

Review chapters 1-10 (except 7) in Yopp.

Review all class handouts on AP style. If you've misplaced originals, download them from links on the syllabus.

Definitions: Mass medium: A communication channel that brings a mix of material to a large general audience

Scanning — its impact on writing for media

Audience fragmentation— many more media choices, same amount of time available)

Trends in media consumption — more Internet; more cable/satellite TV choices; generally shrinking audiences for newspaper print editions; lower broadcast TV viewership (ABC, CBS, NBC, PBS)

Individuals' need for info/entertainment remains relatively stable, as does the amount of time and \$ available. Variety of choices has increased dramatically

Mass audience is splintering

Mass media are trying to cater to more diverse audiences in terms of gender, ethnicity, race, religion and interests

Positive trend toward more specialized, highly focused media in cable/satellite TV, magazines and especially Web-based media

Changes in media audiences

Growing diversity in media audiences; fastest growing third of mass audience is minorities

Women make up a slight majority of media audience

Less homogenous readers/viewers vs. a generation ago — in race and ethnicity, religion, cultural backgrounds, social experiences, education, family configuration

General shift away from mass media toward niche media that meet specific groups' interests and needs while mass media struggle to broaden their scope

Mass media trends & observations

Concept of mass media evolved as vehicle for large-scale mass advertising

Technology drives development & change -- high-speed presses, better communication across distances, better transportation fueled shift from local to mass media

Remember: The word "media" is the plural of "medium"! Combining "media" with a singular verb (as in: "The media is out to get me!") should be a felony.

Newspapers' print readership shrinking while Web grows

Growth of "narrowcasting" and specialty publications

Broadcast networks' TV audience is shrinking due to non-broadcast choices on cable, satellite, Internet

"Time shifting" (DVRs, Tivo) affects television and its advertisers — local plus network and cable/satellite

Newspaper terms

Hard news (or breaking news)

Feature and news feature (What's the difference between these?)

Banner headline

Dateline

Masthead

Inverted pyramid

Attribution

Corroboration

Editorial comment and editorializing

Objectivity

Story angle

News peg (reason for writing the story at this time)

Nut graf: Key paragraph (or two) that spells out the news peg as well as kernel of story

Nugget: Quote that carries special interest due to distinctness of language, viewpoint, expertise. "Juicy" statement — worthy of direct quote rather than paraphrase.

Writing Tools & Guidelines

Two types of editing — content (including accuracy, corroboration, sourcing and story development); and copy editing (spelling, punctuation, sentence formation, AP style)

Homonyms (words that sound alike but have different meanings)

Eliminating redundancy and wordiness

Emphasis on short, compact sentences and paragraphs

Maximum sentence length for readability is about 20 words. Media writing goal — 12-20 words per sentence.

Media-writing paragraphs often one or two sentences

News values

Timeliness

Prominence

Proximity (especially important to local media; the local angle is essential for all original stories in combination with other news values)

Impact

Magnitude

Conflict

Oddity

Human interest

Also: Currency — topics that are on the media's and people's minds at the moment; the public conversation, interest or awareness

Essential elements of the news story

5 W's and H

Leads — brief introductory paragraph(s) containing key elements of story in summary

Leads attract readers/viewers and captures attention

Headline serves same function as lead, but in even more abbreviated form.

Newspaper headlines usually include subject + verb

Hard-news formula

WHO & WHAT go in first sentence. WHERE & WHEN are also usually included. "When" may be implied by verb tense; "where" may be covered by dateline.

HOW & WHY appear in lead only when more colorful or compelling.

Standard format for first paragraph:
WHO does WHAT WHERE WHEN

Inverted pyramid story structure

What is it? Why does this form serve the needs of both editors and audiences?

Traditional reasons for structure based on newspaper layout and compressed, quick takes on story

Inverted pyramid is equally applicable to the Internet and the habits of scanners.

Four- to six-paragraph hard-news formula:

Tell the essential message in four to six paragraphs of reasonable length.

A. Graf 1 summarizes who-what-where-when. Second paragraph may supplement or add main details.

B. Next section: background & additional important info. It develops news value(s) introduced in lead.

C. Next section: info of less importance about topic in lead. Quote often appears about here.

D. Final section: least important info (could be cut)

Research and Observation

Types of sources

1. Primary or first-degree sources (participants)
2. Secondary or second-degree sources (witnesses and others with knowledge of the event)
3. Experts
4. The public (reaction from uninvolved individuals)

Freedom of Information Act, 1966

What is it? What does it cover?

Who can ask for government information?

Public record: Most government records (subject to some exceptions such as juvenile crime and income tax)

Public records generally exist wherever citizens' lives intersect government: birth to death certificates; driving and motor vehicle records; property deeds and sales; police and fire department actions; minutes of all elected and appointed government bodies; criminal and civil courts; and more

Reporters and the media cannot be sued for libel or slander when information has come from public records.

Google: Know the basic search techniques discussed in class, such as enclosing terms in quotes vs. separate words and using + or - to include or rule out combinations of terms.. (Review tips on syllabus links)

Interviews

On or off the record

Need to identify oneself and one's purpose when asking questions for attribution

Direct quotes (full and partial) vs. paraphrase

Punctuating quotes (see handout and Yopp chp. 10)

The funnel: moving from general to specific questions

Open vs. closed questions

AP Style: Pay special attention to these issues, as covered on worksheets:

Numbers — Rule of Nine and exceptions. Pay special attention to handout on exceptions, including weight, height, ages

Days, dates and times.

*Thirty days hath September, April, June and November.
Of 28 there is but one, and all the rest have 31.*

Street addresses and city/state combos

Courtesy, professional and honorary titles (including which can be abbreviated). Do you use courtesy titles when referring to someone the second time?

General rules for capitalization

Media names — TV and radio stations; newspaper and magazine names; TV programs; song titles; movies

Abbreviations -- when do you spell out the whole name of an organization, and when do you abbreviate it? When do you spell out "street" and "avenue"? When are state names abbreviated?

Internet in AP style: Internet, Web site, e-mail

Serial commas