

MODULE 1

Understanding Mass Media and the Importance of Media Literacy

What is News?

News is information about recent events shared with the public.

However, not everything that happens becomes news. Journalists and editors select events based on:

News values

Audience interests

Business considerations

Available technology

Type of media

Cultural and political context

This selection process is called **gatekeeping**.

The Myth of the “Nose for News”

The “nose for news” refers to the belief that good journalists naturally know which events are important.

In reality, journalists use professional and organizational criteria called **news values**.

The 11 News Values

1. **Relevance**

A story is newsworthy when it affects the audience.

2. **Timeliness**

The event is new, recent, or currently developing.

3. **Simplification**

The story can be explained clearly and easily.

4. **Predictability**

The event is expected or scheduled.

5. **Unexpectedness**

The event is unusual, surprising, or rare.

6. **Continuity**

A story continues to receive coverage because it is already considered news.

7. **Composition**

Editors choose a mixture of stories to create balance.

8. **Elite People**

Stories involving famous, powerful, or influential people receive more attention.

9. **Elite Nations**

Powerful or wealthy countries receive more international coverage than poorer countries.

10. **Negativity**

Bad news is often considered more newsworthy.

11. **Proximity**

Events closer to the audience geographically or culturally receive more attention.

Important Reminder

A story does not need all 11 news values. Two or three strong news values can make an event highly newsworthy.

The News Net

According to Gay Tuchman, news organizations use a “news net” to gather stories.

The news net includes:

1. **Staff reporters**

Journalists assigned to specific beats or areas.

2. **Stringers and freelancers**

Non-regular journalists who are often paid per story.

3. **Wire services**

Organizations that distribute news to different media outlets.

Problem with the News Net

Because many media organizations use similar sources and systems:

They often report the same stories.

Important stories may be ignored.

Communities outside major cities may receive less coverage.

Marginalized groups may remain underrepresented.

How Newsrooms Are Organized

1. **By Geography**

National outlets: Cover the entire country.

Regional outlets: Focus on a particular region or city.

International outlets: Cover events in other countries.

2. **By Beat**

A beat is a specialized topic or area covered regularly by a reporter.

Common Philippine beats include: Malacañang

Senate and Congress

Supreme Court

Police and NCRPO

Health

Education

Environment and weather

Business and economy

Entertainment and showbiz

3. **By Department**

Common newsroom departments include:

News desk

Sports desk

Features and lifestyle

Entertainment

Business

News in Different Media

Newspapers

Newspapers compete through: Depth

Analysis

Context

Exclusive reports

They cannot compete with radio, television, and online platforms in speed.

Broadsheets

Large format

Mostly English

Formal and serious tone

Audience: educated and higher-income readers

Focus: politics, business, foreign news, and analysis

Examples:

Philippine Daily Inquirer

Philippine Star

Manila Bulletin

Tabloids

Smaller format

Usually Tagalog or Taglish
Dramatic and conversational tone
Mass-market audience
Focus: crime, scandal, showbiz, and local drama

Radio

Radio is highly accessible because it:
Can operate with batteries
Does not require internet
Reaches remote barangays
Delivers news quickly

Television

Television emphasizes:
Pictures
Emotion
Drama
Fixed program schedules
Live reporting
Television news often prefers events with strong video and emotional impact.

Online News

Online news offers:
24/7 updates
Interactivity
Unlimited space
Multimedia content
Links and related stories

Philippine Media Issues

Media Ownership

Many Philippine media organizations are owned by powerful families or corporations.

Safety of Journalists

Journalists in the Philippines may face:
Threats
Harassment
Red-tagging
Libel cases

Misinformation and Disinformation

False information spreads quickly

Community Media Gap

Regional and marginalized communities are often underreported

MODULE 2

The Philippine Press: History and Core Journalism Principles Early Journalism

The Roman **Acts of the Day**, established by **Julius Caesar** in 59 B.C., is an early example of public information sharing.

(Rox reviewer)

News Values

News values help journalists decide:
What becomes news
How prominently a story appears
How much space or airtime it receives
Which angle to emphasize

Elements of News

The elements of news are the facts and structural components needed to make a story complete and meaningful.

5Ws and 1H

1. **Who** – People involved
 2. **What** – Main event or issue
 3. **When** – Time or date
 4. **Where** – Location
 5. **Why** – Cause or significance
 6. **How** – Process or manner
- A complete story should answer the 5Ws and 1H.*

Inverted Pyramid

The inverted pyramid places the most important information first.

Structure

1. **Lead** – Most important facts
2. **Body** – Details, quotes, evidence, and context
3. **Tail** – Background and least important information

Advantages

Readers understand the main point quickly.

Editors can cut from the bottom.

Writers are forced to prioritize facts.

The **lede** is the opening sentence or paragraph of a news story. It is the most important writing decision a journalist makes.

A good lede:

- Contains the most newsworthy information (usually 3-4 of the 5Ws+H)
- Is concise (typically 20-35 words)
- Captures the reader's attention
- Establishes the story's tone and angle

Types of Ledes:

- **Summary Lede** - Directly summarizes the most important facts; standard hard news lede. This is best used for breaking news, politics, crime, disasters
- **Narrative Lede** - Begins with a specific scene, moment, or anecdote before revealing the border story. Best for features, profiles, long-form journalism
- **Descriptive Lede** - Paints a picture with sensory details to draw the reader in. Best for human interest, lifestyle, arts stories
- **Question Lede** - Opens with a provocative question that the story will answer. Best for Explanatory journalism, trend stories
- **Quote Lede** - Leads with powerful, surprising, or revealing direct quotations. Best for profiles, interviews, opinion-adjacent news
- **Delayed-Identification Lede** - Describes action or situation first, names the person later. Best used when the person is not yet famous or the action is more interesting than the identity

Other News Elements

Nut Graf

The paragraph that explains why the story matters.

Attribution

Identifying the source of information.

Dateline

Indicates where the story was reported.

Byline

Identifies the journalist who wrote the story.

Headline

Summarizes the story and attracts attention.

Kicker

A short phrase above a headline or a memorable ending paragraph.

Deck or Subhead

A short summary below the headline.

Pull Quote

An important quotation displayed prominently.

Sidebar

A related story providing background or statistics.

MODULE 3**Information and Source Management****Information Needs**

Journalists must ask:

Who is the audience?

What does the audience need to know?

What information is missing?

How can information be delivered clearly and accessibly?

Three Approaches**Market-Driven**

Focuses on what audiences click on or find entertaining.

Journalistic

Focuses on information needed for informed decisions.

Socio-Cultural Change

Focuses on helping marginalized communities:

Assert their rights

Preserve their culture

Improve their lives

Protect their dignity

Information Poverty

Information poverty occurs when communities lack access to important information or are rarely represented accurately.

Types of Sources**Primary Sources**

Firsthand or direct sources.

Examples:

Eyewitnesses

Participants

Community members

Original documents

Interviewees

Secondary Sources

Secondhand information that has already been processed, analyzed, or interpreted.

Examples:

Academic studies

Government reports

News summaries

Research articles

Routine and Cultivated Sources**Routine Sources**

Official channels that regularly provide information.

Examples:

Government offices

Police departments

Health offices

Press releases

Cultivated Sources

Trusted community contacts developed through relationships over time.

They are important because they can provide voices that are often ignored.

Evaluating Source Credibility**1. Authority**

Does the source have expertise, position, or direct experience?

2. Accuracy

Is the information specific, verifiable, and correct?

3. Bias or Independence

Does the source have a motive, interest, or agenda?

4. Currency

Is the information up to date?

Interview Basics**Step 1: Preparation**

Research the community.

Learn about its culture and history.

Define the purpose of the interview.

Ask for permission when necessary.

Step 2: Formulating Questions**Open-Ended Questions**

Encourage detailed answers.

Closed Questions

Ask for specific or yes/no answers.

Follow-Up Questions

Explore previous answers more deeply.

Leading Questions

Suggest the answer the journalist wants.

Leading questions should be avoided.

Step 3: Conducting the Interview

Build rapport.

Listen more than you speak.

Maintain respectful eye contact.

Take notes.

Observe nonverbal cues.

Stop or change the topic if the person becomes uncomfortable.

Thank the source.

Step 4: Source Protection**Journalists should:**

Discuss anonymity beforehand.

Protect confidential sources.

Understand possible risks.

Never reveal a confidential source without proper justification.

MODULE 4**News Writing Fundamentals: Inverted Pyramid and Lead****Inverted Pyramid Structure**

The inverted pyramid organizes information from most important to least important.

Lead

Contains the most important facts, usually from the 5Ws and 1H.

Body

Contains:
Supporting details
Quotes
Evidence
Context

Tail

Contains:
Background information
Related details
Minor facts
Less important information

The Lead

The lead is the first paragraph of a news story.

It should:

Summarize the main event

Attract the reader

Present important facts

Avoid unnecessary details

You do not need to answer all six questions in one sentence, but the most important facts must appear early.

Types of Leads

Summary or Straight News Lead

Directly summarizes the most important facts.

Impact Lead

Focuses on the effect of the event on people's lives.

Question Lead

Begins with a question that the story answers.

Use this sparingly.

Quote Lead

Begins with a powerful or significant quotation.

Descriptive or Narrative Lead

Uses a scene, sensory details, or a short anecdote.

Common Lead Errors

Burying the Lead

The most important fact appears too late.

Cluttered Lead

Too many details are included in one sentence.

Opinionated Lead

The journalist includes personal judgment.

Questionable Question

The opening question is obvious, trivial, or unnecessary.

Cliché Lead

Examples include:

"In a world where..."

"When one thinks of..."

News Language and Style

Accuracy

Facts, names, titles, dates, and numbers must be correct.

Brevity

Use direct and concise language.

Clarity

Use familiar words and avoid unnecessary jargon.

Objectivity

Report facts and viewpoints without inserting personal opinions.

Objectivity does not mean treating powerful and marginalized groups as though they have equal power. Fairness may require giving greater attention to a historically ignored community.

Active Voice

Active voice is usually clearer and more direct.

Active: The council approved the project.

Passive: The project was approved by the council.

MODULE 5

Ethics, Accountability, and Fact-Checking

Why Ethics Matter

Journalism influences public opinion and can affect people's lives.

Without ethics, journalism can become:

Propaganda

Manipulation

Stereotyping

Exploitation

Profit-driven misinformation

Five Core Ethical Principles

1. Truth and Accuracy

Journalists should:

Seek the truth.

Verify information.

Avoid deliberate distortion.

Admit what they do not know.

2. Independence

Journalists should:

Avoid conflicts of interest.

Reject gifts and favors.

Refuse free travel and special treatment.

Remain independent from political and commercial pressure.

3. Fairness and Impartiality

Journalists should:

Represent relevant sides.

Give accused people a chance to respond.

Avoid stereotypes.

Separate news from opinion.

Fairness does not always mean giving equal space to powerful and powerless groups. Marginalized communities may need appropriate space to tell their side.

4. Humanity

Journalists should:

Minimize harm.

Show compassion.

Protect children and vulnerable people.

Avoid exploiting suffering.

5. Accountability

Journalists should:

Take responsibility for their work.

Correct mistakes promptly.

Be accountable to audiences.

Expose unethical journalism.

Key Ethical Issues

Anonymous Sources

An anonymous source may be used only when:

1. The information is important to the public.
2. It cannot be obtained another way.
3. The journalist knows the source's identity.
4. The reason for anonymity is explained.

Conflict of Interest

Possible conflicts include:

- Gifts
- Free trips
- Advertising pressure
- Personal relationships
- Financial interests

Privacy Versus Public Right to Know

Private individuals, victims, children, and marginalized communities deserve greater privacy protection.

Sacred cultural practices and sites should not be reported without permission.

Sensationalism

Sensationalism exaggerates or dramatizes information to attract attention.

It can:

- Distort the truth*
- Exploit suffering*
- Reinforce stereotypes*
- Damage communities*

Misinformation, Disinformation, and Malinformation

Misinformation

False or misleading information shared without the intention to cause harm.

Example: Someone shares an incorrect statistic because they believe it is true.

Disinformation

False information deliberately created or shared to deceive or harm.

Example: A fake story created to damage a political opponent.

Malinformation

True information shared out of context to cause harm.

Example: A real photograph from years ago presented as a current event.

Fact-Checking Process

Step 1: Identify the Claim

Determine exactly what is being asserted.

Step 2: Find the Original Source

Trace the claim beyond reposts and secondhand accounts.

Step 3: Cross-Check

Use multiple independent sources.

Step 4: Evaluate Evidence

Check whether the evidence comes from:

- Government agencies
- Academic institutions
- Official documents
- Credible news organizations
- Independent fact-checkers

Step 5: Make a Determination

Possible verdicts:

- Verified
- False
- Unverified

Credible Philippine Sources

- Philippine Statistics Authority*
- Department of Health*
- Department of Education*
- Department of Environment and Natural Resources*
- National Commission on Indigenous Peoples*
- Academic institutions*
- Vera Files*
- Rappler Fact Check*
- Official government documents*

MODULE 6

Feature and Editorial Writing

Feature Writing

A feature story is a human-interest article that goes beyond basic facts to:

- Inform
 - Entertain
 - Explain
 - Inspire
 - Humanize an issue
- Features focus on people, context, experience, and deeper meaning.*

Hard News Versus Feature Writing

Hard News	Feature Story
Informs quickly	Informs, entertains, explains, or inspires
Uses inverted pyramid	Uses narrative structure
Objective and factual	Descriptive and engaging
Highly timely	Often timeless
Focuses on the event	Focuses on people and context
Concise language	Colorful and literary language

Types of Feature Stories

1. Human-Interest Feature

Focuses on emotion, experience, and human conditions.

2. Profile Feature

Presents the life, character, background, and motivation of a person.

3. Explanatory or Interpretative Feature

Explains how or why something happened and connects it to human impact.

4. Trend Feature

Explores changes or patterns in society.

5. Seasonal or Occasional Feature

Connected to:
Holidays

Seasons
Anniversaries
Special events

Feature Structure

Beginning: The Hook

The opening grabs attention using:

A scene
A description
A quote
An anecdote
A central character

Middle: The Development

The story develops through:

Details
Quotes
Anecdotes
Background
Context
Explanations of significance

Ending: Resolution or Reflection

The ending may:

Return to the opening scene
Present a meaningful quote
Offer a reflection
Leave the reader with a question
Provide a forward-looking statement

Feature Writing Style

Show, Don't Just Tell

Use sensory details and specific observations.

Use Dialogue and Anecdotes

Quotes and personal experiences make stories more engaging.

Vary Sentence Structure

Combine short sentences with longer descriptive ones.

Keep Facts Accurate

Features are still journalism. All facts must be verified.

Be Culturally Sensitive

Avoid:

Stereotypes
Exoticizing communities
Patronizing descriptions
Dehumanizing language

Editorial Writing

An editorial is an opinion article that presents the position of a publication, editor, or columnist.

Unlike straight news, an editorial is designed to persuade.

However, it must still be based on facts and evidence.

Types of Editorials

1. Criticism

Points out what is wrong with a policy or situation.

2. Persuasion

Argues for a specific solution or action.

3. Praise or Commendation

Recognizes good work or positive developments.

4. Interpretation

Explains the meaning or significance of an event.

Editorial Structure

Introduction

Presents the issue.

Clearly states the position or thesis.

Body

Gives arguments.

Uses evidence.

Addresses opposing views.

Refutes opposing arguments fairly.

Conclusion

Summarizes the main position.

Ends with a call to action or strong closing statement.

Ethical Rules for Editorial Writing

Even opinion writing must:

Use accurate facts.

Avoid distortion.

Represent opposing views fairly.

Avoid prejudice.

Promote dignity, equity, and truth.