adventurer, surviving war zones, coup attempts, and life-threatening bouts with malaria and cholera.



**Bill Bryson:** Bill Bryson was born in Des Moines, Iowa, in 1951, but spends most of his time in the UK these days. His bestselling books include *The Road to Little Dribbling*, *Notes from a Small Island*, *A Walk in the Woods*, *An African Diary*, *One Summer* and *The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid*. In a national poll, *Notes from a Small Island* was voted the book that best represents Britain. He is one of the most prolific travel writers in the last few decades. He

is also known for his books on science, Shakespeare and the English language.

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## 9.7 BEST OF TRAVELOGUE BOOKS

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***No Hurry to Get Home* by Emily Hahn:** Originally published as separate essays in *The New Yorker*, this collection that makes up Hahn's memoir showcases a lifetime of testing the limits of what women "could do" in the 1920s and beyond. Hahn majored in mining engineering, basically to prove that a woman could. She travelled cross-country by car, pre-interstate, pre-Motel 6, and pre-7-Eleven. She walked across Africa and lived alone in the Belgian Congo. She was an independent traveller when independent travel was usually called "exploration" and done by men. By the '30s, she ended up in Shanghai, eventually riding out WWII

in Hong Kong, under Japanese control, before returning to New York to write from Greenwich Village.

***Travels in West Africa* by Mary Henrietta Kingsley:** As a woman in the late 1800s, Kingsley's escapade was not only unique but daring. With the small inheritance she got in 1893, she took off on her own to remote areas in West Africa as an explorer and a scientist. She canoed up ravines and rapids, walked through swamps and mangroves, visited villages and dealt with missionaries, traders, and locals, including cannibals. And if that was not enough, she also waded through chest-deep swamps, collected samples of fish, wrote about her exploration, and climbed Mount Cameroon in a cumbersome Victorian dress.

***Full Tilt: Ireland to India with a Bicycle* by Dervla Murphy:** Devla Murphy is considered one of the most adventurous and respected travel writers of all times. Now in her late 80s, she has been responsible for dozens of travel books, dwelling on destinations as varied as Cuba, Laos, Romania and Cameroon. Her most famous work is her debut book, written in 1965, on her solo bicycle expedition to India from Ireland. "Within a few weeks my journey had degenerated from a happy-go-lucky cycle trek to a grim struggle for progress by any means," she writes, before encountering wolves, broken ribs and heat exhaustion. She also packs a .25 pistol and has more than one cause to use it. Based on Murphy's daily diary, *Full Tilt* is the gritty Irish woman's account of her 1963 solo ride from Dunkirk across frozen Europe and through Persia and Afghanistan, over the Himalayas to Pakistan into India, during one of the worst winters in memory.

***Around the World in 80 Trains: A 45,000-mile Adventure* by Monisha Rajesh:** Monisha Rajesh has form when it comes to rail travel. This globe-straddling journey is the follow-up to the well-received 2010 book, *Around India in 80 Trains*, and sees her undertake a 45,000-mile (72,000 kms) journey through Europe, Asia and North America. Her gift for detail means that characters, as well as places, are brought to life.

***A Short Walk in The Hindu Kush* by Eric Newby:** "Can you travel Nuristan June?" With this 1956 telegram – sent by disillusioned London fashion executive Eric Newby to a diplomat friend – begins an engrossing, at times comical, mountaineering journey into Afghanistan. The pair lack anything like the requisite climbing experience but undergo a brief training period in Wales before travelling to the unforgiving peaks of Asia, with the aim of conquering the 5,800-metre Mir Samir. Newby's prose is sharp and lively throughout, drawing the reader into remote villages and the "spiky and barren-looking" Hindu Kush, where hardships (and a chance hillside encounter with steely adventurer Wilfred Thesiger, who sneers at their air-beds) await.

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## 9.8 CONCLUSION

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Writing on travel, destinations and places, or travelogues, is an art. It can be honed into a great skill and there will always be a demand for it from both travellers and non-travellers who want to vicariously live life. Best writers and explorers seem to do it alone – both men and women.

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## 9.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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1. Is travel writing a modern-day phenomenon?

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2. How important is it to give the cultural context of each destination?

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3. What is affiliate marketing and what are the ethics involved with it?

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4. What is the unique achievement of 14<sup>th</sup> Century traveller Ibn Battuta?

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5. What is Dervla Murphy's debut book *Full Tilt* about?

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## 9.10 KEY WORDS

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**Bootstrap:** To promote or develop by initiative and effort with little or no assistance; Starting a venture with one's own funds and/or those of family and friends.

**Listicle:** An article consisting of a series of items presented as a list.

**Ethics:** A discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation.

**Jet lag:** A condition that is characterized by various psychological and physiological effects (such as fatigue and irritability), occurs following long flight through several time zones, and probably results from disruption of circadian rhythms in the human body.

**B&B:** A bed and breakfast (typically shortened to B&B or BnB) is a small lodging establishment that offers overnight accommodation and breakfast.

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## 9.11 REFERENCES

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**:: STRUCTURE::****10.0 Introduction****10.1 Objectives****10.2 What Is an Interview?****10.3 Types of Interviews****10.4 Purpose of Interviews****10.5 Methods of Interviews****10.6 Preparing for an Interview****10.7 Interviewing****10.8 Conclusion****10.9 Check Your Progress****10.10 Key Words****10.11 References**

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**10.0 INTRODUCTION**

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Interviews are an all-important feature of journalism, as also other media industries like advertising and public relations. There are various methods of interviewing, each with its distinct feature, advantages and disadvantages. In journalism, interviews – short or long, with one question or many – are part of the daily routine.

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**10.1 OBJECTIVES**

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- Understanding the importance of interviews
- Comprehending the scope of an interview
- Application of interviews according to the situation

**On completion of this unit, you will be able to:**

- Structure your interview according to the field you choose
- Know the etiquettes of interviewing
- Get thorough practical knowledge of conducting an interview

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## 10.2 WHAT IS AN INTERVIEW?

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An interview is predominantly a conversation in which one person asks questions and the other person answers or is expected to provide answers. It is an accepted practice in the field of journalism, in the job and employment industry and in the field of research. An

interview is a tool to assess knowledge and elicit information with a pre-determined broader objective of saying something about the subject. That is the distinction between another question-answer format, namely, a quiz. A quiz usually relates to knowledge-based tests in a game or job or educational assessment. The latter may be part of an interview but on its own does not constitute as one.

“Interview”, simply put, is a one-on-one conversation between an interviewer and an interviewee. The former poses questions to which the latter responds, which – depending on the industry and the purpose – helps in either taking a decision or disseminating it to the larger public. In journalism, the interview can happen in real time, such as live TV or online video/webinar, or for a later time, when an interview is published in a print or online publication. In a job interview or an investigation, the answers are processed later to make, respectively, a decision on employment of a candidate or arrive at a premise, analysis or findings related to the subject of the investigation.

Interviews usually take place face-to-face and in person. Sometimes, the parties are separated geographically, connecting by methods such as videoconferencing or the telephone. Interviews almost always involve spoken conversations between two parties, or maybe even more than that. In some instances, a "conversation" can happen through emails or online chats between two persons, who could type their questions and answers.

In journalism, interviews can be unstructured and freewheeling without following a rigid questionnaire. Even if one starts with predetermined questions, one can stray from the script as follow-up questions arise whenever a new aspect is revealed in the interviewee’s answer. A good interviewer will have researched their subject and be ready with follow-up questions and fact-check. There could also be highly structured conversations in which specific questions occur in a specified order; usually these are interviews which are conducted “in collusion” with the interviewee, like a Prime Minister or a senior leader in the government. These are called scripted interviews.

The traditional format is the two-person or the one-on-one. There is a direct interaction between the interviewer and his or her subject and there is a higher probability of striking a rapport. The format allows for follow-up questions and even going back a few answers to clarify questions about them. It gives the interviewer better assessment of the credibility of the answers. The face-to-face interview is advantageous to both the interviewer and the interviewee. An in-person interview also involves an actual meeting, thus providing an opportunity to read each other through body language and facial expression, connect and achieve a comfort level. It can also be advantageous even when the subject is controversial, and the interaction is adversarial as it provides a dramatic tone.

Plainly put, an interview is made for the purpose of securing information about the interviewee, or about other persons or information that he or she knows or is interested in. The interview format has evolved over time as an integral part of journalistic work, surveys and case studies.

The goal of an interview, particularly in mass media and communication, could be to get a biographical account or to cross-check information sourced from others or to get information first-hand. In all interviews, it is understood that notes would be taken; for recording on audio or audio-video, courtesy demands that permission be taken of the interviewee. Usually, one establishes a fair degree of rapport at the beginning of the interview which develops further during the course of the interview. It is best if the interview is conducted without any interruptions or disturbance; that is the reason the location for the interview is extremely important.

Unless it is the demand of the journalistic deadline, it is rare and unadvisable to complete the interview in one session. The best interviews are done over several sittings; American features magazine Playboy was well-known for its skilful interviews of a wide range of celebrities and achievers including musicians, filmmakers, civil rights leaders, film directors, writers and sports people. Most of these interviews were completed over several sessions and conducted over many weeks, sometimes even months.

A good journalist would be able to take down notes by just jotting down the key catchphrase or inflective words and go to the writing desk at work and dash off the entire interview almost verbatim. Taking down copious notes and try to catch every word of the interviewee could be distracting. In controversial interviews, a seasoned journalist would ask a few questions, may hardly take any notes, and dash off the quotes. Even when one is recording an interview on a digital recorder, many journalists prefer backing up these with notes, in case the recorder does not record owing to technical issues.

Journalism demands an unstructured interview which gives the freedom to one subject to another, have follow-up questions depending on the answers given and other liberties. A structured interview or a questionnaire has a set pattern and should be shunned by journalists.

Seasoned interviewees like top politicians and businessmen tend to deliberately digress from the topic to throw the interviewing journalist off the track, a practice most visible on television where programme time is limited. Thus, while creating a rapport and establishing a cordial atmosphere for the interview, the journalist should never refrain from asking tough and probing questions while keeping a check on irrelevant digressions

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### **10.3 TYPES OF INTERVIEWS**

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This unit, in subsequent sections, will focus on interviews in the media. That being said, a student should be curious and be informed of other situations where interviews are conducted and necessary. Sometimes, these techniques for assessing can be employed in journalism too. The various types of interviews are:

**Media:** Reporters have access to authorities and celebrities and conduct interviews for publication. Depending on the need, it could be a short interview over the phone or in person for the story they are filing for the day. That underscores the significant of a deadline in chasing the subject to be interviewed and persuading them to talk. In other times, it could be an interview for a profile or a Q&A piece, which means it could be scheduled much before the publication date. There are also talk shows on TV where celebrities or people in position of authority come to the studio and are asked questions by the host, usually for entertainment (and sometimes information) purposes. Usually, they are pre-recorded and telecast later.

**Employment:** Titled as “job interviews”, these are held at the time of recruitment to assess the suitability of the candidates. The application of the candidate is initially vetted on the basis of academic and other qualifications. Then candidates that pass the initial screening are called for an interview which is conducted in a formal setting. The evaluation process may continue through several rounds of interviews in order to determine whether the candidate is right for the specific position and job. There are different interview formats that the candidate may go through, depending on the industry. In a case interview, the applicant can be asked to resolve a mock situation that could come in the course of the work that may be assigned to him or her. Employment interviews can be prolonged sessions with several screenings of the candidate, including through a group interview as well as those conducted by the human resources (HR) department of the hiring organisation.

**Psychological evaluation:** Psychologists employ a wide range of interviewing techniques to try to understand their patients and help them. A psychiatric assessment of the patient is done after seeking answers to a plethora of questions. When a couple seeks a psychiatrist's help in resolving relationship issues, then both are usually interviewed simultaneously in what is called as couple's interviews. Psychologists employed by policemen or well-trained interrogators use cognitive method of interviewing to assess their eyewitnesses and alleged criminals to recreate what happened at the crime scene.

**Research:** In the field of marketing and academics, interviews are mainly used for research. There are numerous ways in which interviewing is conducted such as personality tests and consumer marketing tests. In marketing, interview is a potent tool to try to understand what a set of consumers think about the product/brand and extrapolate the data to present the findings. Similarly, during major national elections, surveys are conducted through interviews of voters to assess which party or leader is ahead or gaining. These are usually structured interviews or questionnaires.

**Other situations:** Sometimes colleges conduct interviews of prospective students to assess the student, before offering the student a seat in the college or university. Embassy officials conduct interviews before issuing or not issuing visas for student, tourist and other applicants. Interviewing in legal contexts is often called interrogation. Debriefing is another kind of interview.

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## **10.4 PURPOSE OF INTERVIEWS**

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In media, an interview is how information is drawn out from the source or interviewee. Sussing information out of a source or authority is a skill that is developed and perfected during the course of a journalist's professional work. The discussion here would include giving an overview of the purpose of various interviews across many industries, many of which will give an insight into conducting interviews for a media profession.

The interview is a proven technique for seeking information. Advertising and marketing industries employ it in focus groups before launching a product or service, or for surveying existing products or service.

In media, journalists interview routinely on a daily basis for information from sources and authorities, and to get a perspective on current affairs. The public relations industry tends to interview their corporate clients to get information for any information that they want to be disseminated to the media and the public through press releases.

The demands of each industry from the interview tool interviews differ in their technique, objective and format though the overall goal remains the

same: gathering information. Many of the methodology of questioning in these industries will be similar, but some will be distinctive, reflecting the differences in the ultimate use of information. The goals of the interview may vary by the intended use for the information (for advertising, public relations, or journalistic purposes) and by the type of story that is being told (business, human interest, civic issues.) Their common goal is the gathering of accurate, factual, and comprehensive material that will contribute to an appropriate and interesting message.

It is quite possible more often than not that the entirety of the interview may not be reproduced in any story by the journalist and is just background information. Same is the case with the advertiser who interviews consumers or a PR professional who interviews top honchos of a company before issuing a press release.

In journalism, the Q&A format is often the norm especially in magazines and weekend newspapers. It is easy on the eye for the reader. The dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee is reproduced verbatim; usually the questions posed by the interviewer are put in bold font and the responses in light or normal font. A short introduction about the person who is being interviewed and the context ('news peg') for conducting the interview are explained. The byline of the interviewer will be mentioned matter-of-factly in the introduction.

The idea behind this type of interview may range from obtaining facts, information, opinions or just anecdotes.

Journalists are always on the lookout for a good story and human-interest interviews especially give them a flavour that goes beyond staid facts and figures to encompass valuable insights into human emotions and flavour of life

While doing investigative reporting, a journalist works with a lot of material which has to be vetted. As an investigative reporter, a journalist is expected to carry out multiple interviews with a wide range of sources and authorities, apart from reading and researching various records and official documents before assembling and filing a narrative. It is not necessary that all those interviewed would be quoted. The article or report should be checked for loose ends. All leads and information included in the report have to be cross-checked more than once. The investigative report provides perhaps the widest range of interviewees of any type of reporting and covers every type of contributor.

One of the functions of public relations practitioners is to know the kind of subject a journalist may be interested in and they will accordingly pitch an interview to suitable media outlets. When an important news breaks out, the public relations practitioner should be alert enough to realise that their client can get a comment or two in, and hence has to get in touch with the client and have a mock interview like a journalist would. It is then that the PR person can pitch for a follow-up interview by the journalist on the subject with the client.

In advertising and marketing industries, there is a need to understand public perception and opinion and hence interviews are conducted. An

interview might take place through a poll or focus group session seeking information about consumer behaviour and attitudes. Public relations research relies on poll or focus group data to measure public opinion as part of a drive to change attitudes. The results of a poll might also be used as a strategic public relations campaign to persuade policymakers in relation to the decisions they are considering.

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## 10.5 METHODS OF INTERVIEWS

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There are various methods of interviewing, and each has its respective merits and drawbacks.

**In person:** Carrying on a face-to-face interview is the most favourite method of interviewing for any professional, whether a journalist for a news story or a Q&A, or for a marketing person who is conducting focus groups. The primary advantage of a face-to-face is that you can pick up nuances about a person from the tone and body language. The venue of the interview could be crucial especially for a journalist who wants to write a descriptive introduction, to capture the surroundings and add “atmosphere” or “colour”.

An interviewee can be recorded with his or her full knowledge. Longer, more complex question strategies can be used, and the “being there” of both the subject and interviewer are by and large assured. A nod, a smile or giggle, or a non-plussed look – all non-verbal responses -- can all be included in the copy.

**On the flip side, if it requires the interviewer to travel a distance to meet the interviewee, it could amount to loss of precious time, especially if it is a news story for the day and there is a stringent deadline. Also, the interviewer’s appearance, age, race, gender or behavioural cues could affect the respondent’s answers.**

**Telephone:** For journalists who need to get information from busy or distant experts, the telephone interview is the go-to method for interviewing. It is a widely used approach for advertisers and public relations professionals too, who need to speak to clients about the message campaign, or to potential audience members to elicit an opinion about a topic or product. The biggest advantage is of course the convenience for the interviewer with no commuting required and for the interviewee who is not required to be physically present at the rendezvous. The drawback is of course the lack of any personal touch and or opportunity to capture any nuance by observing the interviewee. In controversial interviews, the subject may hang up the phone on the journalist abruptly, or even pretend the line is not clear.

**Video:** In the era of the pandemic, this is fast becoming the most popular method of interviewing. It is either through digital screen time on apps such as Zoom, WhatsApp, Skype or Facetime that the interviewer and

interviewee call and engage with each other, especially on television and other audio-visual channels. For print and online journalists, such an interview will work as a combination of a face-to-face and telephone interview and can catch a glimpse of any nuance. The advantage is that everything can be recorded, if mutually agreed upon. For journalists, this could be a major disadvantage, because the chances of getting something off-the-record from the interviewee are slim, unless the latter trusts the former enough to be convinced that the recording feature has been turned off.

**Digital:** Digital or email interviewing is becoming a popular method for initial contact with a prospective interviewee. Many interviewees are more at ease with the digital form of interviewing because they usually are better at writing than speaking “extempore”. In this format, everything is on record and taking a comment out of context could be a rarity. From the journalist’s viewpoint, you can never be sure that the interviewee is the person answering the questions personally; his or her PR agent could be answering and is later vetted by the person who is being interviewed, before the “send” button is pressed on email.

**News conferences:** This is the least favourite method of interviewing or news gathering, as far as a journalist is concerned. As far as the subject is concerned, it saves a lot of time, but from the journalist’s viewpoint, it takes the sting out of what – assuming it is newsworthy -- could have been an exclusive. Especially if the news is worthy enough to be televised live, there is little for the journalist to work on and he or she can only report whatever has already been covered the previous evening; in other words, it could fall into the realm of “important routine”. Reporters who have prepared particularly well often do not reap the benefits of their preparation. They may not have a chance to ask their questions, and if they do, they reveal their lines of inquiry to competitors.

Despite the limitations of news conferences, interviews continue to be a standard method that busy or celebrated people use for giving information to the media. Behind the scenes at press conferences, the work of public relations staff members is critical. For many news conferences, public relations staff have prepared handouts that give the essential information about the announcements to be made that day. Questions in news conferences should be short. Rambling when posing a question puts off fellow journalists and the subject.

**Focus groups:** Focus-group interviews are much sought-after in advertising and marketing industries and not in journalism. Depending on the product and service that is proposed to be the subject of discussion, the demographics of focus groups can vary. A moderator is chosen for each focus group interview and he or she allows the discussion to flow and directs the flow in such a way that it sticks to the topic on hand. The

moderator should not influence or lead the answer and the job is to primarily ensure that the members of the focus group do not stray from the topic. Each respondent should get an opportunity to make his or her point. Focus group interviews are almost always recorded with full knowledge of all participants.

The moderator at the outset explains to all participants the purpose of the interview and how it would proceed. Group members are told the method of recording and the subsequent use of their comments. Participants are given a small token payment as a norm. Group interviewing and eliciting information from many people through polling/surveying is also an important information-gathering technique for communicators. In focus groups, you meet a small group of interviewees who have agreed to discuss a topic or a product. A special strength of the focus group is its capacity to raise issues and enlarge the scope of the discussion.

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## 10.6 PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW

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In journalism, it is important to have your own sources for tapping information and also to identify people who need to be contacted for the information for your story. Before going into the interview, you should have prior knowledge of the subject, background information on the person being interviewed in order to ask the relevant questions and mental preparation for follow-ups according to the response.

For a daily news story which has to meet the daily deadline, you need to have more than one name for a potential interviewee as the person may not be available or willing to talk at that crucial moment or on that topic.

Interviews have to be immaculately planned. There are times when the subject would dictate the time allotted for the interview and whether they want to meet face-to-face or on telephone or digitally. There could also be conditions laid on recording or otherwise or to show the material before it goes to print (the latter is against journalistic ethics and should be opposed at all cost).

**Appraise and review:** The interview method should be employed to get information, corroborate information received from unnameable but trusted sources or to get a different take on news of the day. So before going to the interview, check your notes and see if the questions you have drafted or the questions that you should be asking should answer the following doubts:

What is the contentious issue?

Are there any discrepancies and gaps in the facts that are being laid out and are crucial to the story?

Are there any new facts that can be developed for the story?

Each interviewee is different and would demand different sensitivities and sensibilities. If some questions are inappropriate for an interviewee, they should be dropped.

Therefore, having some background information about the interviewee and the topic of the story would help to come straight to the point about the key issues to be addressed in the interview. When approaching the topic and the questions, you should appear knowledgeable and in command of the issue and not appear amateurish by asking basic questions. Your reader should get the hang of the topic from the introduction, your questions and the answer seamlessly, and not from a simplistic question like “Tell me about the topic” which can irritate both the interviewee and the readers.

Having a fair knowledge and reading up on material by experts other than your interviewee will help in counter-questioning and deciphering any jargon that he or she may use. The background knowledge should be such that it should not be possible for the interviewee to confuse you.

For topics currently in the news, reading articles from rival newspaper and magazines and archival material will give you a sense of direction that you want the interview to take so that fresh information is available to readers on the topic. These days, social media pages of potential well-known interviewees give an insight into the person. Also, scouring and keeping abreast of social media and networking sites keeps you up to date with the “flavour of the season” and other current issues.

Private-sector institutional interviewees pose special challenges for journalists. Many are well-trained to talk to communication professionals, wary of saying too much and sophisticated in their ability to take control of an interview. In private sector, business executives and honchos are usually adept at side-stepping issues and hence you have to be meticulous in your preparation and alert during the interview. You have to be tenacious with your line of questioning to get a direct answer and to get something substantial from the interview than any spin that they try to put on to avoid giving a direct answer.

Corporate bosses are used to “yes men” and deferential people around them, so they are not accustomed to being fielded probing questions. As much as you have to handle them with care and show due respect, you as a journalist cannot lose sight of the ultimate goal: of getting answers to your questions.

Scholars and academic experts are far different from other sources. With the depth of knowledge that they have on the subject, scholars and academicians like readers and people to get an insight into their area of expertise. Being quoted in the media helps as a morale-booster to the otherwise-anonymous work of a scholar and also in getting recognition which can lead to opening doors to financial grants and other opportunities. Academic experts may make for willing subjects to be interviewed as being quoted in the media enhances their credibility.

For those in marketing and advertising, before meeting a client - who is probably paying substantially towards the services he has hired you for - preparation is imperative. You have to understand the client's business and the need for putting out any information or campaign out there. With the knowledge and information that you have equipped yourself with thanks to the preparation, the client would feel confident that you are the right person for the job to spread the words about the products and services.

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## 10.7 INTERVIEWING

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Podcasts are digital audio files that can be streamed or downloaded for listening at any time. They are gaining more popularity than the other audio media, the radio. India too is witnessing a major podcast upsurge and is the third biggest podcast market after the US and China. India's podcast boom is thanks to the proliferation of smartphones, cheap data costs and gravitation to on-demand content.

The biggest advantage of podcasts is that you can not only choose what to listen to at any point of time by just logging in and playing back recorded podcasts, but you could be doing all sorts of activities and your daily routines like running, laundry, cooking or driving: just plug and play. A lot of the podcasts revolve around interviewing experts and celebrities. So before embarking on interviewing for your podcast, it is better to follow a few time-tested steps (apart from those listed in the previous section which are all valid here too):

**Have clarity on the interview format:** It can follow a direct Q&A format, or you could intersperse the interview with your own commentary like in a documentary. In the second format, you may have more than one interviewee to make it a well-rounded topic with varying viewpoints. You have to – like for any interview – prepare the set of questions that you wish to ask, how long you want the interview/s and the podcast to run. The podcast has to ensure that the listener is also involve in it, so while you are interviewing the experts on your podcast channel you have to communicate with your listener too.

**Provide the interviewee with information:** Podcast is a fairly new medium to many people, especially academicians, and hence they have to be fed information as to what to expect during the interview. They need to know how the show is recorded and give them a background on the demographics of your audience. A casual chat with the interviewee

before the actual show is to be podcast live or recorded is a good idea not only for podcast but for any interview on any medium.

Make sure the guest familiarises himself with the concept of podcast. Ask him or her to listen to a few podcasts to get an understanding of it. The guest has to be informed that the medium demands that the words be enunciated clearly so that the listener does not miss out on any word. In this aspect, the more you know about your interviewee the better or if he or she has any recording, you would be aware of the clarity with which they speak. Give some key tips so that your production quality is of high standards.

Usually, podcast interviews are done over Skype or similar VOIP (voice over internet protocols) platforms; a crash course for the interviewee on that with some reading material would go a long way in making your work easier. You have to impress upon them the need for a good internet/wifi connection at their end. Experts advise that Bluetooth-enabled devices are best avoided for podcasting.

An interviewee has to be made aware that there could be distractions if he or she is in your studio or connecting from their homes. First and foremost, their cell phone should be in airplane or silent mode; there should be no disturbance for the duration of the interview from other members or pets in the home. You have to convince your guest that it may be worthwhile to invest in a good headphones and mic. Recommend a brand and the best deal available online or in a shop. The guest should be made aware of the ambient noise during the interview; if it can be minimised, it would save a lot of headaches at the editing table.

All said and done, you have put your interviewee at ease and for that you may have to prepare them for the podcast medium as much and as fast as possible. One of the most irritating things to hear on an audio file including radio is interruptions from the interviewer or even a “hmm” murmur when the guest is talking. A laugh at a relevant joke or comment is fine but constantly hmmm-humming can be annoying to a listener. Ask your questions and leave the mic open to the guest to answer elaborately. If the interviewee and you are in the same location, you can gesture when you are going to move on to the next question. In a remote interview, you have to choose the right moment without sounding that you are interjecting unnecessarily or cutting the guest short.

As an interviewer make sure you are interested in the work or achievement of your guest. Do not select your interviewee just because he or she is “current” and in the news or just plain famous. Podcast exposes your disinterest or feigned interest on the subject to the listener more than any other medium. Find subjects and people of your interest and you can do wonders with your podcast.

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## **10.8 CONCLUSION**

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While the Q&A format is easy on the eye of the reader, it is as difficult to pull it off for the interviewer. Immense preparation has to be done

before an interview for the journalist, because the questions – though they may sound basic or foolish – will expose the quality of the interviewer when published. Even when one is not doing a formal interview, journalists are asking questions on a daily basis and that is what makes the interview the most important tool in the arsenal for the media professional remains.

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### **10.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

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1. Are quiz contests or quiz programmes interviews?

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2. What is the difference between an interview and a questionnaire?

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3. What is the purpose of an interview?

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4. Are interviews similar in journalism, advertising and public relations industries?

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5. Mention one method of interviewing and its advantages.

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## 10.10 KEY WORDS

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**Verbatim:** In the exact words or word for word.

**Rendezvous:** A meeting at an appointed place and time.

**Nuance:** A subtle distinction or variation.

**Extempore:** Spoken or done without preparation or spoken with spontaneity.

**Corroborative:** To support with evidence or authority, to make more certain.

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## 10.11 REFERENCES

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### Books

Asking the Right Questions by M. Neil Browne (Author), Stuart M. Keeley

The Art of the Interview: The Perfect Answers to Every Interview by James Storey

The art of the interview by Lawrence Grobel

Talk To Me: How to Ask Better Questions, Get Better Answers, and Interview Anyone Like a Pro by Dean Nelson

Interviewing for Journalists by Sally Adams

### Online:

<https://hbr.org/podcast/2016/02/the-art-of-the-interview>

<https://www.npr.org/2020/03/06/812934447/the-art-of-the-interview>

**:: STRUCTURE::****11.0 Introduction****11.1 Objectives****11.2 What is Longform Journalism?****11.3 Longform in Times of WA and Twitter****11.4 The Rising Popularity of Longform****11.5 Longform in Blogs****11.6 Longform as a Marketing Tool****11.7 Top Magazines for Longform****11.8 Best of Longform Journalism in Recent Years****11.9 Conclusion****11.10 Check Your Progress****11.11 Key Words****11.12 References**

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**11.0 INTRODUCTION**

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Longform is the latest flavour of the season for serious journalism. Many print, online and blog publications have found a niche for themselves in longform journalism, which is a narrative that can stretch from 1,200 to 10,000 words. Longform requires ideation, planning and extensive research and interviews, followed by writing that should engage the reader for the entire length of the article.

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**11.1 OBJECTIVES**

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- To familiarise students with longform writing
- To explain the writing skills required for longform
- To introduce students to some of the best longform journalism

**On the completion of this unit, you will be able to:**

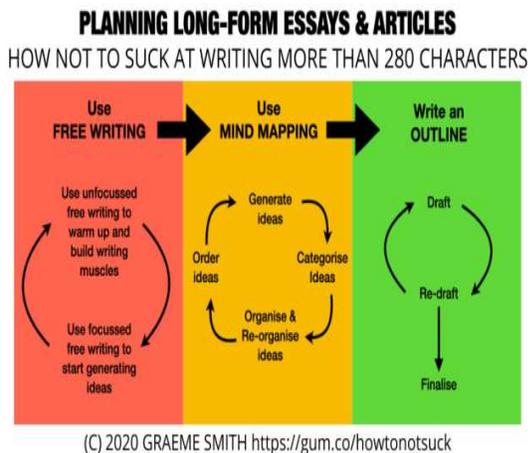
- Select the right stories for longform format
- Ideate and plan the story and gauge the word length it deserves
- Gain expertise to write a longform fit for publication

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## 11.2 WHAT IS LONGFORM JOURNALISM?

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In the past decade, as declining ad revenue constricted editorial space in print publications, online publishing offered journalists freedom from some of their limits. A story could be as complicated as its subject requires, and as long as necessary, though the ancient caveat still applied: your readers might not stick with you until the end. Websites such as BuzzFeed, whose content seemed to assume an entire new generation of attention-deficient readership,



occasionally published pieces of narrative nonfiction whose word counts reached into thousands. Online publishers began to label such stories ‘longform’.

As evident as it might seem, there are many definitions of what longform content is. Articles longer than 700 words are sometimes considered as longform writing, but for many it has to be in the word length of 2,000 and beyond to be worth the nomenclature ‘longform’. Longform content in magazines like The New Yorker sometimes ranges between 3,000 to 10,000+ words. In the online version, it is usually enhanced by images and graphics, sound bytes and video clips.

‘Longform’ springs from journalism’s paranoia over word length — mainly, its online audience’s attention span. Newspapers and magazines in India, just around the time of the online onslaught, had prejudged that the reader does not want to spend more than a minute on each article, and so most articles were cut to size of less than 350 words. Instructions were issued to its journalists in many media outlets that because of the attention span of the readers and millennials, articles should be restricted to 350 words or thereabouts.

Even if a story could not be told in less than a 1,000 words, it would be broken into three or four aspects, each one not going beyond 350 words. There would be box items and side stories not exceeding 200-250 words, alongside the main story of 350 words. Then there would be bells and whistles and a brief summary of the story to make it even more “readable” for the attention-deficient reader.

Longform obviously means long stories, but what it really entails is writing more involved articles, that often reflects creative and narrative journalism. All the rules of journalism, including factuality and ethics, remain sacrosanct, while the article reads like a novella.

In India, *The Caravan* magazine has created a niche for itself in longform journalism and commands a loyal readership across demographics; information and facts for its stories are painstakingly researched and collated and their articles run beyond 3,000 and 5,000 words.

In the last decade, when longform format came into its own, software was developed that would estimate the time it would take to read articles based on the word count. The formula seemed to be that the more time it took, the more it engaged with the online reader. Its popularity can be gauged from the fact that BuzzFeed, a go-to site for the youth and the millennials, got itself a full-time longform editor in 2013.

During the longform decade, software developers created programmes that translated word counts into estimated reading times. Both Longreads.com and Longform.org use the programme, as does Medium. For their first assignment, students of the late The New York Times media critic, David Carr, wrote stories with estimated reading times of fewer than five minutes. BuzzFeed, which is the go-to site for youngsters, hired a “longform editor” in 2013 to oversee a section of the site devoted to such stories. The longform editor described his section as “BuzzFeed for people who are afraid of BuzzFeed.”

Medium, that developed an early reputation for longform journalism, distanced itself from the label. “It was not our intention... to create a platform just for ‘long-form’ content,” said E.V. Williams, Medium CEO and a co-founder of – ironically --Twitter. In fact, a new trend is emerging called the Longform Twitter, with a thread being used to tell a story in a long series of 140-character limits imposed on each tweet.

When the media for short-attention-span audiences is thinking on the lines of promoting longform journalism through a series of tweets, that is vindication by itself.

All in all, if the subject is chosen well, the research is extensive and the language and the flow of the story is eloquent and gripping, longform makes for an excellent read. It is one of the most exciting development in journalism, but it is not for all publications or for all reporters to pull it off.

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### **11.3 LONGFORM IN TIMES OF WA AND TWITTER**

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In the current millennium, twin developments have resulted in the strong revival of what is called longform journalism. The term alludes to print and online articles that are relatively lengthy. The traditional offline newspapers and magazines were printed on newsprint (paper suitable for printing newspapers) that was expensive and relied on revenue from advertisements given by governments, corporations and the people. The

length of articles was thus restricted by the division of space allotted to advertisements and articles and the number of articles themselves.

Over the past two decades, a steady decline in advertisements further constrained the number of pages that a publication could viably print. The size of the articles continued to shrink as newspapers and newsweeklies opted for quantity over depth. The advent of almost unlimited online space freed publishers of this restriction. A story could be as complicated as its subject required, and as lengthy as necessary, although either choice ran the risk of losing the reader to fatigue or boredom.

Ironically, the Information Age also gave rise to websites such as BuzzFeed, an American digital media company, in which the content was created to serve readers with a short attention span and shorter pieces were the norm. But even a BuzzFeed occasionally published pieces of narrative nonfiction, in which the number of words ran into the thousands. Online publishers began to label such stories ‘longform’. Longform is genre-neutral and may appear in different media formats.

It might seem odd but there are many different measures of what longform length truly is. Some people consider articles longer than 700 words to be longform, whereas others think that articles have to be in excess of 1,800 words and going up to as many as 20,000 words to be considered longform.

Another genre of longform writing is in science. There is even a \$10,000 prize dedicated to this end - The Finkel Foundation Eureka Prize for Long-Form Science Journalism in Australia, for submissions between 2,500 and 8,000 words.

*The Caravan* magazine published in English is India’s first longform “narrative journalism magazine”. Originally launched in 1940, it shut down in 1988. Two decades later, it was relaunched in 2010 as a “journal of politics and culture dedicated to meticulous reporting and the art of narrative,” according to a description on its website. It carries commentary, essays and analyses that can typically run up to 3,000 words. Executive editor, Vinod Jose, was inspired by the format, design and content of magazines such as *Harpers*, *The New Yorker* and the *Believer*. “This is a new school of journalism and a highly laborious exercise. I thought, “Why doesn’t my country have anything like this? Why don’t we have space to do longform?”” Jose recalled in an interview to the *Virginia Quarterly Review*, which reported that as of 2020, *The Caravan*’s website gets 1.5 million page views per month. Other publications that offer longform journalism in India include *The Ken* (narratives up to 2,000 words), which publishes a longform story a day, and *IndiaSpend*. Indeed, many online media papers now have a longer read section with users commenting and spending more time on the posts. “Longform” springs from journalism’s anxiety over limitations—mainly, its online audience’s attention span. Newspapers and magazines in India, just around the time of the online tsunami, believed that readers, particularly millennials, had a short attention span and it would be prudent to keep articles restricted to 350 words or thereabouts.

Software developers created programmes that translate word counts into estimated reading times. Both Longreads.com and Longform.org use the programme, as does the blog platform, Medium.

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## **11.4 THE RISING POPULARITY OF LONGFORM**

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There has to be clarity on the choice of topic for writing in longform. Before the subject for the longform is decided, top editors have a brainstorming session on whether the story calls for longform, whether there are enough elements for the story to pan out and also whether all the elements coming together are enough to engage the reader.

Many journalists want more than elbow room to tell their story and feel extremely restricted by word length constraints, especially when the story has a lot of drama, historical data and a contemporary perspective. The freedom that longform gives the reporter should be well-deserved. That is where the editors and the desk come into play to make sure that the story is gripping enough.

Planning is the key, because there is every chance that the story will fall flat if it is not appealing enough for the longform format. Obviously, it will not work for a one-dimensional story. It should have lots of characters, not lose sight of the pivotal issue and bring in all the elements crucial to the story in a lucid narrative style.

Longform stories especially seem to work on online platforms, hence the sudden clamour for it. That is not surprising, considering that the more a reader stays on an online page, the more it attracts advertisers' and media planners' attention. More often than not, these stories give an insight into readers who frequent these pages and stay on to finish the longform stories. The demographics are bound to be of 'high' quality, because they are engaging with high quality journalism and reading matters of substance.

The longer the story, the more there is scope for advertisements alongside the article and insertions after every few paragraphs, as the reader keeps scrolling down. Surprisingly, in a longform web page, a surfeit of ads is not considered as intrusive as in a regular news feed page. From the advertiser's viewpoint, longform tends to be more shared by readers on social media and WhatsApp. Those in the advertising industry would vouch that there is nothing better than word of mouth.

In the online world, the SEO is the holy cow through which articles are discovered by netizens and search engines throw up longform articles on top, if they are relevant to the searches. What then is SEO? The acronym expands to Search Engine Optimisation. When an online search is done on the web for a particular text of content, software tools or search engines scan millions and millions of internet pages to find results that may fit the query. They are reflected online in what is called Search Engine Results Page with some SERPs showing thousands of results. SEOs are a digital marketing strategy that uses algorithms and other tools to put certain websites on top of SERPs. That is the kind of importance

that SEOs accord to longform articles, which again emanate from advertisements that they are capable of generating.

Many a time, longform articles do not have an early expiry date; almost all, especially since they tend to be well-researched and detailed, have at least a one-year shelf life and thereby their value increases and they are referred to much more.

Discerning readers do not seem to mind paywalls when it comes to longform content. Unlike newspapers or other online news portals, readers consider longform writing worth paying for.

Of course, it depends on the content, but platforms also matter. It is seen in recent times that longform content on YouTube is not working as well as it used to earlier and the views and shares are dropping, while on blogs and other online text media, it is soaring.

Blogtyrant.com, which does longform articles, analyses the trend. It points out that “Medium, a pretty new blogging site that is largely devoted to longform content, has grown 140% since 2016. Its most popular article of the year has an estimated 10-minute reading time.”

It goes on to vouch that *The New York Times*, which is largely a longform and detailed investigative news source, experienced a quarter one growth of 308,000 subscribers this year (2019) – their largest ever gain”.

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## 11.5 LONGFORM IN BLOGS

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We have already established that longform needs a lot of relevant content and information to make it work. It begins with the idea, then research and planning the story and making it worthwhile read for, say, 2,000 words or more.

Writing a longform blog becomes an independent and a lonely pursuit without the support system of colleagues and other editors and senior journalists. So, the ideating and brainstorming for a blog by and large turns out to be a solo act.

Bloggers of longform tend to read up a lot, follow various sources of information in their areas of interests and put together the data. Like reporters in a mainstream and organised media, they have to put in efforts to research extensively and plan their longform article. Where they would face stonewall vis-à-vis a reporter in an established mainstream is when they need quotes from authorities or experts on the subject they are writing about. In the western world, they might still get a response to at least an email if not a phone call, but in countries like India, it is for authorities to refuse to talk to you. Bloggers who are ex-journalists, who have already established contacts in their field of specialisation, find it easier to get access to authorities.

Bloggers have to be alert about news breaks and developments and have to be adept at what is called as ‘newsjacking’, a marketing term which can come in good stead for bloggers too. Newsjacking is, according to Oxford Dictionary, “the practice of taking advantage of current events or

news stories in such a way as to promote or advertise one's product or brand”.

If blogs have to succeed, their turnaround time has to be quick, at least quicker than print publications and if possible, even online portals. Their take on issues and the perspective the blogger gives should be so unique that it will be the go-to site, or one of the must-see sites, whenever there is breaking news on the subject.

According to a study in 2014-16, Orbit Media Studios in the US found that half the bloggers they surveyed took just two hours to write a blog in 2015, a small increase over the time it took in 2014. But in 2016, “an average blog post took 3 hours 16 minutes to write”. The study said, “Twice as many bloggers spend over six hours on their average post.”

Orbit Media attributed the dramatic increase in time spent in writing an average blog to the “increasing popularity” of longform content. It found that blog posts of less than 500 words was declining, an average blog post in 2016 was more than a 1,000 words, and the percentage of blog posts over 2,000 words had doubled. Backlinko, which is a US-based SEO marketing and strategy company, researched and came to the conclusion that longform content was given better play in Google search engines and that the average word count of articles that showed up on the first page results of a Google search was nearly 1,900 words.

Where bloggers would feel the pinch of the lack of a support system would be in the department of graphics, photographs and charts to intersperse and break the monotony of a web page of pure text of 2,000 words and more. In a newspaper or any other publication, there would be professionals just for that. The blogger may have to acquire some of the skill sets or hire freelancers for the design element of the blog post and the page.

Design is such a key element of especially longform that huge swathes of large chunky text are “not soothing on the eyes”. The visual appeal of the page has to be enticing. The most complex articles can have shorter paragraphs, even if not necessarily shorter and simpler sentences. What makes a longform online article interesting for readers is sub-headings and breaks either by way of quotes or passages, or by way of photographs, videos, graphics or images supporting the arguments or thoughts in the article or to make a point. Embedding video or audio is an easy DIY process, helped by various applications. Apart from making the page and content attractive, visuals of graphics, videos and photographs go a long way in increasing the ranking on Google search.

As it is, Google search is the greatest enabler in supporting longform. A recent study concluded that the average length of the content in the top ten results of search queries were over 2,000 words.

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## **11.6 LONGFORM AS A MARKETING TOOL**

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Longform has found its niche and place in journalism for telling in-depth, well-researched and articulated articles with panache, to hold

the reader enthralled through the entire 2,000- to 4,000-word piece. Now it is finding its niche in brand promotion and marketing.

In the realm of content marketing, brands are full of stories of their inception, ups and downs, transformation, customer-centric tales and so on. Longform is turning out to be a great marketing tool to connect with customers, build brand loyalty and positioning of the company and the brand.

Stories are built around the brand, and if there are stories and interesting ones at that, there will be takers for it. Storytelling creates a buzz around the brand and gets talked about; it becomes a great icebreaker and has a cool quotient about it.

Longform storytelling for brands and companies raises curiosity about them, develops an immediate connect on an emotional matrix with the customers and sets one apart from the others (read competition) in the same arena.

As in journalism, longform as a marketing strategy for brands also has a better shelf life than short-form stories. It all depends on how you want to position your brand. Short-term content of 500 words and less can exist alongside on various social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram and on blogs, but it will have to be constant and churned out regularly to keep the brand recall at a high level.

Longform content positions the brand exclusively and the story lives on much longer than short-term content. Longform gives gravitas to the brand and makes the customers proud of their association. Longform with high-quality photographs, graphs and graphics, with some video thrown in the process of the brand manufacturing and employee connect...all these help create an image of the brand that no advertisement or short-form content, with limited shelf life, can achieve.

As in journalism, longform for brands and companies as a marketing tool gets to be up there on SEO ratings. Google search results throw up longform on its first pages. Moreover, longform gets shared more by customers on social media platforms and that – word of mouth coming from customers who have put faith in the brand -- is the best marketing strategy possible.

Two online media audit companies -- MOZ and Buzzsumo – came together a few years back, analysed over a million articles and found that longform content gets shared five times more than shorter forms. Its study found that articles of less than 1,000 words had around 2,800 shares on social media platform, while articles of more than 1,000 words to 10,000 words got around 13,500 shares. That, by any standards, is mighty impressive.

In big corporates, the CEOs and the top management share their personal success stories, how they came up in life and the ideas and concepts that helped the company succeed. These connect not only with the customers and suppliers, but also with the employees, when told with compassion and humour. Marketing is subtle in these cases and when the writing (or

ghost writing in some cases) is eloquent, it creates a great connect with the stakeholders.

Longform narratives work best when the story is to be told of the brand and the company, on how it took seed as an idea and how it grew from strength to strength to reach the market position it is occupying now. Corporates, especially tech companies, have longform articles to forecast what is in store in the future, while tracing the strides that they have taken to reach where they are today.

In India, there are mandatory philanthropic activities – under the CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) initiative – undertaken by corporates. That calls for a well-written, data-driven story narrating real life stories of people and the difference the company makes in their lives through their monetary and other contributions.

In many companies, employees undertake social work in their free time. That is not only an inspirational story internally in the company, but also establishes an emotional connect with the outside world about the empathetic talent pool in the company.



Ann Handley, an expert on online platforms and content marketing, says: “We marketers have a lot of noise to contend with. I’ve been talking a lot recently about the need to approach business and marketing with a mindset of As Slow As Possible (ASAP). I view the trend toward longform and substantive content as another example of the shift toward slow marketing and slow content marketing.”

She goes on to say that “slow content marketing is slowly conceived, well-executed, substantive work that tells a memorable story. It sustains both marketers and our audiences long-term.”

She says: “Bottom line is we seek meaning and crave connection. That means marketing needs to slow down and think about substance and context. Short and snackable is out.

And slow and substantive is here to stay.”

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## 11.7 TOP MAGAZINES FOR LONGFORM

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Longform journalism is one of the most engaging reads for a discerning audience and particularly for students of journalism and writing. A longform article is a masterclass of how a story is constructed, how it all came together with the facts and how a narrative is such a key to storytelling. The investigation, the loads of information and the months of painstaking research that go into a longform is testimony of its success.

Here are some of the destinations where exciting work in longform format is taking place:

**The Caravan:** *The Caravan* is India's first long-form narrative journalism magazine. It was relaunched in 2010 as a journal of politics and culture dedicated to meticulous reporting and the art of narrative. It is recognised now as one of the country's most respected and intellectually agile magazines. Their stories are based on months of reporting and research and are crafted into dramatic narratives. It has created a niche for itself, thanks to its highly readable and in-depth stories. It has both print and online versions. The online magazine has a paywall to access new stories, which are available freely to non-paying readers after two months.

**The Ken:** *The Ken*, established in Bangalore, India in 2016, has a unique model. It does one longform article – uncluttered by ads or pop-ups -- every weekday, which lands in your inbox after you subscribe for it. Another uniqueness is that it does only business-related stories, focusing on investigative and insightful stories on healthcare, start-ups, technology and science. Three of its co-founders have a business journalism background. It does raise funding but it is sustained mainly by subscriptions and donations from Bangalore-based Independent and Public-Spirited Media Foundation (IPSMF).

**Longreads:** This is an online magazine that carries feature stories, investigative articles, interviews, opinions and commentary, book reviews and biographical profiles. It has reporters who spend months on investigative projects, covering issues such as gun violence, genocide, environmental destruction, and more. Its columnists provide incisive commentary on important news events and a wide range of voices share intimate stories in weekly essays. It is a free site, but if any reader wants distraction-free, ad-free and pop-up-free reads, they will have to become members by paying a monthly, yearly, or one-time fee.

**ProPublica:** According to ProPublica website, its mission is “to expose abuses of power and betrayals of the public trust by government, business, and other institutions, using the moral force of investigative journalism to spur reform through the sustained spotlighting of wrongdoing”. For those interested in political administration and accountability in public life, ProPublica is the go-to site. Its stories have a clear focus on politics and government administration and cover educational and environmental issues, among many subjects.

**The Atlantic:** The Atlantic is another high-quality website for longform stories, that covers a whole gamut of topics that affect public life. Their stories have depth and are well-written and they are among the most popular among readers of longform stories. It says: “The core principles of the founders are core principles for us: reason should always guide opinion; ideas have consequences, sometimes world-historical consequences; the knowledge we have about the world is partial and provisional, and subject to analysis, scrutiny, and revision.” In its first issue in November 1857, it published its mission statement, which was signed by many of the great American writers, including Ralph Waldo

Emerson, Herman Melville, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Nathaniel Hawthorne.

**Guernica:** *Guernica* is a non-profit magazine dedicated to write-ups about global art and politics. They publish a variety of types of writing, with an especially strong longform section. The publication features voices from around the world and values justice, equality and civic action. *Guernica* has published the works of esteemed authors such as Jesmyn Ward, Chimamanda and Ngozi Adichie.

**The New Yorker:** *The New Yorker* is one of the most respected and influential magazines in the US, known for its in-depth and longform journalism. Apart from its incisive articles on politics, theatre and societies, it is legendary for its cartoons, which dot its pages across the issue. Its covers and cartoons are keepsake so much so that the magazine has found a revenue stream in selling those in framed and metallic magnet forms. It has got a rigorous commitment to accuracy (it has a full-fledged fact-checking department) and quality of writing.

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## 11.8 BEST OF LONGFORM JOURNALISM IN RECENT YEARS

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As one explores, there one finds numerous excellent longform articles produced in the last few years. Here is a list of some of them, with their links:

**1. The Trauma Floor: The secret lives of Facebook moderators in America by Casey Newton**

**Publication: The Verge, US**

**Word length: 7095**

<https://www.theverge.com/2019/2/25/18229714/cognizant-facebook-content-moderator-interviews-trauma-working-conditions-arizona>

The story is an investigative reportage that appeared in the online magazine, The Verge, in 2019, after three months of planning. The author, Casey Newton, interviewed dug deep into the facility of the American multinational Cognizant (which has a huge presence in India) in Phoenix, Arizona, where the correspondent met a dozen employees and ex-employees who worked in the department that moderates Facebook posts. The story reveals the mental issues and workplace abuse that the underpaid employees endure.

**2. Stories about my brother by Prachi Gupta**

**Publication: Jezebel, US**

**Word length: 6618**

<https://jezebel.com/stories-about-my-brother-1835651181>

This poignant piece by Prachi Gupta, from a second generation Indian-American family, appeared in Jezebel, an online magazine that focuses on gender, culture and politics. Gupta writes about her brother Yush, a whizkid, who dies after he undertook a height-enhancing surgery in Italy. This first-person piece – which talks of the Indian family culture, racism

faced by brown-coloured in the US, medical mumbo-jumbo, feminism, depression and lots more -- is illustrative of how a personal tragedy can be relatable at many levels to many readers even though it is a personal story.

### **3. How ICE picks its targets in the surveillance age by McKenzie Funk**

**Publication:** The New York Times Magazine, US

**Word length:** 10489

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/02/magazine/ice-surveillance-deportation.html>

The article traces how Immigration and Customs Enforcement works in a stealthy manner and deports undocumented people in the US. The story revolves around the working of ICE in Washington State area and specifically looking for the peninsula's Spanish-speaking families to arrest them and send them back. With a deadly combination of relentless surveillance and intimidation, ICE under President Donald Trump and his predecessor Barack Obama terrorised communities and deported millions, separating parents from their US-born children. The story recognises activists' nomenclature for Obama as the "deporter in chief".

### **4. Supreme Charge: "I have been victimised for resisting and refusing the unwanted sexual advances of the CJI Ranjan Gogoi," says former Supreme Court employee by Atul Dev and Nikita Saxena**

**Publication:** The Caravan, India

**Word length:** 8537

<https://caravanmagazine.in/law/former-supreme-court-employee-accuses-cji-ranjan-gogoi-sexual-harassment>

The story created a sensation when it first appeared in April 2019. It was the only publication daring to take on the then chief justice of India and publish a detailed investigative 360-degree report on the controversy. Most publications and TV channels totally ignored the issue of such public importance, while others like The Wire and The Scroll filed reports quoting The Caravan. The report related how a Supreme Court employee was sexually harassed by the CJI and later threatened by CJI's wife to withdraw the case. It showed how the police and the authorities tried to suppress the news and bullied the employee to set up a protective shield around an extremely powerful man.

### **5. Three years of misery in Google, the happiest company in tech by Nitasha Tiku**

**Publication:** The Wired, US

**Word length:** 11,332

<https://www.wired.com/story/inside-google-three-years-misery-happiest-company-tech/>

For this article, WIRED spoke with 47 current and former Google employees. Most of them requested anonymity. Together, they described a period of growing distrust and disillusionment inside Google. The

longform expose dwells deep into how the most beloved company of employees was beset with scandals, gender and race issues and cases of sexual harassment at the top management levels. As the story said, “After two years of employee revolts, culture-warring, and accusations, the furore that had surrounded Facebook for the previous three years now finally seemed to be aimed at Google with full force.” It was appalling, the story said, that the women in the company swapped stories about reporting harassment to Google HR, only to watch their abusers receive promotions.

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## **11.9 CONCLUSION**

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Longform needs great ideating and writing abilities. A news story or feature which runs into 2,000 words or more is no mean feat; it requires diligence, ideas and planning. Longform has found its place in journalistic history, more so when audience is being pulled into variety of platforms disseminating information. There is an audience out there which is willing to pay money to engage itself with writing that has serious, good and...yes, long (but not long-winding) content, with enough facts and meat.

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## **11.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

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1. Can longform articles take more liberty with facts than reporters for the sake of narrative style?

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2. Do longform articles show up more on search engines?

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3. Are longform articles more long-lasting than short-form stories?

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4. Do corporates and brands use longform to tell stories in longform as a marketing tool?

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5. Are there any Indian publications known for their longform stories?

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### 11.11 KEY WORDS

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**Newsjacking:** Newsjacking is, according to Oxford Dictionary, “the practice of taking advantage of current events or news stories in such a way as to promote or advertise one's product or brand”.

**SEO:** It stands for search engine optimisation. Simply put, it is the process of optimizing online content so that a search engine like Google shows it as a top result for searches of certain keywords.

**Page views:** Google defines pageview (or pageview hit, page tracking hit) as an instance of a page being loaded (or reloaded) in a browser. *Pageviews* is a metric defined as the total number of pages viewed, it says.

**Demographics:** The statistical characteristics of human populations (such as age or income) used especially to identify markets.

**Netizen:** An active participant in the online community of the Internet.

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### 11.12 REFERENCES

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#### Books

Immersive Longform Storytelling: Media, Technology, Audience by David Dowling

**Online:** <https://backlinko.com/search-engine-ranking>  
<https://annhandley.com/long-form-storytelling/>  
<https://www.blogtyrant.com/does-long-form-content-still-get-worthwhile-results/>

**:: STRUCTURE::****12.0 Introduction****12.1 Objectives****12.2 What is Business Writing?****12.3 Who is a Business Writer?****12.4 The Dos and Don'ts of Business Writing****12.5 Categories of Business Writing****12.6 Types of Business Writing****12.7 Writing Emails****12.8 Academic vs. Business Writing****12.9 Writing Brochures****12.10 Check Your Progress****12.11 Key Words****12.12 References**

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**12.0 INTRODUCTION**

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Business writing is disseminating information about one's business or activity to an intended recipient, such as an employee, investor, board member, media person or customer. Business writing requires a skill to write concisely, precisely and accurately. It does not use flowery language but remains to the point and business-like, without compromising on grammar or information.

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## 12.1 OBJECTIVES

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- To prepare students in the craft of business writing
- To lay out the dos and don'ts of business writing
- To familiarise students with stylebooks

**On the completion of this unit, you will be able to:**

- Master the art of business writing
- Convey information crucial for decision-making in the legal and correct way
- Write brochures and handbooks

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## 12.2 WHAT IS BUSINESS WRITING?

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The adage “Write to express, not to impress” applies to Business Writing aptly. Business writing is professional writing for a specific recipient, such as a customer, employee, potential client, or the media.

The purpose of business writing is that it should result in action and elicit a response, and hence the content should be direct, clear, accurate and comprehensive.

Business writing is done with the objective of getting a result out of the communication addressed to a clearly targeted audience.

Before embarking on drafting a document, one should be clear of the audience, and what one wishes to convey. Various types of business writing – which would be elaborated in subsequent sections include business reports, press communique, office memorandums and agendas.

Most of them are extremely formal, but some can be informal. The common denominator among all these is that they have to be accurate, informative, relevant, to the point and well-written. There can be no scope for taking any liberty with the language or grammar, even when one can be informal.

The aim of business writing is to disseminate information to the recipient in unambiguous terms, and hence the language and writing skills where one has to be concise and precise are of utmost importance. Usually, such business writings are not more than a page or two, but if it is, for unavoidable reasons, a long document, a concise version in the form of an executive summary is advisable.

Verbosity is to be avoided at all cost. Sentences with too many descriptions and adjectives make for good writing too but that does not fit in at all into business writing. Not a word should be lost, no extra word is needed, so flowery language, padding the copy to fill space like in a

newspaper are no-no in business writing. That does not mean that one should not be creative and has to “dumb down” the document.

The idea should be to put pen on paper to bring together cohesively the information that has to be conveyed. Over and over again, every authority on the subject of business writing would emphasise: Do not ramble. Come straight to the point. Unlike a thesis, movie script or a book, there is no need for suspense in business writing. Your opening lines should give the entire story and climax. What follows would be a flashback and the reasons and methodology why you went about it all the way you did.

Written communication has a number of pluses. A lot of thought goes into writing; it is not off the cuff and there is very little scope for loose talk. It remains on record and can be retrieved for reference. Written communication is more trusted by the recipient. Professional writing in workplaces for customers and clients enhances confidence in the organisation and its products, increases efficiency within the company and boosts its image to the outside world.

Many executives become nervous about writing and believe that it is a specialised job for a journalist or writer. Often, they put off writing reports, proposals and emails to the last minute. Procrastination will only lead to mistakes and poorly and hurriedly produced reports. Writing is a skill that can be honed like any other with practice, a lot of reading, following language and grammar trends and giving oneself time to keep writing.

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### **12.3 WHO IS A BUSINESS WRITER?**

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A business writer writes proposals, white papers, business plans, brochures, training kits, manuals, governance documents, agreements and newsletters, among other things. It calls for research and writing talent. Usually, it is an employee in an organisation who must have or develop the skills for writing numerous documents. Some companies may hire freelance and professional writers for specific jobs, such as writing an annual report.

There are two categories that a business writer deals with. One is where a business writer would have all the data – mostly internal and known only to the company and the organisation – at her disposal. If she wants to “relevantly” jazz up the document she is preparing, it would require a fair amount of researching for data and information.

The other – especially those in which she has to prepare reports commissioned by the company, she has to conduct deep research and collect data from other works or through interviews. She may have to observe workplace culture and practices and talk at length to employees to get an authentic sense of practical issues. Research is necessary for sales proposals for business development departments, business plans or rationalisation of staff. All these need to be backed by on-ground real-time information before writing out a proposal or a plan.

Businesses need to have clarity in their communication, so the business writer's job is to ensure that there is no ambiguity in conveying a message to the audience, which could be other employees, investors, bankers, top managers or customers. So, a business writer needs to have at least a Bachelor's degree; a degree in writing or journalism is an added qualification.

A writer would also have to read relevant materials or even books related to the subject on which a report is being prepared. Before embarking on it, the writer needs to make doubly sure that she is aware and has grasped the subject. After writing the report, she needs to make revisions and corrections over and over again. Many writers shy away from rewriting, but going through the draft and reworking the copy till one is fully satisfied and has achieved the best report is imperative.

A *Business Insider* article suggests the following guide questions as you develop your writing:

1. Why does the reader care?
2. How does the reader benefit?
3. What should the reader do?
4. When should the reader do it?
5. What happens if the reader does take action?
6. What happens if the reader doesn't take action?
7. Who else will benefit? Why?
8. Where does the reader go for more information?

Remember, if you can hone your skills as a writer and can produce good documents, reports and emails, you would be noticed in the organisation and company and could lead to good growth prospects. Business writing skills would indicate that you care about your job, that you care about the image of the company and you are interested in seeing the progress and growth of the company.

A badly written document or even a short email can rile up bosses and colleagues; if it is a client it could lead to loss of business and hurt the reputation of the company. On the other hand, a well-produced document reflects well on the company, builds confidence internally and externally, helps in bringing in business and in promoting the brand.

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## **12.4 THE DOS AND DON'TS OF BUSINESS WRITING**

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The process of business writing is otherwise not vastly different from any other kind of writing, but it is important to reiterate it to produce the best quality. To begin with, the language, as mentioned in the previous section, has to be impeccable. In business, attention to detail is respected and hence grammar, the language and the structure of the communicate are as important as the message.

Planning the document in one's head is probably half the job done. Before sitting down on the desk to draft the document, it is important to think out the entire draft: what is it you want to say? What are the points

you want to highlight? What are the illustrations you want to give? What is the tone you want to adopt in the communicate?

Have a checklist of the points you want to make, and how the document is going to be presented. It could be contents, headline, proof-reading, captions or graphs.

Put the thoughts in your head in point form on a piece of paper or computer screen. Once you start putting those points in sentence form, you will get the flow. You can shift the paragraphs around till you get the opening and the sequencing right.

Once the first draft is prepared, it needs a thorough read. A second or third draft is always a good idea, if for nothing else, to polish the language, edit the mistakes out and add any points left out.

Breaking the draft with sub-headings section-wise would make it an easier read for the recipient. Each sub-heading should capture the main point in the section. Once, as in journalism, you get the headline and strapline right, you will get the story and the flow of the story right.

Make sure that sentences are not very long, and remain within 14-15 words. Also each paragraph should not be more than five or six sentences, to improve readability. Each paragraph should flow in an hierarchical or chronological order, if there is one.

If the document touches upon various aspects of business and is elaborate, apart from headings for each section, having a summary at the end would also help in getting one's views across.

Experts advise that jargon and technical terms should be avoided especially if the target reader is non-technical or general public. Sometimes, avoiding jargon is not an option, as also an acronym familiar only to those in the industry. It is a good idea to have a glossary at the end of the document.

**Follow some rules like:**

- Have a single space after the full stop at the end of each sentence (Earlier norm was two spaces).
- Use the active instead of the passive word
- Emoticons are accepted in business writing these days, but don't overdo it and use appropriately
- Thorough reading more than once of the whole document before pressing the "print" or "send" button is a must.

Once a thorough proofreading is done of the entire document, or checked even by a colleague, go back to the checklist that was created during the preparation stage and make sure each point is checked.

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## **12.5 CATEGORIES OF BUSINESS WRITING**

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In any corporate office or organisation, there is a lot of paperwork involved and documents are generated on regular, if not daily, basis. Each document has a purpose and specific targets, and so business writing can be broadly classified into a few categories:

**Informative writing:** This kind of writing is full of data and graphs for the purpose of tracking the progress of the company, recording future plans and growth and is put in place to draw up contracts and avoid any legal tangles.

Business reports are part of business writing, wherein one records business data, inventory data, work executed and information that will give an insight into problems faced. All this is information that one can record, archive and go back to for reference whenever required. Add to this, financial reports and information, collated on a daily basis but filed quarterly or even monthly, as the company may want. Regulatory bodies require this information to be filed on quarterly basis.

Another sort of information that needs to be recorded meticulously both for the company's and for regulatory purposes is minutes of any meeting held within departments or especially at the board of directors and top management levels.

**Boilerplate writing:** These are step-by-step manuals and documents, which are crucial and task-oriented for running of factories, shop floors and departments. These make the training process easier for any new entrant to the organisation; they just have to refer to the manuals and follow the protocol. These will also include user manuals for customers that come especially with cars or electronic gadgets such as washing machines or microwave ovens.

In companies and organisations, manuals are usually in the form of memos with instructions on how a task is to be handled and executed. Many companies may have a format to be followed for these manuals. Even if it has to be updated and the department has seen an employee's turnover, it is easy for the new person to just follow the cue and create a fresh manual. In some industries, companies share manuals because the concerns are the same and there is no point in creating fresh ones each time; there are also readymade manuals, which can just be adopted by a company.

**Sales and other pitches:** The writing for these need to be convincing for the reader to invest in them. Targets are clients, journalists and a wide range of customers. Sales pitches can be tricky, and your writing cannot afford to either undersell or hard sell; to achieve the balance is an art. The other area in which the writing has to be evolved is press releases. Journalists tend to be dismissive of press releases, so the writing has to offer something new and persuade them to go to print with it. Company results will be published but when it comes to a product or any other information that needs to be published, the press release has to be convincing enough for a "story".

**Operations:** There is a daily writing grind which offices have to do including emails, official letters, job offers, producing invoices and employee interactions. It may seem monotonous at times but the idea is to keep improving one's skill to make it interesting for oneself and also the recipients. Many human resource departments come up with weekly or

periodical newsletters and content for that is produced on a daily and regular basis.

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## 12.6 TYPES OF BUSINESS WRITING

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**Email:** This is the most common of business writing in the modern world. Earlier, if one would walk across to a colleague's cabin to discuss an issue, emails are dashed off at the drop of a hat these days. It is not a bad practice considering almost everything is on record.

**Reports:** Reports have to be produced on regular intervals in organisations. These take a good, hard look at how one is conducting oneself in business, how the

products and projects are performing, how they are troubleshooting and how things can be taken forward for the present and for the future. While writing these reports, one needs to be totally objective and the only thing that should matter is producing the best results for the company and its stakeholders.

**Memos:** These are more like post-it messages. They are short messages, such as a "Thank you" note, written rather informally compared to other business writing. Since it is among colleagues, the trick is to sound informal but also professional. Memos are usually written by seniors addressed to juniors in hierarchy in the organisation in response to a report or document produced by the latter.

**Style guides and handbooks:** Many human resource departments have handbooks for employees, which lay down behaviour in office, sexual harassment guidelines, annual leave packages, tax benefits, and other company policies. They are drab but most informative for every employee. They are not handed over as handbooks to each employee like appointment or joining letters with paygrades and salary structure; usually, these are generic in nature, apply to the entire workforce and are uploaded in the company's internal online system. Style guides are part and parcel of the media world. Many media houses adopt existing time-tested ones like the style guides published by *Associated Press*, *The Economist*, *NYT* and others, with a few additions to suit one's own publication.



Emails are the most favourite workplace communication mode in our personal lives. In the process, the writers quite often lose track of the difference between professional and personal.

While writing emails, usually done in a hurry or in the flow of things, we miss out on many aspects that are key to professional writing like the grammar, spellings and tone. In personal emails, it is considered kosher to say “u” instead of “you” and use slang; these anomalies can creep into professional emails too if one does not take care.

One tends to be more casual and hence careless while sending emails, rather than through any other mode of communication. So one needs to watch out for the tone while writing emails. Re-reading emails after having written it is a good protocol, especially when it is an important one. What sounds good in your head may not always look good in an email.

There is empirical knowledge that more care and formality come into writing the same matter as a .doc file than as an email. Things like layout and headlining are thrown aside in an email, while one takes good care how it looks in a Word document. In fact, more often than not, one would print a Word document, read it and make corrections and incorporate it in the document. It is very rarely that one takes a printout of an email letter for proofreading and then makes necessary corrections before punching the “send” button.

One cardinal mistake one tends to do in emails is keying in the recipient’s email address before starting off on the email. It is quite common that an incomplete email has been sent because the send button has been pressed by accident. Such situations lead to embarrassing moments in one’s workplace. The recipient’s name should be the last thing to be keyed in, after making sure that it is the final draft that you have in the body text of the email.

If there are multiple recipients in the office, you should be doubly certain that they do not include any recipient who should not be getting that email. Again, it is better to have the actual recipients jotted down in a paper or on a notepad on the computer/laptop, which can later be cut-pasted to the recipients’ addresses. If you don’t want the recipients to know who the emails have gone to, you have to ensure that all those names appear in “bcc” and your own name appears as recipient.

Mary Morel, an online writing trainer, has some tips on the tone of the email. She says, “Whatever your relationship with a person, everyone appreciates courtesies, such as being addressed by name in the first email correspondence. You can easily adjust your tone by adding, deleting or changing specific words.”

She points out the difference with this illustration:

**Abrupt:** I need the information today.

**Polite:** Can you please send me the information today. I need it to finish my report. Thanks.

She says further: “Many emails come across as too abrupt because we’re in a hurry and just want to get to the point. Sometimes such emails

benefit from massaging to soften the message and a brief explanation may help. And even an exclamation mark may soften your tone.”

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## **12.8 ACADEMIC VS. BUSINESS WRITING**

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Both business writing and academic writing are formal in nature for the most part, and emphasis is on language, tone and grammar, apart from information. One has to keep in mind the key differences between the two.

To begin with, business writing, which is workplace writing, is geared towards results and solving issues that crop up at work from time to time. It is goal- and task-oriented. Academic writing is primarily convincing your guide and professor that you are well abreast of the subject and knowledgeable enough.

Academic writing needs extensive research and quoting – and crediting – from other works on the same subject. In business writing, most of the information is readily available within the organisation; it may need meeting colleagues and taking inputs from them.

Plagiarism in academic writing can lead to serious repercussions and can have long-term effects on one’s education and career. In business writing, plagiarism may get a rap on the knuckles or may even be overlooked.

In business writing, you may have to address different audiences who have diverse outlooks towards the job, the problem at hand and the possible steps for resolving that problem. You address it to your department and most probably “cc” your bosses and others in the organisation. So the audience is varied and the reaction of each would be different, depending on their idea and knowledge of the subject.

In academic writing – right from school to college to thesis – you are writing for your teachers and professors, who are already knowledgeable and experts in that subject. They are trying to assess and judge whether you have grasped the subject and are able to articulate it well in your writing. You can write in a complex manner in your academic writing and even be verbose, but in business writing brevity, simple and direct language and conciseness helps a varied readership, which may not want to spend too much time in the document or the presentation.

In the academic field, the reader of your document is usually just one person, except when you are writing a ground-breaking research paper, which then gets vetted by peer review. But otherwise, it is usually one professor who goes through your document and writing. Writing in workplaces can be read by everybody and anybody at work; the writer may not even know them. Once it lands in the inbox or desk of your boss and the reporting staff in your department, it could get passed on to different departments and so on.

With academic writing, one sets the scenario, builds up the argument and the case and then arrives at the main point towards the end; it is almost like a movie or a thriller book where the climax is kept at the end.

Business writing cuts to the chase and comes to the point without beating around the bush.

With legal or academic writing, “you’re going to generally start with building up the case, and put the main point all the way at the end,” he says. “But in business communications, it’s best to start with your conclusion first.”

Academic papers have an expiry date unless it is a doctoral thesis which could see the light of the day as a published book and reach bigger audiences. Work documents can be of use for a longer period and sometimes even indefinitely. In case of any legal issues or suits, emails, memos and other documents within the office and workplace can be used as evidence.

The writing style of a workplace is far different from the format used for academic work. School and college essays, research papers, theses and case papers require a different kind of writing and follow a set pattern. In a workplace, one mostly writes email letters, assessment reports, manuals and memos, so depending on the organisation and its ethos, the writing style can vary, and one can take a few liberties.

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## 12.9 WRITING BROCHURES

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An important aspect of business writing involves writing brochures, which, from time immemorial, have been important marketing tools. They are informative and attractive; they are easily distributable as handouts at trade shows, in consumer exhibitions, at retail shops on racks and can easily be delivered through mail at doorsteps.

When a sales representative hands out a brochure – like any written testimonial – while making a call, it gives credibility to the product or service on offer. A brochure is a good reference for potential customers to go back to at their own pace and leisure before taking the call to buy the product or not.

The steps to a good brochure are:

- **Prepare:** First, decide your target audience. Make a mental note of the demographics you want to appeal to. Remember, brochures are like advertisements, only in more detail and with more information. It should be persuasive enough for the brochure to be picked up with the final goal of the product or service being subscribed to. Like in any advertisement, the age, gender, income brackets and aspiration of the target audience come into play. Once you are aware of the audience you want to address, the tone, the style you want to adopt, the flow and the language will fall into place.
- **Headlining is a good start:** A catchy headline will draw the customer to pick up the brochure and go through it. It has the same effect as in a newspaper. A headline draws the reader to the story. It is no different: A fuzzy headline will confuse the

customer; the headline should be crystal clear and yet so mystical that the customer gets drawn to it.

- **Design is the key:** Use of photographs, fonts and typefaces, the quality of paper used for printing the brochure and layout design of the brochure should make for an attractive and enticing look. The overall production value of the brochure is crucial to it and the product's success. Photographs should be of very high quality and only those photographs should be used that are relevant to the product. A photograph of your big headquarters building is a waste of space and will not impress your potential customer. It should be so good that potential customers will save it for keepsake.
- **Brevity:** What is being marketed on brochures should be explained very clearly and concisely. Don't waste too many words. Keep it short and sweet. To publicise an entire product range, one produces a booklet. But brochures usually produce just one product or service, and not beyond two or three pages.
- **Benefit to the customer:** What the brochure focuses on mainly are the features of the services and product and the benefits the customer gets out of it once he opts for it.

The process should go through proof-reading, getting a sample brochure out and circulated for the opinion of a few whose judgement you respect. No brochure is complete without giving contact numbers, email, social media accounts and QR code.

At the end of all this, one needs to go through the entire draft and ensure that information like description of each product or service, warranty information, refund policies, product specs, shipping information and disclaimers are mentioned.

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## 12.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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1. What is the objective of business writing?

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2. Do you double-space after each full stop?

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3. Can business writing be informal?

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4. What is the one key difference between academic and business writing?

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5. Why is the headline key to a brochure?

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### 12.11 KEY WORDS

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**Business writer:** Someone who researches and writes proposals, white papers, business plans, brochures, training kits, manuals, governance documents, agreements and newsletters, among other things. All this calls for research and writing talent.

**Boilerplate:** Standardized text.

**Pitch:** To present or advertise especially in a high-pressure way, plug and promote. To attempt to persuade especially with a sales pitch.

**Press release:** An official statement that gives information to newspapers, magazines, television news programs, and radio stations. It is issued by the government, companies or any organisation. **Brochure:** A pamphlet or a booklet, especially one containing descriptive or advertising material.

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### 12.12 REFERENCES

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#### Books

HBR Guide to Better Business Writing

Business Writing Essentials: How To Write Letters, Reports and Emails  
by Clare Whitmell

Model Business Letters, Emails and Other Business Documents by  
Shirley Taylor

#### Online

<https://www.beledit.com/writing-guides/10-new-rules-business-writing/>

<https://hbr.org/2014/11/how-to-improve-your-business-writing>

**:: STRUCTURE::****13.0 Introduction****13.1 Objectives****13.2 What is a Research Paper?****13.3 Skills Needed For Writing a Research Paper****13.4 The Key Steps of a Research Paper****13.5 Choosing a Research Paper Topic****13.6 Importance of Second Draft and Revision****13.7 Most Respected Research Journals/Magazines****13.8 Conclusion****13.9 Check Your Progress****13.10 Key Words****13.11 References**

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**13.0 INTRODUCTION**

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A research paper is a branch of academic writing. It is analysis and interpretation by a PhD student or writer based on his or her own extensive and original research. A research paper, especially when it achieves a major breakthrough, has led to public accolades, including the Nobel Prize.

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**13.1 OBJECTIVES**

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- To prepare students in the vocation of academic writing
- To imbibe the sense and spirit of writing well-researched reports
- To familiarise learners with various types of research journals

**On the completion of this unit, you will be able to:**

- Develop a style of writing
- Assess academic writing for quality
- Understand the rigour and discipline involved in academic writing

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## 13.2 WHAT IS A RESEARCH PAPER?

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Research papers involve academic writing by students and academicians based on their own original research and analysis. Academic writing is precise, sticks to a certain style and language (usually pedantic). These days, academic writers and students tend to make their thesis or presentation more interesting by smarter and sharper writing and avoiding jargons as much as possible.

Clarity of analysis and argument is the cornerstone of academic writing. Students should develop their own style of writing that they are comfortable with, develop rigorous assessment skills, read extensively to gather material and put forth their arguments and have a quest for original thinking. Finally, it has to be understood by the student that the objective of academic writing is to deliver comprehensive, accurate and credible information and theory. The arguments and theses have to be backed by evidence, empirical and proven, with references given at appropriate junctures.



There is lucidity and clarity in the way academic writing evolves. The writing can be elaborate and tedious, but that is because the academic texts begin by explaining what the author seeks to propound, thrash it threadbare and point by point and finally make a conclusion based on all that has been said prior to that.

An academic text has to announce what the writers are basing their facts on. It has to give references and bibliography of previous studies and what others over the years and decades have theorised and argued. The references may be selectively quoted to prove one's theory or point or give an opposing view or argument. As much as one wants one's viewpoint to be validated by another authority or academician, care should be taken in juxtaposing and interpreting academic texts. By giving a gamut of opinions, biases and arguments from other academic texts, the writer can show that he or she is being objective.

Academic texts can be either an essay or a dissertation. An essay is expected from students at college and pre-PhD university levels. A dissertation or thesis is an original piece of research work by a student on a chosen specific subject. It is usually linked with a master's degree and is the most substantive and difficult piece of work undertaken in a student's life. Research papers are part of PhD and post-doctorate career,

after getting a certain expertise or on the threshold of getting that expertise.

Most experts recommend that the most important aspect of embarking on a research paper is to read as much as you can on the subject that you have ideated for your paper and then start writing. There is nothing like practising writing. So have an idea, start writing and as you start writing, you will naturally look for material and research.

Many a time, the ideas are excellent, but lose their way because the writer of the research report is not able to express or articulate his or her thoughts and arguments well. So it is important to work on one's writing. Many papers are badly written and hard to understand. If one follows some simple guidelines and steps, the problem of bad writing or expression can easily be overcome.

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### **13.3 SKILLS NEEDED FOR WRITING A RESEARCH PAPER**

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Academic writing is structured to a fault, planned, focussed, formal and backed by evidence. A research report must reflect the writer's knowledge and expertise on the subject.

The foremost skill you would need to bring to the table is the ability to argue a point well. It is your viewpoint and you know best to express it. Your individualism should shine through in your writing, your discussion, interpretation, and evaluation of the sources. Your sections and paragraphs should ideally begin with your assessment and assertions and then the evidence, references, and arguments counter to yours with attributions should follow.

Each of your sections should reflect the originality of your thought and your argument. Once you have your argument clear, then you would know how to structure your arguments and counter-arguments, and back your viewpoint with evidence. So that would mean reading up a lot of material on the subject and taking notes. The skills that you would need at such times are discipline and rigour.

Arguments have to be made logically and thereby structured. You should know how to develop the argument and take it to a logical conclusion. The arguments you make should run across the research report; there should be no let-up and all the material should be central and relevant to that.

Your bias should not be obvious. Both sides of the arguments have to be presented as also your thoughts on the subject and the arguments, even as you bring together all the different and disparate ideas and elements.

You can highlight the merits and demerits of your argument, pre-empting any questions that the reader may have. But by giving different sets of evidence, you can make amply clear where you stand and why your argument has a validity that has not been explored earlier.

You can then work towards a conclusion by weighing the evidence and showing how certain ideas are accepted and others are rejected. Your conclusion should make clear where you stand.

Some academic writing, such as lab or business reports, will have a rather rigid structure, with headings and content for each section. In other formats, writing usually follows the same overall structure: introduction, main body and conclusion.

When you embark on the writing process, there should be clarity on what you wish to say. Enlist the main arguments and points, the chronology and sequence that you wish to state them, make sure that each point you raise is achieving the main goal: answering the question that you have raised and giving credence to the original thought you want to highlight.

For each point that you raise and the argument you make, you will have to support it by the apt evidence. There will be lot of evidence which may not be up to the mark and you have to sieve the best ones to give weightage to your paper. Poor quality evidence must be got rid of instantly.

There should be no beating around the bush in academic writing. You should come straight to the point that you want to make in the opening or certainly in the second sentence of your paper and the line of reasoning that you would be following for reader to know what to expect and stick with it. Academic writing must be backed by data, facts, references, statistics and theories expounded by other experts and scholars in the field.

The research should be so impeccable that it should allow you to showcase – and even show off – your knowledge and understanding of the subject and its theories and concepts through the evident wide-ranging research done by you.

You should be well skilled in the use of the language and grammar, as while incorporating other people's work. You should know how to paraphrase, summarise and quote. You should be able to use language skilfully and appropriately and use a combination of these techniques throughout the research paper.

Usage of verbs should be done expertly by switching back and forth between passive and active.

The language should never be bombastic or egoistic; even when presenting your arguments and ideas with conviction, there should be scope for it to be questioned and challenged as any research, ideas or arguments should be. This should reflect in the language. It is not to suggest that it should convey any self-doubt but it cannot be presented as the only truth; academic writing and research papers are full of hedging. Use words like “definitely” or “proves” rather sparingly, and instead go for “It is possible” and “somewhat”.

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### **13.4 THE KEY STEPS OF A RESEARCH PAPER**

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**Do not leave room for confusion:** When you are taking up an assignment, there should be no room for ambiguity. If there is any confusion, it is better to get it cleared with your professor or guide. While writing a thesis, you decide what you are writing about, so you have to make sure there is no confusion about the subject or its approach in your mind. You may still have doubts when you attempt research papers at a later stage of your career. When you have achieved moderate expertise in your field, there should be a senior sounding board to clear those doubts.

**Have a game plan:** Once you have a clear understanding of what is in store, you should set out the task in a systematic manner, including setting yourself a deadline, the format and submission. Have a checklist which you can go back to at the end of finishing the thesis or research report. Do not be overoptimistic about the deadline; give yourself enough time to submit the thesis. You need to give time to plan, research, write, re-write and have the final product. Have an estimate of the word length, so that you do not overdo either the information gathering or the writing part.

**Know who you are writing for:** You have to consider the recipient/s of the tome that you are going to produce it for. Their basic understanding of the subject or their expertise, as the case may be, should determine the language used in the academic writing. If it is for consumption within the academia or for a peer review journal, one can be more technical and jargon-oriented though it is better to avoid it. Whenever one is writing an academic paper, it should not be too dumbed down for a layperson. Nor should it be too technical, meant for only an expert to follow. A middle ground would help in making the writing interesting. Also, it will help in the long run if you want to develop the concept into a book for general interest.

**Prepare the ground:** Once you have decided that you want to go the academic research way, it should be occupying your mind 24/7. All types

of reading including journals, books and online material should be devoted to gathering information and references for the research report. Maintain a diary either handwritten or online and note down the important sources that you would like to go back to when you get deep into it down the months. Note down the points that may run contrary to your viewpoint so that you can incorporate them and even argue against them as you go along. Treat this exercise as the preliminary research before you make sense of all these materials in the course of researching and writing in later months.

**Give a deep thought to the research paper subject:** Having done the preliminary research, the topic should be carefully chosen. Remember, it has to be an original thought or concept, which you are going to propound on. Generating an idea which is sustainable and interesting is key to a good research paper. Jotting down the topics and having a brief two-sentence synopsis and going over the notes repeatedly can clear the clutter about the topic. It is a no-brainer that the topic chosen should keep you engaged and motivated, has the material and resources to research and meets all the criteria of the assignment you have undertaken.

**Prepare a thesis statement:** This is like a vision statement for corporates and organisations. This will form the basis of why and what you are doing in pursuing the research paper writing. The thesis statement should explain in two or three sentences the purpose behind the paper and your original thought vis-à-vis the subject you have chosen. The statement should be concise and lucid. This statement will be your guiding light throughout the process of writing a research paper. It does not mean that you can tweak the statement as you go along and discover more on the subject.

**A brief outline:** Supplement the thesis statement with a concise outline of the topics that you plan to cover, the arguments to and for, and the references and the evidence that you hope to present. This will be the roadmap that will aid in making the writing process efficient and smooth.

**Now, get started on the draft:** It is time for your first draft. Work on it in right earnest and start writing as you had envisaged your research paper. Collect the sections, graphs, references, arguments - get them all in. It is not necessary that you start with the first chapter or the introduction. You can start whichever part you are comfortable with; remember, this is just the first draft and will definitely need to be polished and rewritten. Follow a certain protocol while writing the first draft like: 1. Just write. 2. Have clarity of thought while writing. 3. Get the flow and organisation of the paragraphs right. 4. Have all the references and arguments ready and in logical sequence.

**Work on a concise but elaborate introduction:** Keep your introduction restricted to answering mainly two questions: What and why. These are clearly specified in the writing of a thesis or dissertation and one cannot deviate much from that. This is not the place to make your arguments or at least hold forth on them. An introduction, as it suggests, is just to make the reader aware as to what he can expect and convince that person that it would be worth his or her while to go in further to read the entire report. In the introduction, one should be specific about the topic of the paper, introduce the background and define terms such as theories, historical references and other terms. You should write briefly about the new discoveries you have made in the course of your research and the new insights that you have to offer.

**Writing the actual thesis:** Now you can get on to present the information that you want to. Write precisely, lucidly and incisively. Give evidence and reference at each point. Give credit where it is due; do not plagiarise or quote material without attributing it. Use chapter headings and section headings and stick to them, while writing each of those chapters and sections. It will make your job easier too. Keep referring to your notes and outline – as suggested in the earlier paragraphs here to be maintained at the preparation stage -- from time to time.

**Conclusion:** Recap the research paper in a concise manner and round it up to reiterate your arguments. It will be like a final bow to a wonderful performance in which you have proved your point. It is bragging without actually bragging. Make sure not to raise any fresh points or arguments; it should give the reader and student a closure to the topic.

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## 13.5 CHOOSING A RESEARCH PAPER TOPIC

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Choosing the topic for your research paper is a crucial aspect of the entire process. It is not necessary that the areas that have caught your interest make good subject and have enough content to make it a research paper topics. Also, the study and research material that you may need to juxtapose and give weightage to your research may not exist.

You cannot be stubborn on the topic you want to right about; you have to broadbase it. A good exercise that experts suggest is thinking and jotting down many subjects that you may be interested in for you to do research on. Then a shortlist has to be created and narrowed down to the most interesting ones and most doable ones.

Reading on these topics online and going to the library would help in narrowing the topic further. Then you have to – in your mind – develop a clear and unique perspective on the subject, after having read copious material on the narrowed-down topics.

Make sure that there are not only other research materials on your topic or close to that, but also many books, articles in newspapers and magazines and other references.

The quandary is that even while ensuring that there is enough material to rely on to expand on the research it should also be not something on which there is exhaustive material and very little wiggle room for your research.

Take extra time to contemplate a subject that you are passionate about and which will hold your interest through the research process of gathering information and writing out. We are talking of weeks and weeks and months and months of being at it, something you have to commit fully to if you want to produce a great research paper.

Having chosen the topic for research paper, the next big and more challenging task is to create a research question. This would require immense concentration and back and forth. You have to find the focus and choose a topic that will be inspiring for you and thought-provoking for the readers.

The fields that lends themselves to research are crime, law, business, education, narcotics and substance abuse, health and healthcare, environment, social and family, politics and psychology.

In the blogpost (<https://paperell.com/blog/best-research-paper-topics#2>), more than 100 interesting topic ideas are listed under various subjects. It is worthwhile looking at the page to get ideas or to get inspired to come up with one own original ideas.

Here are some samples of topics from the blog:

1. Is traditional music of a country more important than the international music that is heard everywhere?
2. What makes one sport more popular than another?
3. Are older people always wiser and correct in their choices and opinions?
4. Are friendships between men different from friendships between women and why?
5. What is the proper punishment for serial killers and rapists?
6. What is the future of religion?
7. Do immigrants provide good or bad impact on a country's economy?
8. Are the virtual world and video games, causing more violence or more antisocial people?
9. Why more expensive sports like rowing and tennis should be more accessible to social and ethnic minorities?
10. Adoption rights for single parents: why are laws so strict?
11. City development: should we keep the grid pattern or move to the new approaches to city planning?
12. What makes communism the best political system in the world?

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## 13.6 IMPORTANCE OF SECOND DRAFT AND REVISION

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Once you have written the first draft, probably after weeks and weeks of research, cross-referencing and detailing, you may think the hard work has finally paid off and your work is done and dusted. No, there is no substitute to revisiting what you have done at first go and rewriting and polishing the draft. You ought to do it, there is no escaping the second and probably more drafts. Your reputation is at stake with these theses and there should be no loose ends.

This is the time to reiterate what academic writing is about to yourself: academic writing is clear, concise, focussed, structured and backed by evidence. The reader should get a clear understanding of your objective in pursuing the research paper. The tone and the writing has to be formal but that does not mean convoluted or complicated words and sentences to impress the reader with your vocabulary and command over the language, which you should anyway show off in your brevity and lucidity.

Now coming back to the second draft, make sure that your thesis statement (vision statement created during the preparation before the first draft) aligns with the draft. Make sure all arguments are well justified and backed by evidence and, if not, do not be afraid to junk them. Do not approach the first draft with a closed mind; be ready to re-sequence the chapters and section. Ensure that there is a smooth flow of ideas one after the other.

The idea behind the exercise of revision and second draft is that old ideas that seem out of place can be removed and new ideas that may occur to you during the course of the weeks of writing can be included in the research paper. Ultimately, the report should be eloquent, read well and be understood.

There are some time-tested practices to make sure that the report has all the facts and figures, reads well and that no point has been missed:

- Always take print-outs for checking
- Read out aloud to yourself
- Have a pencil/pen handy to make notes and correction on the printout
- Spelling errors is a strict no-no and should be annihilated
- Get it read by a trusted colleague

If the PhD has to be submitted in a certain format or stick to citation style, you have to make sure you adhere to it.

You have to ensure that you have properly formatted citation within the text for each and every nugget of information from an outside source. If there has been any query from your guide or professor, it should be

addressed. Go through the introduction thoroughly and make sure it gives a sense of what your topic is, why it has significance, both short-term and long-term, and how you will be going about presenting and arguing it.

There should be continuity, in the sense that each paragraph should have a smooth transition from the preceding and the subsequent ones. Each paragraph and section should have a well-thought-out topic headline for easy reading or going back to.

After making sure that the purpose of second draft and revision – including additions, deletions, corrections, rearranging paragraphs, sections and chapters -- have been met, it is time to go back to the checklist that was created initially. Once – and only after – you have ticked every point in that checklist, which one assumes is comprehensive, can you be satisfied that the research report can be submitted.

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### **13.7 MOST RESPECTED RESEARCH JOURNALS/MAGAZINES**

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Academic journals are a subset of academic texts. Almost every field that has research as its natural offshoot will have a journal to its name. They are produced by various reputed publishing houses and institutions and up-to-date in its information and research. Academic journals are published periodically, usually monthly, quarterly and, in some very niche segments, annually.

These days, online publications have made periodicity somewhat redundant with ongoing publishing of research papers especially when it is ground-breaking work. This model of regular or ongoing publication means that journals are able to respond quickly to new research. They are therefore thought to provide information about the latest research, evidence, ideas and thoughts from across the academic community.

Academic journals are generally well-respected because their content has been peer reviewed. Peer review means that an article has been examined and scrutinised by one or more experts in the field (a peer) and that it is considered acceptable for publication.

Here are some of the top research journals:

*Annual Review of Psychology*, published annually, has a wide range of reviews related to psychological research. Offering detailed and thoughtful commentary on a range of subjects, from the biological basis of behaviour, cognitive processes, to human development, the journal is an esteemed source of knowledge within psychology.

*The Lancet* began as an independent, international weekly general medical journal founded in 1823 by Thomas Wakley. Since its first issue,

the journal, according to its website, “has strived to make science widely available so that medicine can serve, and transform society, and positively impact the lives of people”. Over the past two centuries, *The Lancet* has sought to address urgent topics in our society, initiate debate, put science into context, and influence decision makers around the world through peer-reviewed articles and research reports. *The Lancet* has evolved as a family of journals (across *Child & Adolescent Health*, *Diabetes & Endocrinology*, *Digital Health*, *Gastroenterology & Hepatology*, *Global Health*, *Haematology*, *HIV*, *Infectious Diseases*, *Neurology*, *Oncology*, *Planetary Health*, *Psychiatry*, *Public Health*, *Respiratory Medicine*, *Biomedicine*, *Clinical Medicine*), but retains at its core the belief that medicine must serve society, knowledge must transform society and that the best science must lead to better lives.

***Journal of Advertising Research*** focuses on providing insights into the world of advertising research. By highlighting topics from neuro-marketing to social media, JAR, as it is known, provides a broad range of areas to explore, not least with the use of biosensors for advertising research. Aimed at both researchers and practitioners, the work is often not just of academic interest, but also has practical applications too.

***Journal of Consumer Research*** is one of the leading journals in the field of exploring consumer behaviour through a multi-disciplinary approach (across fields spanning psychology, economics, and communication, among others). By focusing on academic content, rather than for practitioners, the research can be more fundamental to an understanding of human behaviour in a consumer research context.

***Hopkins Medicine Magazine*** is a leading journal that publishes newsletter and periodicals on researches and medical advances made by practitioners in the John Hopkins medical community. The focus is on patient care, research and education. Other medical magazines that have similar focus are brought out by Stanford University and Harvard University.

**CHI Conference** is one of the leading publishers within the field of human-computer interaction and UX design. By promoting forward-thinking, data-driven, science-based approaches, CHI is continually advancing knowledge of human behaviour for researchers and designers alike.

***Research in Engineering Design*** is an international journal that publishes research papers on design theory and methodology in all fields of engineering, focusing on mechanical, civil, architectural, and manufacturing. The journal is designed for professionals in academia, industry, and government interested in research issues relevant to design practice. Representative topics include functional representation, feature-

based design, shape grammars, process design, redesign, product database models, and empirical studies. The journal also publishes state-of-the-art review articles.

*Learning and Instruction* focuses on providing cutting-edge science in the areas of teaching and education. By providing an evidence-based understanding of educational methods, the journal can help educators teach more effectively. Often publishing articles that incorporate psychophysiological measures, *Learning and Instruction* encourages an unbiased approach to understanding human behaviour in the classroom.

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### **13.8 CONCLUSION**

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Research reports are an important feature of one's academic career, especially at the higher education level. If you want to be an expert in your field, research reports are an imperative part of the process and have to be meticulously produced. Peer-reviewed reports give a boost to the reputation of academicians and experts and hence are much sought-after.

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### **13.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

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1. What is a research report?

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2. Is the idea behind the research report more important than the writing itself?

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3. Are there any formats that research papers have to adhere to?

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4. If there is a statement from an outside source, should it be produced as it is?

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5. Can you name one research journal and what is its niche?

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### 13.10 KEY WORDS

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**Pedantic:** Uninteresting and too concerned with unimportant details or traditional rules, especially in connection with academic subjects.

**Jargon:** Words and expressions that are used in special or technical ways by particular groups of people, often making the language difficult to understand.

**Paraphrase:** Express the meaning of (something written or spoken) using different words, especially to achieve greater clarity.

**Peer review:** Evaluation of scientific, academic, or professional work by others working in the same field.

**Neuro-marketing:** Market research of a type using processes such as neuro-imaging and eye tracking in order to analyse the way in which a consumer's brain responds to particular products, advertisements, brands, etc.

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### 13.11 REFERENCES

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#### Books

Writing Empirical Research Reports: A Basic Guide for Students of the Social and Behavioral Sciences by Fred Pyszczak

How to Write a Great Research Paper by Beverly Chin

#### Online

<https://www.cis.upenn.edu/~sweirich/icfp-plmw15/slides/peyton-jones.pdf>

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**14.0 INTRODUCTION**

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Non-news visual medium means the whole gamut of films, sitcoms, mini series and documentaries. Web series is a new addition. These visual medium entertainments and infotainments are revolutionising the industry. In many cases, they are turning out to be disruptors in the entertainment zone and have increased during the Covid times, when most people have been forced to stay indoors.

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**14.1 OBJECTIVES**

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- Getting insight into visual medium in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- Becoming familiar with screenwriting and scripts
- Understanding various platforms and their scope

**On the completion of this unit, you will be able to:**

- Understand the craft of screenwriting
- Make a distinction between TV and web series
- Create a concept and script for all genres

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## **14.2 WHAT CONSTITUTES NON-NEWS VISUAL MEDIUM?**

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Visual medium has expanded beyond television to our smartphones, tablets and other platforms. Till a few years back, news was being consumed on all these platforms, posing a serious challenge to the print version of news. More and more entertainment and non-news visual media is gaining audience, with growing accessibility and affordable data packages.

Leaving news aside, the visual medium is full of creative and original content, both fictional and non-fictional.

In the fictional category, there are films, mini-series, animation television series including sitcoms and dramas and web series. In the non-fiction category, there is documentary and, with a pinch of salt, reality shows. We will briefly touch upon each of these categories and deal with them elaborately – especially the techniques of writing specific to each – in the subsequent sections.



**Animation:** Commonly known as cartoon films, animation is one of the most popular visual medium genres for kids and even adults. From TV channels and online productions to the big screen, gif and other graphic content on our smartphones, animation is omnipresent as a medium of information and entertainment. Even in advertising and marketing medium, animation is up there as one of the most engaging genres.

**Films:** Films a.k.a. cinema, movies and motion pictures are a visual art form that is undertaken to tell a story, based on stories that are fictional and real. Films are cultural history and reflect the specific cultures and milieu that they are created for. Since their advent they have been a major influential and popular art form.

**Documentaries:** Documentaries do not have a fictional element in them. They deal with real issues and events. In a sense, it is like the feature section of a newspaper. Whatever is on the screen should be accurate and

factual. Most documentaries are made to bring attention to an issue that the documentary film maker wants to delve into. The subject that one chooses for a documentary is of utmost importance, along with authenticity and credibility.

**Sitcoms:** Situation comedies or Sitcoms are episodic series with the same set of main characters in a comedy. A sitcom could be enacted live in front of a studio audience, then recorded and telecast without the audience ever being shown on TV. Many sitcoms use laugh tracks to enhance comic moments. Friends, Seinfeld and Big Bang Theory are some of the popular sitcoms.

**Reality TV:** Reality television is a genre starring unknown and “real” people (as against professional actors) thrown into supposedly unscripted and real-life situations. Reality TV became popular in the early 2000s in American networks, with hit shows like Survivor and Big Brother. Almost all-American hit reality TV shows have global franchises, including in India. There are also competition-based reality shows like Indian Idol (modelled on American Idol) and Masterchef India (franchise of MasterChef Australia), in which participants face elimination, with one person emerging as the winner in every season. The performance is rated by a panel of experts to perform the duties of judges and/or viewers.

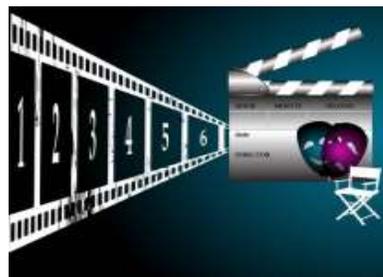
**Television series:** A television series could be mini-series, episodic serials or limited series. A TV series is usually aired on a network at the same time on a weekly or a daily basis each season. Unless there are repeat shows, if you have missed seeing the first telecast, there is no going back. Usually, they are of 30 minutes to one-hour duration, including commercials. Many television series have been bought over by streaming services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime and Hotstar. Many TV series, such as Friends, Seinfeld and Game of Thrones, stretch into several seasons and years.

**Web series:** A web series is a collection of several episodes, which are streamed through online platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, Zee 5 and so on. These could be one-off stories in each episode of the season, or a long narrative packed in one season of several episodes. Drama, mysteries and thrillers are the most popular genres in a web series format. Web series work for viewers, as they can log in at any convenient time and start watching, as against pre-determined timing for TV viewership. One can follow a web series, apart from a television screen, on any of the gizmos like laptops, smartphones, iPad or tablets.

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### 14.3 SCREENPLAY FOR MOVIES

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A film script or what is called screenplay is a document that sequentially narrates every minute detail that has to go into a movie and is the basis for shooting. Usually, a screenplay will run anywhere

between 70 to 200 pages, depending on the length of a film.

Screenplays are written in a certain format, with margins, numbers on pages and other jargon unique to screenplays, though of course the story structure takes precedence over every other aspect. Having knowledge of the structure is immensely important because it is the ready reckoner to put the story down on paper. The structure begins with a screenplay outline, which is in-short synopsis or a blueprint for all that you want to include in the script. Basically, a script outline -- including the theme, characters and the plot -- will help focus and keep bringing you back to the storyline, whenever you have a sort of writer's block. To put it simply, create and identify the main character, then build up the main conflict and have a clear idea of the big or the talking point moments which is what structure is all about.

Then go through an exercise called world-building. You have to imagine the world that the movie is taking place in. You ought to have a vivid sense of the time, the place and the period, with an idea of the technology around that time and place, the fashion, the transport and other details, the architecture. At no point should the script or the movie as seen on the screen deviate from these minute details which will make the movie authentic to the discerning viewer.

Have a synopsis. It is the fulcrum of the story in an order that would appeal to your senses and the audience's. Whether it is an action, drama, romance or a comedy, there will be the main character or characters, a beginning which should lead to what is called "an inciting moment" which is the event that gets the plot going. The inciting event is what will spur the main character into action and has to have a major impact. Then there has to be turning point, twists and turns which makes it difficult for the hero/heroine to deal with the situation caused by the inciting incident. There has to be complications and perilous situations which seemingly make it impossible for the main character to overcome them to bring it all to a logical conclusion. Finally, the climax has the hero/heroine achieving the impossible or otherwise, more often than not the former.

A screenplay is the basic document that gives producers and those who are putting in money an indication of how much is required to bankroll the project.

Usually, professional screenwriters are given up to three months to finish writing a screenplay. When one is in "the zone", a screenplay can be completed within two weeks. It depends on the schedule one sets for oneself to write the script. Some keep a gruelling schedule and try to finish up to 10 pages in a day's sitting at the writing desk. Once the first draft is finished, say within a week, it is better to allot another week to rewrite and make corrections, so that it is that perfect finished product that is handed over to the producers and the director. A month is a fair amount of time to finish a script.

A screenplay format is fairly easy to navigate. These days, there are software which take care of the formatting almost to the minutest detail, while the writer is just concentrating on the creative side.

But if one does not have the wherewithal to invest in a software, the basic script formatting involves the following:

- Font size is 12 pt courier
- 1.5-inch indents on the left-side
- 1-inch right-side indents
- 1-inch headers and footers (space on the top and bottom)
- Dialogues are indented 2.5 inches from the left side of the page
- Character names, when appearing for the first time, have to be in all caps and positioned, starting around 4 inches from the left side of the page
- Page numbers are on the top right corner of the page
- The first page is not numbered.

Scene headings are a good practice followed in the best screenplays. A scene heading gives the production crew a clear idea of the location of a scene. A scene heading typically has details like Int. (for interior) or Ext. (or exterior), a concise description of the setting (such as ‘raining’, ‘dimly lit room’) and the time of the day (such as morning, sunset, twilight).

There are jargons used in script-writing that one should be familiar with, and in the next section we have mentioned some of these to get a working knowledge of the lingo. If you are a first time or budding screenplay writer, it helps to credit your screenplay with your personal information including your name, phone number and email address on the title page and get it registered for copyright.

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#### **14.4 SCREENPLAY WRITING FOR DOCUMENTARIES**

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Documentaries are factual accounts of an interesting topic or a topic that a filmmaker is interested in. They are usually made to highlight a particular story or viewpoint that has been ignored or not given its due importance by mainstream media.

Once an idea has germinated, extensive research before the shooting is the key to a good documentary. There should be a comprehensive list of interviewees or characters, the storylines, the flow of the story and the stylising that one would like to adopt for the documentary.

Since it is based on real incidents or events, it will have to “unscripted”, and that is the challenge of screenwriting for a documentary. It evolves from the footage shot. One can and should have a shooting script, which will basically have an outline of what you want to show, what you want shot, the people one wants to interview and re-interview and the main

points that one wants to highlight, which other mainstream media have ignored or not represented adequately.

Writing a script after the shooting can be quite challenging, as one may feel that the main task of having footage is over. If time-tested steps are followed, it would make a job easier and also more rewarding, because at the end of it, having a written script would lead to a well-produced documentary.

To begin with, one has to re-run the footage and have it in written form or transcribe each and every frame of the footage. After having transcribed it, one has to read and re-read the output and figure out the main characters and other key elements encountered during the shooting.

The standout moments, the climactic parts and those unmissable moments have to be compartmentalised into various crucial scenes and sequenced in the script. It is the short and engaging stories within the length of the film that create a great and terrific documentary. Having a clear idea as to how you want to conclude your documentary will help to create the narrative of the story, which should seamlessly and effortlessly lead to the ending.

Every story needs to have a beginning, middle and end. If, while writing the script for the documentary, you refer to the outline or the shooting script and recall the footage that have been shot already, the flow of the documentary from start to finish should be amply clear. The beginning has to be meaningful and captivating. It is the hook that would prepare the audience for what is to follow. If you cannot engage the viewers in the first 10 minutes, the chances are that you have lost them unless the subject is of immense interest. Like a good novel, the middle provides all the elements that are key to the story interspersed with interviews and commentary.

The middle parts also tend to be the most difficult to navigate as every scene and footage may seem important and difficult for a filmmaker to edit. But to keep a documentary within the time one intends it to be and not to make it long and tedious to watch, the harsh decision to cut out some portions have to be made.

For those who are not on your side of the debate, your documentary and the facts that you show should compel them to rethink their views. The basic message that you want to convey through your documentary should make every viewer empathise with the subject and its victims/stakeholders.

The script template should have a split column, one for the audio and another for the video, so that on the editing table it is matched scene by

scene and there is no jarring discrepancy between what is playing on the screen and the commentary. These days, there is excellent software for scriptwriting and storyboarding. Many of the software devices help one to structure the script, especially if it is a complicated subject, or there is excess data or footage.

Finally, what looks good in the written script may not always look great on the screen, so it should all come together on the editing table and determine how one deals with the script and the footage.

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## 14.5 WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF DOCUMENTARIES?

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As a journalism student, the inclination should be more towards documentaries in the non-news visual medium that are closer to facts and reality. Documentaries are categorised into a few slots:

**The Expository Mode:** Of the six types of documentary film-making, this is probably the most sought-after. Under this category, the subjects are extensively researched and are primarily done with an intention of educating and influencing public opinion on topics that are controversial or concerning. These could be made on subjects like climate change impact on a certain region, a nuclear plant which is facing protest or the role that media played in propping up a certain government. These are based on facts, like any documentary would be, but they have to be supported by evidence and interviews, visuals and graphics, statistics. They are often referred to as essay films. There will be a narrator, the concept which is also called the “Voice of God”.

**The Observational Mode:** This is called in the cinema world as *cinema vérité*, direct cinema or fly-on-the-wall documentary. It is what is called cinematic realism, sometimes shot in low light conditions and with smaller hand-held cameras. The observation mode of shooting documentaries can be done by just two people who go out with a camera and, if at all, a basic equipment with whatever natural light available and shoot real-time as events unfold. No need for bulky production equipment and/or a big crew for staging action.

**The Participatory Mode:** In “Introduction to Documentary,” Bill Nichols describes participatory documentary as “when the encounter between filmmaker and subject is recorded and the filmmaker actively engages with the situation they are documenting.” The participatory mode aims for immediacy. Also, it often presents the filmmaker’s point of view.

Most Michael Moore’s documentaries fit into this category. He takes a socially relevant subject like gun control and America’s healthcare system to make his scathing commentary. He talks to people on the street

on these subjects and ambushes the perpetrators, the powerful and the authorities with inconvenient questions to make his point against their hate, bigotry or agenda from their privileged position. His *Bowling for Columbine* and *Sicko* are must watch.

**The Reflexive Mode:** Documentaries made in reflexive mode provoke audiences to “question the authenticity of documentary in general,” writes Bill Nichols. Reflexive docs challenge assumptions and expectations about the form itself.

**The Poetic Mode:** Webster defines poetry as “literary work in which special intensity is given to the expression of feelings and ideas by the use of distinctive style and rhythm.” You can apply this definition almost perfectly to many documentaries created in the poetic mode. The aim is to create an impression or a mood rather than argue a point. The poetic form also referred to as abstract or avant-garde can be traced back to the popular City Symphony film movement of the 1920s. Classics such as Walter Ruttmann’s “Berlin: Symphony of a Metropolis” (1927) came from that period.

Also, filmmakers operating in the poetic mode typically emphasize cinematic values over content to create visual poetry. Shot design, composition and rhythm achieved in editing are hallmarks of the genre. The narrative, if there is one, is expressed visually rather than rhetorically. Additionally, Dutch filmmaker Joris Iven’s City Symphony classic ‘Rain’ (1929) is a shining example of the poetic style. It shows how a rainstorm transforms the Dutch metropolis Amsterdam.

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## 14.6 WEB SERIES: HISTORY AND FUTURE

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A web series is basically a collection of episodes which is streamed through the internet or online platforms. These episodes could be related to each other or could be one long story split into multiple episodes. Most OTT and VOD platforms today are streaming a lot of engaging content in the form of web

series. In fact, some of the web series offerings are so addictive, they lead to what is known as binge-watching.

In present times, the web and internet seem to be the best way to reach as wide – in numbers, nationalities and demography -- an audience as possible. Unlike a television series, which usually requires heavy production costs, celebrity actors, and large media companies, a web series requires a camera, an idea for a show, and participants, actors and

performers who need not be professional. Having said that, the audience is demanding and expecting finesse in all departments of a web series, apart from engaging and unique content.

Anyone with a camera and an account on video sharing platforms such as YouTube can create a web series. Even amateurs, with not much finance to fall back on, can write and film web series with special effects and the works. Friends and aspiring actors can say their lines, film scenes with a few cameras, and create a loyal online following.

Sometimes, the amateur web series can get so popular that there have been instances, especially in the US and Japan, where it has led to bigger offers from established networks. In the US, a YouTube web series called *The Misadventures of Awkward Black Girl* became so popular that HBO approached its maker Issa Ray to create original television content for its network.

Many screenwriters are jumping into the web series bandwagon to tell an engaging story outside the fixed two to three-hour format of films shown in cinemas or other formats seen in the streaming services.

The rise in the popularity of the Internet and improvements in the accessibility and affordability of high-speed broadband and streaming video technology means that producing and distributing a web series becomes a feasible alternative to "traditional" series production, which was formerly done for broadcast and cable TV. Web series are more economical to produce compared to a conventional TV series. Web series has a greater edge over a television series as it is available online, not arrested to a particular time slot and can reach world wide audience at the click of a button with access 24 hours a day and seven days a week, at the time of their choosing. Moreover, in the 2010s, the rising affordability of tablets and smartphones and the rising ownership rates of these devices in industrialised nations means that web series are available to a wider range of potential viewers, including commuters, travellers and other people who are on the go. The challenge, which a television network easily overcomes, is marketing the web series and make it known to a wider audience. This is where word of mouth works as the best marketing tool; for this, the web series has to be so top-notch that it becomes viral and there is a buzz about it.

The best part about creating a web series is that it can be done at an individual level without any help of big players like Netflix or production houses. Creating a web series is extremely low cost compared to creating a TV series. Crowdfunding is the most popular way to get the funds to produce your web series. Your backers then become your audience and will help to spread the word when your web series get launched!

Making a web series is a great way to be able to supply a constant stream of storytelling for a huge online audience. In less time than making a pilot, you can create and launch new material that keeps your audience coming back and wanting more. Your fans will keep coming back to

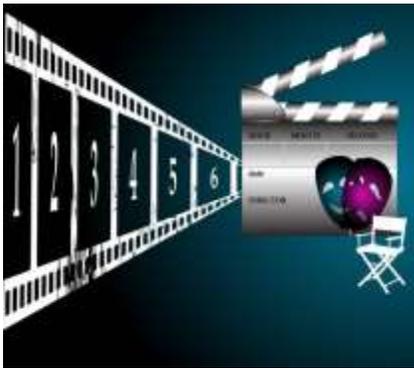
support your work, and in turn will look forward to any bigger projects you create, such as feature films. In making a home production web series, you are your own boss with no limitations or dictates of a network. Making a feature film is a long-term process from conceptualising to writing to shooting to post-production and broadcasting. On the other hand, an entire season of a web series can be shot in a jiffy, sometimes within a few weeks (assuming the groundwork like script etc is meticulous) and put out there on the internet and other platforms. You can take your idea from concept to completion in about one month and bring it to your audience within weeks, instead of years.

Web series are growing by leaps and bounds. The ones that have succeeded all started with one viewer clicking on their series and then to hundreds of thousands or millions of regular viewers.

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## 14.7 TERMS USED IN SCREENWRITING

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Before embarking on writing scripts and screenplays, one should be familiar with the terms that are used to indicate the scene and how it is to be shot, right from whether it is indoors or outdoors, the background, the activity around one and the characters in the frame. If a film has to be shot well and look good on screen, all these have to be planned on paper to perfection.

Here we list many of the screenwriting terms though it is not a comprehensive list:

**Action:** The scene description, character movement and sounds described in a screenplay.

**Aerial Shot:** A shot to be taken from a plane, a helicopter or a drone (but not a crane).

**Beat:** In a dialogue if there is a “beat” written in brackets, it means the actor is expected to take a pause and then continue mouthing the dialogue. Instead of “beat” being written, the three-dot ellipses are also the norm for a pause.

**B.G. (background):** It is used to describe any action in the background in the frame. While the characters in the foreground may be smiling, there could be a scuffle happening in the background between other characters and capturing both in the same frame is crucial to the narrative.

**Character:** When a character appears for the first time in the script, the name is written in bold and all caps. Subsequently, it is written normally.

**Crossfade:** This is like a "Fade to black then Fade to next scene." In other words, as one scene fades out, a moment of black interrupts before

the next scene fades in. Unlike DISSOLVE, CROSSFADE involves – without any exception – a black or blank screen.

**Cut to:** The most simple and common transition. Since this transition is implied by a change of scene, it may be used sparingly to help intensify character changes and emotional shifts. The transition describes a change of scene over the course of one frame.

**Dialogue:** Very simply, this is what people are supposed to say according to the script.

**Dissolve:** A common transition. As one scene fades out, the next scene fades into place. This type of transition is generally used to convey some passage of time and is very commonly used.

**Dolly shot:** A mechanism on which a camera can be moved around a scene or location. Simple dollies involve a tripod on wheels. Dolly shots are moving shots.

**Establishing shot:** A shot, usually from a distance, which shows us where we are, suggesting location. It is often used at the beginning of a film to suggest where a story takes place, such as a long or aerial shot of a city's landmark, like VT station of Mumbai or the airport.

**Ext. or Exterior:** This indicates that a scene takes place outdoors. It also helps producers to make cost projections for a film.

**Fade to/black/fade in/next scene:** The chronology of a scene fading to a black screen usually suggests that it is the end of a major moment or incident in a film, such as the death of one of the leading characters or passage over a long period of time. The "Next Scene" is often days, months, or years after the previous scenes. The black screen may fade with a subtitle of the time period, say after six years, indicating a significant change in time or emotional status for the main characters.

**Flashback:** This is used to go back in time in a scene and is usually followed by the indicator “back to the present day” to bring the screenplay back to current times.

**Int. or Interior:** The scene takes place indoors.

**Intercut:** Two scenes, especially in a dramatic moment in the film, cut into each other after intermittent moments, to show crucial circumstances at play. Typically, in a James Bond-like flick, while the villain is setting off a timer for a bomb, it is crucial for a hero to reach on time to undo it. The scene will go back and forth from the villain's den, with the hero racing to reach the place.

**Matchcut:** This involves two images or scenes – visually unconnected -- merging seamlessly into each other. It could be an object of a certain colour or shape or movement merging into another object of similar colour, shape or movement. Typically, scenes like a fast train would transcend into another scene in which an arrow or bullet has been fired. This is also used as a metaphor to show perspectives. Even if things have advanced a lot in the world not much has changed in the biases and other outlooks.

**O.C. or O.S:** It is an abbreviation for off-camera or off-screen. When this is written against a character mouthing a dialogue, it implies that he has not to be shown when he is speaking.

**Pan:** This indicates that a camera is pivoting to get a broader view of the scenery or the frame, as seen by the character. When the camera pans, it takes in the entire view of what the screenplay wants the audience to see.

**Shooting script:** The final draft of a screenplay used on the set by the production crew includes actors and directors.

**Split screen shot:** The frame is split into multiple frames to show simultaneous actions in the film. It could be two people talking to each other on the phone. Split screen is used also for many dramatic events unfolding.

**Super:** It is an abbreviation for superimpose. Many a times, the title credits of the film are superimposed over the scenes.

**V.O. or voice over:** If a film uses a narrator to fill in the gaps or even if it is a first-person account, the voice over method is employed. It may show the character, but he or she won't be moving their lips but expressing their thoughts through V.O.

**Zoom:** The camera zooms in or closes in on a character or an object to magnify it.

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## 14.8 LANDMARK SCREENPLAYS

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Here we list some of the best screenplays – there are 100s – that a student should read to get a sense of what great screenwriting is about. These include movies, television series and web series:

### **Godfather**

Set in 1945 New York, the cult movie is based on the Corleones, a fictional mafia family. The movie, directed by Francis Coppola, is based on the book by the same name written by Mario Puzo and stars Marlon Brando, Al Pacino, Robert Duvall and Diane Keaton. Both Coppola and Puzo worked on the screenplay, but separately. According to Gene Phillips's book on the subject, both kept in touch during the writing process and took decisions on what to include and what to remove from the final version. The semi-collaborative effort produced one of the best-known films.

**Recommended reading:** Annotated Godfather: The Complete Screenplay with Commentary on Every Scene, Interviews, and Little-Known Facts by Jenny Jones

### **Game of Thrones**

Game of Thrones is television series based on a series of fantasy drama novels called A Song of Ice and Fire written by George R R Martin. Game of Thrones had nine writers over its eight seasons. Most of the 73 episodes spanning over eight years from 2011 are co-written by the creators of the series, David Benioff and D B Weiss. Martin himself wrote one episode in each of the first four seasons.

According to an article in The New York Observer by Sean Collins, the writers spent several weeks writing a character outline, including what material from the novels to use and the overarching themes. “After these individual outlines were completed, they spent another two to three weeks discussing each main character's individual arc and arranging them episode by episode,” the article said. A detailed outline was created, with each of the writers working on part of it to create a script for each episode. All ten episodes in each season were written before filming began since they were shot out of order by two units in various countries. Collins says in his article: “Benioff and Weiss wrote their episodes together; one wrote the first half of the script with the other writing the second half. They then passed the drafts back and forth to make notes and do rewrites.”

### **Angoor**

Angoor was a comedy made in 1982 by Gulzar based on The Comedy of Errors by William Shakespeare. Gulzar also wrote the script. According to Deepti Naval who starred in the film, “Gulzar works very quietly on his scripts. He does not tomtom them but when it is ready, he produces it and presents it.” She goes on to say in the book Angoor by Sathya Saran, “Gulzar is a writer of precision. He had a metre in mind, the rhythm of a sentence in his brain. He knew exactly how a dialogue should be delivered, whether it would end on a high note or a low one. He was strict about it and the only person who could improvise on it was Sanjeev Kumar, who would do so but without changing the inherent structure and rhythm of the line.”

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## **14.9 CONCLUSION**

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Screenwriting seems more difficult than it seems. As in any other profession, it needs practice and experience. The formatting seems tedious, but with advanced software that is available in the market, writers can concentrate on the creative part of producing the script. Unlike earlier times, when the only two mediums available were big screen and television, now there are platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime, apart from the whole world wide web.

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## **14.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

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1. What does fictional and non-fictional visual medium entail?

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2. What is a web series?

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3. Are screenplays written in a certain template?

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4. What is expository documentary?

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5. Mention three terms used in screenplay and what they indicate.

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### **14.11 KEY WORDS**

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**Binge-watching:** To watch many or all episodes of (a TV series) or many seasons in rapid succession or in one sitting, which can go on for several hours or even days, with very short breaks.

**Fictional:** Of, relating to, characterized by, or occurring in fiction, or invented by the imagination.

**Metaphor:** Broadly it denotes figurative language. A word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them.

**Documentary:** A presentation (such as a film or novel) expressing or dealing with factual events, or a documentary presentation.

**Transcribe:** To make a written copy of or to transfer (data) from one recording form to another.

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### **14.12 REFERENCES**

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#### **Books**

Writing Great Screenplays for Film and TV by Dona Cooper.

Screenplay: The foundations of screenwriting by Syd Field

#### **Online**

<https://www.writersstore.com/how-to-write-a-screenplay-a-guide-to-scriptwriting/>

## યુનિવર્સિટી ગીત

સ્વાધ્યાય: પરમં તપ:

સ્વાધ્યાય: પરમં તપ:

સ્વાધ્યાય: પરમં તપ:

શિક્ષણ, સંસ્કૃતિ, સદ્ભાવ, દિવ્યબોધનું ધામ,  
ડૉ. બાબાસાહેબ આંબેડકર ઓપન યુનિવર્સિટી નામ;  
સૌને સૌની પાંખ મળે ને સૌને સૌનું આભ,  
દશે દિશામાં સ્મિત વહે, હો દશે દિશે શુભ-લાભ.

અભણ રહી અજ્ઞાનના શાને, અંધકારને પીવો ?  
કહે બુદ્ધ આંબેડકર કહે, તું થા તારો દીવો;  
શારદીય અજવાળાં પહોંચ્યાં ગુર્જર ગામે ગામ  
ધ્રુવતારકની જેમ ઝળહળે એકલવ્યની શાન.

સરસ્વતીના મયૂર તમારે ફળિયે આવી ગહેકે  
અંધકારને હડસેલીને ઉજાસનાં ફૂલ મહેંકે;  
બંધન નહીં કો' સ્થાન સમયનાં જવું ન ઘરથી દૂર,  
ઘર આવી મા હરે શારદા દૈન્યતિમિરનાં પૂર.

સંસ્કારોની સુગંધ મહેંકે, મન મંદિરને ધામે  
સુખની ટપાલ પહોંચે સૌને પોતાને સરનામે;  
સમાજ કેરે દરિયે હાંકી શિક્ષણ કેરું વહાણ,  
આવો કરીએ આપણ સૌ  
ભવ્ય રાષ્ટ્રનિર્માણ...  
દિવ્ય રાષ્ટ્રનિર્માણ...  
ભવ્ય રાષ્ટ્રનિર્માણ

