

You must be watching television, listening to radio or reading newspapers to update yourself with the happenings of the country and the world. Have you ever thought about the purpose of news? Your answer must be 'to get information'. In rapidly changing times, you may feel lost without information as you would not be able to relate yourself with the society politically, socially and economically. Before we proceed further, let us try to understand what is news.

In common parlance, news is what is new. News is what everyone wants to know. A radio station, television news channel or newspaper office's main concern is to gather and report news-local, state, regional, national and international. You would not like to read Monday's newspaper on Thursday to up-date yourself. We do go back to the old newspapers to confirm certain information but that is once in a while.

4.2.1 Definition of News

There are several definitions of news. News may be defined as 'anything timely that interests a large number of people, and the best news is that which has the greatest interest for the greatest number'. In other words, news is a timely report of events, facts, opinions that interests a significant number of people. The news is a new piece of information about a significant and recent event or development that affects the listeners/viewers/readers and is of interest to them. However, news is also relative, what may interest one person may not be of interest to the other. The definition of a radio news item is dependent on:

- the size of community (listeners);
- the periodicity of the broadcast (once, daily, twice, thrice a day);
- the social character and economic base of the community and;
- the focus of attention or emphasis of the community.

You must be aware of the famous definition of news developed by Jhon B. Bogart, City editor of New York, 'Sun'. He defined news like this, "when a dog bites man, that is not news; but when a man bites dog, that is news". Jhon Bogart pointed out very correctly that unusual events fall under the purview of the news. Later another famous editor of the Sun defined the news as "...everything that occurs, everything which is of sufficient importance to arrest and absorb the attention of the public or of any considerable part of it". You must be familiar with the name of **Joseph Pulitzer**, the publisher of the *New York World*. He defined news as "original, distinctive, romantic, thrilling, unique, curious, quaint, humorous, odd and apt-to-be-talked about". The founder of the first School of Journalism, Walter William, defined news as, "...News, in its broadest sense, is that which is of interest to the readers-the public". The former Managing Editor of the *New York Times* said that the news is "...anything you can find out today that you didn't know before".

There are some more definitions of News but the essence has been captured in these definitions. Let us recapitulate the salient points. The News is:

- perishable – when the event is understood and the tension is eased off- the news gets less informative and more of history;
- is of interest to a large number of people;
- of unusual events and happenings;
- what is new to the public; and
- an event put forward by a reporter, as without a reporter, a news item does not exist.

However, you should remember that the general notion of news varies with people and situations. Generally, though some of the points about news, may vary, but essential ingredients of the news are universally recognised.

4.2.2 Elements of News

From the preceding discussion, we have identified some basic elements or ingredients of the news. We shall learn about them systematically in this section.

Timeliness: News must be timely and new. It will not arouse interest if it is already known, or brought to notice long after its occurrence.

Nearness or Proximity: People are more interested in what happens in their own village, town, country rather than distant places. Similarly, they are more concerned in the occurrence of an immediate impact on them. The news that the price of rice may rise due to strike of local transporters, will make them sit up than a report that Government subsidy for fertilizers has been abolished.

Conflict: People gather in street if and when there is a fight. Conflicts of all kinds are a part of life and make a good copy.

Prominence: What happens to important people makes news. The value of the news increases with the prominence of the person involved. What the prominent people say is also very important for a reporter, particularly, if they make some announcements which have an impact on the common people.

Human interest: People are interested in what is happening to other people. The oddities, humour, tragedy, triumph over handicaps, stories involving children, animals- all make good human-interest stories.

Government action: The passing of a law or other orders concerning general people, cabinet meetings, parliament and assembly sessions, notifications about new rules and regulations are newsworthy.

Development projects and issues: News related to development issues such as Environment, Ecology, Gender, Health, Population control, Agriculture etc. need to be reported and disseminated.

Weather and Sports: Both the weather and sports have great news value. The arrival of monsoon or cyclones make important news. Similarly, fury of drought and floods make news.

Follow-up: A good news story does not end at the first reference, it needs a follow-up. Follow-up keeps the interest of the listeners alive by updating them on the latest development of an event or an issue.

4.2.3 . Qualities of News

There are some basic qualities of the news. These are; accuracy, balance, objectivity, and clarity.

Accuracy: Accuracy is basic to any news item. When you fail in accuracy, you lose credibility. Hence it is important to cross check your facts and information. Check figures, names and facts. Check how names are spelt. Did you get your first name correct? People are generally offended by misspelt names. If you are paraphrasing a speech from a text given to you, make sure you do not change the meaning or quote statements out of context. Rumours and speculation need to be avoided at all costs. Sensationalisation of news must be eschewed.

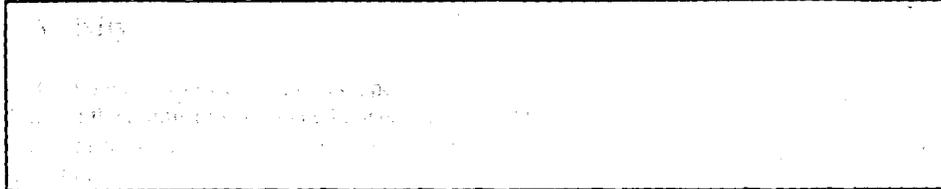
Balance: To be balanced in reporting is as important as being accurate. If you are writing about a controversy, give both sides of the story. When reporting a strike, for instance, give the claim of authorities and also that of the workers on how far it is successful. A story may appear to be imbalanced and thus biased, if it has too much of Government's views, or tends to give, too much foreign news which has little relevance to your listeners.

Objectivity: You should not mix your opinion in the story. Report only facts and other people's opinions. You should be a disinterested observer, reporting events without taking sides. News must be presented objectively in an unbiased manner and it should not be allied to any selfish interest.

Clarity: A story must be best in the way it expresses the theme. Your introductory sentence should be short and in active voice to the maximum extent possible. The ideal length of each para may be 3-4 lines containing two-three small sentences to facilitate easy comprehension.

4.2.4 Hard News and Soft News

The news is divided into two broad categories- Hard and Soft News. The Hard News is mostly event centered. It is narration of an event. The Hard News items are centered on, "what, when, where and why". The major thrust of a daily newspaper is the hard news as the main task is to provide information to the readers. However, mere accounts of events do not satisfy the readers as they would like to have more of analysis, background and interpretation. This type of news is called Soft News which is becoming an important segment of the daily newspapers, television news channels and radio bulletins.



4.2.5 Radio and Newspaper News

Radio news writing demands the same standard of accuracy, speed, clarity and objectivity as the news writing for newspaper. A question often asked is what is the difference between news written for a Newspaper and a Radio bulletin. To find the answer to this question, we must know the difference between a printed word and a spoken word. The relationship in a newspaper is between the printed word and the eye, whereas in radio it is sound and the ear, thus, you *read* a newspaper; while you *hear* a radio bulletin. While reading a newspaper, if you come across a difficult word or expression, you have the option of consulting a dictionary or a reference book. In the case of Radio news, if you do not understand a difficult word or expression, you cannot go back in time. Moreover, while reading a newspaper you have the option of reading any page first, e.g., most young people like to glance through the sports page first. Some may prefer political news, while others may opt for stories dealing with economic news, crime or scams, but with radio news, you cannot exercise such preferences. Moreover, the radio bulletin begins at a fixed time and if you miss it, you cannot retrieve it, at best, you can only wait for the next news broadcast.

Radio is a live instant media where the listener has the choice to switch off the radio, if the bulletin is dull, drab and boring. The radio news has to be presented in a nutshell cutting out non-essential and less essential aspects. The news items and stories are to be rewritten using simple and familiar words, which even an average listener can easily comprehend. Being an audio medium, care is taken towards the tone and pitch of the speaker so that it does not create ennui.

Radio news is undergoing a great deal of changes. The style is becoming more and more informal and many voice casts are included in the bulletins. Efforts are also being made to make radio bulletins people-centered by highlighting the problems, hopes and aspirations of the common man. Ideally, the emphasis of radio news should shift from political news to human-interest stories with a focus on social, cultural scientific and economic news.