**FUNDAMENTALS OF NEWS WRITING**

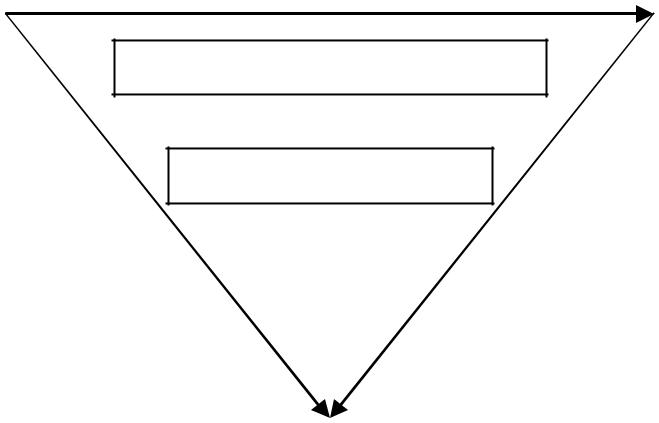
The first thing which a news writer must keep in his mind while writing a news story is that the news must be factual, objective and the language employed must not be flowery.

**Inverted Pyramided Style**

The main difference between news writing and other forms of prose, such as essay, short story, novel, article, or feature, etc. is that the writers of these forms usually begin with minor details first and they first start with comparatively insignificant details, and then develop the flow of the writing to the most significant information by the end of the writing; whereas the news writer reverses this style. In other words a news writer starts writing with the most significant information and the rest of the details are given near the end of the story.

This style of news writing is called inverted pyramid style that is peculiar with news writing. The inverted pyramid can be illustrated as following:

**Most important details of a News Item**

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**Intro (Lead-headline)**

**Body of the News**

**Least important details of a News Item**

**Essentials of Radio News**

**Lead**

The lead or the headline or intro is the starting sentence of a news item. It contains the most important features and the facts and figures of the news story. Since it is the crux or the gist of the event that is being covered, it needs to be short, crisp, comprehensive and catchy. Keeping the interest of the listener alive throughout the bulletin and making him wait for the detailed news, all depends upon the lead. Radio news presentation is different from that of the newspaper in a way that in newspaper every headline is followed by the detailed news but as far as radio is concerned, this technique is simply impossible. Here the headlines of all the news items to be included in the bulletin are read out at the start of the bulletin and then the news in detail goes on air. That is why writing lead for radio news bulletin requires more skill and proficiency on the part of the news writer.

A headline is normally a brief summery of the main points of the story and must be completed within a line comprising word not more than 48 in any way.

**Body**

This is the detailed version of the news item whose headline has already been read out by the start of the news bulletin. This part of the news bulletin may contain an actuality, voicer or wrap depending upon the requirement of the news item.

In five-minute news bulletin, however, actuality, or other insertions are not possible to be made a part of the bulletin owing to the time restraints.

***Details***

While penning down the body of the news story a news writer must not forget to include any important point of the news item. All the details must be arranged in the body.

***Paragraphs***

If the news item is pretty lengthy yet important, the story must be written in paragraphs. In this way the newscaster will be at ease while reading out the news item.

***Chronological order of the events***

Another important thing that the news writer needs to focus is the **Chronological order of the events*.*** If the event being covered extends to dates or different times in the same day, the chronological order is to be maintained. It means that the different parts and portions of the same news item must be arranged according to the order they have taken place.

**Paul White (CBS News Director) Formula**

The format and the style of radio news bulletin is well explained by Paul Whit who had been serving CBS news as director. The style described by Mr. White is called ***Paul Whit Formula*** that goes like this:

***“Tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them that you have told them.”***

The formula actually explains that in a radio news bulletin, first the audience must be told the head lines (***Tell them what you are going to tell them***), then news in detail must be read out (***tell them***), and finally the headlines once again are to be told by before the bulletin ends (***and then tell them that you have told*** ***them).***

**Essentials of Radio News Writing**

The essentials of writing news for radio, by and large, are the same as are the essentials of writing for radio in general. The news writer must keep the following truths in his/her mind while writing news for radio:

**For ear---not for eye**

First and the foremost truth about writing for radio is that you are writing for ears not for eyes. It simply means that whatever you are going to write it will be heard and it will not be read by the audience. It is quite obvious that the written expression is different from the spoken one and it ought to be. The content written for radio must be spoken and lengthy sentences and difficult vocabulary must be avoided.

**Telling the Story**

You must write for the radio in a way that can be told not read out. Telling a story is an effective method for writing for radio.

***If you find it difficult to put your thoughts down on paper clearly and simply, use the trick of***

***telling someone out loud what you want to say* -----------------------------------------Harris Watts, BBC.**

**Writing for mass audience**

While writing for radio another important truth must be kept in mind that you are writing for masses, not for the intelligentsia of your society. Communication means to convey the message in a way that the target audience not only listen to it but also understand it. For securing this purpose it is necessary that the message must be constructed coming to the level of the audience.

Listener's requirement is different from that of a reader.

**FUNDAMENTALS OF WRITING NEWS FOR RADIO I**

Writing news for radio is a different task; different from the way employed for writing news for newspaper or television. While writing for radio following fundamentals must be kept in mind.

**1. News for Once only**

Since newspaper can be read for many times a day and it is something that can be picked up for confirming or re-reading news stories whenever one feels like. But this is not the case with radio news. Radio news bulletin goes on air once only. That is why the radio news must be written in such a way that the listener may be able to understand and grasp the contents of the news when he/she listens to it.

**2. Language**

It has been mentioned time and again that the radio is a medium that is meant for ears and not for eyes. Radio is a verbal communication medium and the language to be used for knitting radio content must be spoken, easy and colloquial.

**3. Avoid Written Expression**

Though what is put on air on radio is first, in most of cases, written on paper and then put on air by the newscaster, but the way the message is written must not be in written expression. The example given below will explain the difference between written and spoken expressions.

**Written Expression**

‘‘The government,’’ said the opposition leader, ‘‘had created the problems.’’

The same sentence when read out may take the following shape conveying altogether opposite sense.

The government said, “The opposition leader had created problems.”

**Expression for Radio**

The opposition leader said that the government had created the problems.

**4. Avoid Literary Expression**

Literary expression has its own tone and style and is different from journalistic language so must not be used for print or electronic media.

**Literary Expression**

Sweet are the fruits of adversity.

**Expression for Radio**

The fruits of adversity are sweet.

**Literary Expression**

Kuchh huvaa yoon k donon kaideen ki mulakat Karachi mein hui.

**Expression for Radio**

Dono kaideen ki mulakat Karachi mein hui.

**5. Avoid Inverted Sentences**

Because of heavy rainfall, ***which came yesterday***, the city life was jammed.

**Radio Expression**

Yesterday it rained heavily and it jammed the city life.

**6. Avoid Parenthesis**

A man, ***basically a taxi driver***, overran a pedestrian.

**Radio Expression**

A taxi driver overran a pedestrian.

**7. Avoid Jargons**

Jargons, as has been explained, are specific terms and terminologies which only the experts or the related people of a field can understand. Since radio addresses an ordinary person as well so chances are there that an ordinary person may not get the meaning of the word. These kinds of terms must be communicated through there colloquial equivalents.

For instance;

Spinal chord=back bone

Inflation=price hike

Jargons, if necessary, then must be simplified.

For instance;

Hydrophobia = extreme fear of water

Kleptomania = a mental illness in which somebody has a strong desire to steal things.

Schizophrenia= a mental illness in which a person becomes unable to link thought, emotion and behavior that leads to withdrawal from reality and personal relationships.

**8. Use familiar words**

Heavy vocabulary is not encouraged even in written or literary styles. A good news writer, especially when writing for radio, must avoid using difficult words and replace them with easy ones.

Some example difficult words with their respective substitutes are as under:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Difficult words** | **Substitutes** |
| Remonstrate | Argue |
| To be in Jeopardy | To be in danger |
| Obliterate | Destroy |
| Plausible | Understandable |
| Antagonistic | Against |
| Loquacious | Talkative |
| Veracious | Truthful |
| Abrogate | Cancel |
| Penury | Poverty |

**9. Use of Contractions**

Since while reading out news bulletin, the news caster gives an impression as if he/she is talking to the listeners, and in conversational style, the contractions of the following expressions are used unless stress is needed to be given, the news must be written by using the contractions.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Had not | Hadn’t |  |

1. **Abbreviations**
   * Avoid abbreviations especially names of the states, countries, religious titles, months, military designations, holy books etc. For instance, LHR (Lahore), PUN (Punjab), C-in-C (Commander in Chief)
   * If necessary write with hyphens. F-B-I , Y-M-C-A, U-N, C-N-N, B-B-C
   * Don’t use symbols. For example “#” for number, “&” for and, “@” for at, etc.
2. **Capitalization**

Capitalize generously especially all proper nouns, anything that is important.

**12. Avoid Quotations**

The exact statements of newsmakers can go in newspaper but should be avoided in radio news bulletin. The reason behind is, since the news written for radio is to be read out by a newscaster, he can not readout commas or columns. Commas and columns are used in written expressions and a reader after looking at a sentence within commas instantly comes to know that what is given between the commas is an exact statement of the person, the news is about. As far as radio is concerned, a news caster can not read out a sentence in this way.

**Written sentence**

President said, “New dams are inevitable for the prosperity of Pakistan”.

**When spoken, becomes**

President said commas begin new dams are inevitable for the prosperity of Pakistan commas close.

**Prefer indirect speech**

The above sentence, when written in indirect speech, will be like this:

**The president said that the new dams are inevitable for the prosperity of Pakistan.**

**13. Avoid Punctuations**

In written expressions comma denotes a pause and full stop denotes the end of the sentence, where as when you are writing for radio you must avoid supplying the sentence with commas and full stops.

In radio scripts, where there a comma is needed, a slash (/) is supplied and where there a full stop is needed two slashes (//) are inserted.

* one slash denotes a pause.

(//) two slashes denote full stop.

**FUNDAMENTALS OF WRITING NEWS FOR RADIO II**

**14. Figures**

Write figures in words.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 30,00,000 | 30 Lacs/ thirty lacs |
| 5400 | 5 thousand 4 hundred |
| Rs. 4000 | 4 thousand rupees |
| $ 6 billion | 6 billion dollars |
| Rs. 90.50 | 90 rupees fifty paisas |

**Complex numbers**

Avoid using complex numbers but give round figures.

84850------------------------------------ Almost 85 thousand

9.8 million-------------------------------Nearly 10 million

59 years, 7 months & 80 days -------almost 60 years

1. **Avoid portraying gender difference** Policemen----police officers. Firemen----fire fighters.

***An average teacher*** complains ***he*** is not getting paid according to ***his*** duties.

***But***

***Teachers*** complain ***they*** are not getting paid according to ***their*** duties.

**Developing a News Story**

**WHAT formula**

W….What has happened? (The lead)

H…..How did it happen? (The background or context of the story)

A…..Amplify the introduction. (Describe main points in the order of importance)

T.….Tie up loose ends.(Additional background material)

**First line**

The intro of the news item must be Short, Catchy and Crispy. Don’t tell the whole story in the first line.

**Last line**

The last line should conclude the story and point to next development if any. For instance, Foreign Secretaries of SAARC countries met in Islamabad. They will again meet in New Delhi.

The last line of a news item is as important as the lead. It must be positive and strong.

**Weak Ending**

The culprits will be dealt with iron hands- the Prime Minister said.

**Strong Ending**

The Prime Minister said the culprits will be dealt with iron hands.

**Weak Ending**

The union leader threatens to go on strike unless the authorities surrender to them

**Strong Ending**

The union leader threatens to go on strike unless the authorities surrender to their demands.

**SUMMARY**

* Avoid written expression.
* Avoid literary expression.
* Avoid every expression that is particular with newspaper.
* Avoid long word where short one works.
* If it does without a word you have used, cut it out.
* Avoid jargon where colloquial equivalent is available.