

ELEMENTS or CHARACTERISTICS or ATTRIBUTES of News

There are five characteristics that every good news report should possess. These are:

Fairness and balance

As a reporter you must learn to get the other point of view. This may mean calling a person late at night to get his side of the story or even holding back an investigative story for a day. But you must do so. This is the best way to bring balance in the copy.

There may be times when an individual may avoid making a statement. In such a case, state the point, indicating the efforts you made to get his point of view.

Fairness requires that you don't impute motives. Remember that your news report is going to be read by hundreds of people, and you can influence their thinking by using loaded words. It is always best to use neutral words.

PML N PROTEST AND POLICE MANHANDLING :

PML N'S VERSION

POLICE MANDLING

GOVT'S VERSION

WITNESS'S VERSION

WOMAN SLAPPED A MAN ON ROAD

WOMAN'S VERSION

MAN'S VERSION

Objectivity

Journalistic objectivity is a considerable notion within the discussion of journalistic professionalism. Journalistic objectivity may refer to disinterestedness, factuality, and nonpartisanship, but most often encompasses all of these qualities.

To maintain objectivity in journalism, journalists should present the facts whether or not they like or agree with those facts. Objective reporting is meant to portray issues and events in a neutral and unbiased manner, regardless of the writer's opinion or personal beliefs.

Objectivity in journalism aims to help the audience make up their own mind about a story, providing the facts alone and then letting audiences interpret those on their own.

REPORTER'S SYMPATHY'S IS NOT WITH ANYONE WITHOUT TILT BOTH STATEMENTS

Accuracy

This is the first requirement of a good news report. You must get all your facts right, starting from the name and designation of the subject to the statements made by him or her. You cannot hide behind the excuse that that there was not enough time to cross check the facts.

The facts that you need to check are:

Names and their spellings

Designations

Incident details. In case it is an accident you must know the exact number of people who were injured or killed.

Statements: The quote reported in the news report must be accurate, and in context. It should not be misinterpreted to imply another meaning.

If it is a science story you must make sure that all scientific names are correctly spelt, and explained.

If it is a sports story then you must make sure that the number of runs made or goals scored are mentioned accurately.

If it is a court story you must make sure that the court verdict is presented accurately.

Attribution

All news reports, with a few exceptions, must be sourced. The source can be identified as follows:

a. Individual: An individual, who witnessed an accident or survived an earthquake, can be quoted by name as an eyewitness.

b. Organisation: A spokesperson authorised by an organisation to brief the media on its behalf. The spokesman can be referred to by:

i) Name and designation

Mr N.Guruswamy, Police Commissioner, told the media...

ii) Designation alone

The Police Commissioner told the media ...

c. Anonymous sources: There are occasions when a news source, who happens to be a senior government official or an important leader, does not want his or her name to be used. In such

cases, the reporter can attribute the story to informed sources or well connected sources or official sources or sources who don't wish to be named. However, the reporter must know the source well, and should trust that the information provided is correct. (Read also: When should reporters use anonymous sources)

d. Exceptions: The reporter need not worry about attribution in those cases that he has witnessed. For instance, the reporter can report a cricket match or a rally stating what happened. This is because these are statements of fact that have occurred in public domain, and have been witnessed by scores of people. The same applies to the swearing in of a new government or historical facts.

Brevity

The importance of this characteristic cannot be overstressed. You must learn to write short stories without missing important facts. Please remember that today's reader is in a hurry. He does not have the patience to go through long news reports.

Brevity does not mean writing a short story. It also means using short words, short sentences and short paragraphs.

Clarity

This is not easy to achieve. You are required to report an event in as few words as possible. You can do this if you use short and simple words and keep out irrelevant facts. The intro of your report must be short and crisp. The body must be made up of as few paragraphs as possible with each paragraph devoted to one point.

There should be no ambiguities. The facts must be sourced, and accurate.