

# **THE ACT/PRACTICE OF JOURNALISTIC WRITING**

BY

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# Introduction

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- The primary function of journalism is to inform the public by reporting on local, national and global news and events. Given that, journalists strive to write articles that have wide appeal and can be easily understood.
- Journalism can be defined as the activity of gathering, assessing, creating, and presenting news and information.
- While news is the report of a significant event or development which is factual, accurate, timely and of interest to a large number of people.

# Intro. Cont.

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- One of the obvious characteristics of journalistic writing is short sentences and paragraphs, which are intended to make the reports easy to read and understand.
- In most cases, journalistic writing is objective, meaning that it relies on facts and evidence, rather than opinions or emotional appeals. Many journalists view their work as a public service and journalistic ethics set a very high standard for objectivity and fact-checking.

# Intro. Cont.

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- Journalists are tasked with providing readers with accurate information on an event as it happened, including the different and sometimes conflicting opinions on the subject.
- Moreover, a strong news article will present the facts of the story, sometimes including charts or graphs, and take the time to explain the numbers or contributing factors so the reader better understands the material.

# **Attributes Of A Good News Writing/Reporting**

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1. Factual: A factual report is based on true information
2. Timely: A timely or current report is made up of information that is new, or fresh to the reader
3. Relevant: A relevant report touches the lives of the reader
4. Accurate: Accurate report contains correct information
5. Balance: A balance report contains all information on all aspects or sides of an event or issue and presents a complete picture.

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6. Clear: A clear report is easy to understand.

7. Background information: This helps to place an event in context or put it in properly.

# THE FIVE Ws AND H

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To be complete, a report must give the What, Who, Where, When, Why and How of an event. It must provide answers to the following

- What happened?
- Who did it?
- Where it happen?
- When did it happen?
- Why did it happen?
- How did it happen?

# Dos and Don'ts in Journalistic writing

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- Make use of short and simple words, sentences and paragraphs.
- Use adjectives only when they are absolutely necessary to ensure clarity and accuracy.
- Use verbs with precise and unambiguous meanings. For example:  
*He shot her dead is more precise than "He killed her".*
- Avoid slangs but use current words and explain uncommon words or technical terms.
- Where a statement given to you is ambiguous, you have a duty to present it in a way that it will be clear to the reader.
- Don't include secondary information in a report, or embellish or pad a story.



# Quotation Marks

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For direct quotations, use quotation marks " " to enclose the exact words of a speaker or writer when reported in a speech.

Example: The judge said, "I give you the maximum sentence of 12 years with hard labour".

For a quotation that is more than one paragraph long, open each paragraph with quotation marks. However, close only the last paragraph with quotation marks.

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The use of direct quotations from a speech or statement lends greater credibility to a report. Quote only the most significant portions of speech and when quoting a portion of speech, statement or document, reproduce it accurately and unabridged.

You can correct a mistake but should ensure that you did not change the meaning , context of the speech.

# CAPITALISATION

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Use capital letter to begin names of individuals, Organisation, Countries, States, Political Parties/ Zones, Towns, Street, God, names of religions, religious groups, NGOs, names of days and months etc.

Do not capitalise prepositions, conjunctions and articles, except at the beginning and end of the title.

In writing news report, the Lead or intro is the first paragraph and must perform the following functions.....

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- Introduce the story
  - Arouse interest
  - Summarise the essential points to give the reader a relatively complete picture of the event or situation in not more than 30 words
  - The Body: It comprises paragraphs in which the detail of the event are arranged in a logical, descending order of importance.
  - Each paragraph contain only one idea and not more than 30.

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Illustrated I

15 killed, burnt beyond recognition in Enugu highway crash

Accident

Abuja April 9, 2023 by Ibironke Ariyo

By Ibironke Ariyo

Abuja, April 9, 2023(NAN) All the 15 occupants of a Toyota bus were killed and burnt beyond recognition on Saturday when the bus had a head-on collision with a Mercedes truck on the Port Harcourt-Enugu Highway.

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Spokesman of the FRSC, Assistant Corps Marshal Bisi Kazeem confirmed the accident in a statement he issued on Sunday in Abuja.

Kazeem stated that the accident took place at the Enugu end of the highway at about 8.20 p.m.

“The victims have been given mass burial. All obstructions have been cleared. Enugu State Fire Service already extinguished the fire in the bus.

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“The fatal crash is blamable on several factors including fatigue, which must have made one of the drivers sleep on the wheels,” he stated.

Kazeem quoted the FRSC Corps Marshal, Mr Dauda Biu as advising motorists to desist from night journeys to reduce fatalities from road crashes.

He added that Biu noted that most fleet operators and other vehicle owners, including private vehicle owners addicted to night journeys did so for selfish economic gains.

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The FRSC boss observed that most night travellers indulged in the overloading of vehicles with passengers and goods.

“Travellers should plan their journeys for the day time because when crashes occur away from FRSC rescue points, it is difficult to access help from other motorists at night,” Kazeem also quoted Bui as saying. (NAN)



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By

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**Journalism:** this refers to the writing and reporting of current events for the mass media

**Journalistic Writing:** this is guided by journalism ethics which enjoins journalists to report the truth and maintain objectivity.

**Journalism ethics:** these are the common values that guide journalists. These values help reporters and editors to execute their work responsibly by seeking the truth and acting in the public interest.

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**Fairness:** a reporter is expected to file a balanced report without partiality, meaning that the report has to capture all sides; getting reactions from all parties involved in the report.

- *For example, there is a Bill sponsored by Ganiyu Abiodun Johnson in the Federal House of Representative titled, “A Bill for an Act to amend the Medical and Dental Practitioners Act, Cap M379, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004 to mandate any Nigerian-trained medical and dental practitioner to practice in Nigeria for a minimum of five years before being granted a full license by the Council in order to make quality health services available to Nigeria; and for related matters (HB.2130).*

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Doing a balanced report on this will require the journalist to get reactions from the Federal Ministry of Health and some of the professional bodies in the sector like the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) and the Nigerian Association of Resident Doctors (NARD).

A special report or an in-depth feature on this topic will require the reporter to visit hospitals and talk to patients about their plights due to the dearth of specialists in the country.

**Truth:** fact-checking is key in reporting, a journalist, therefore, needs to seek accurate information relevant to the report.

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**Public Interest:** As a journalist, you should be aware of the impact of whatever information you put out to the public.

**Objectivity:** a journalist is not supposed to take sides or insert his or her own opinion while reporting an event.

**Accountability:** Journalists write under their bylines and accept responsibility for their reports.

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## Thinking Beyond Just Reporting

Headlines: Beyond just reporting, a journalist should also strive to come up with catching headlines and interesting leads to capture the audience attention.

A headline can either sell a report or kill it. This is because people pay attention to issues they can related with.

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A sensational headline attracts audience and gives a report visibility. As a reporter, your caption can make your editor consider your report as one of the lead stories for the day even if it is not a big story.

Identifying your audience: This reminds a reporter to keeping it simple