
UNIT 10 PRESENTATION TECHNIQUES

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10.0 INTRODUCTION

News channels, by and large, revamp themselves from time to time in order to establish a stronger visual connect with their viewers. They understand the value of overall presentation as it gives the brand better recall value and credibility.

News presenters or anchors are an integral part of the overall packaging and presentation of a television news channel. They are the mediators between a channel and the viewers. Anchors try to maintain the continuity between different segments of a programme or a news bulletin. The news presenter's knowledge, look, personality and presentation style influence public perception about the news item. Hence, news channel anchors represent the channel and also function as conduit of credibility. Television anchoring is not just about reading the lines

from a teleprompter. Here the most important factors are speech, knowledge, body language, voice modulation and command over spoken language. A good anchor is expected to strike a balance in all these territories while anchoring.

The task of presenting a programme is challenging one because anchors are expected to reinvent themselves as per the evolving media scenario and changing requirements of their channel and viewers. The anchor is responsible for not only providing information, but also to ensure that a programme or news bulletin is delivered in a credible and authentic manner. Today the ever-changing media landscape keeps the news channels on their toes while providing them with a plethora of options - to revamp, innovate and introduce new presentation techniques. This Unit discusses the different aspects of television news presentation.

10.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

After going through this Unit, you will be able to:

- understand the importance of news presenters/anchors for television news channels;
- describe the qualities essentially required in a TV news presenter;
- improve your news anchoring skills for television;
- write a proper anchor script; and
- understand the challenges faced by a TV news anchor.

10.2 TELEVISION NEWS: PRESENTATION RELATED ASPECTS

There are two major content related components in any television news channel: selection of content and presentation of content. Selection of content deals with the subjects and issues selected for the broadcast while presentation decides how to present the chosen content. Presentation is a broader term and it encompasses many aspects like presentation style of news anchors and reporters, screen layout, programme formats, scripting, language, graphics, etc. But in this Unit, we shall focus only on news anchoring. The different aspects of news anchoring will be discussed in detail.

If you observe any television news channel carefully, you will find only two types of its employees visible on the screen. First, the news anchors and second, the reporters. In the previous Units, you have studied about the production process in a television news channel. So while you are aware that a large number of journalists and technical staff are involved in bringing various programmes to the viewers, it is important to note that except for news anchors and reporters, all others work behind the screen. Since the news anchors and reporters are visible to the viewers, they form the face of the channel. Now, if you further compare the two- the news anchors and reporters, you will find that the news anchors have a bigger share of the screen appearance. As mentioned earlier, in this Unit we shall limit the discussion to only the news anchoring. ‘News Anchor’ and ‘News Presenter’ both the terms are commonly used as synonyms and the same has been followed in this Unit too.

10.3 TELEVISION NEWS PRESENTERS: ESSENTIAL QUALITIES

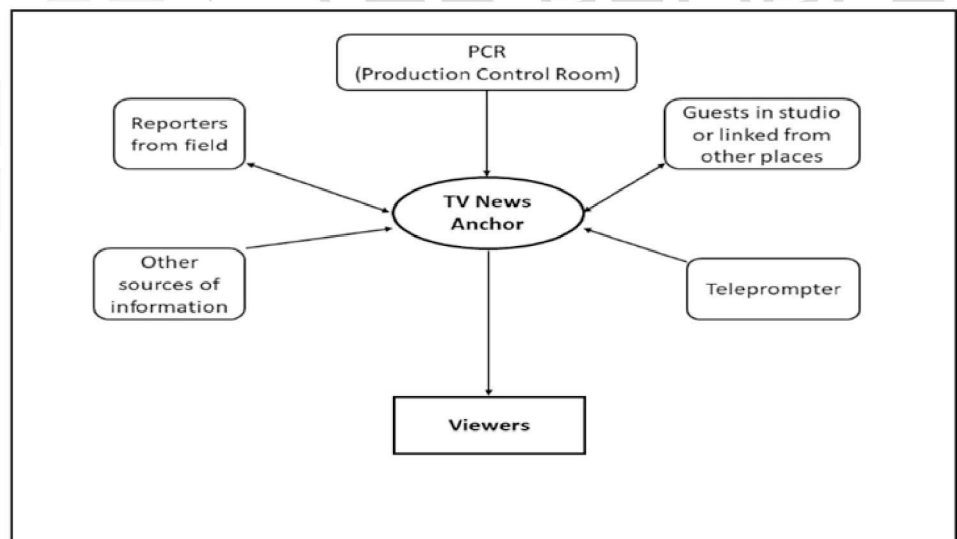
Reading the news from a teleprompter and anchoring a news bulletin may sound easy, but it is more cumbersome than it seems. In last two decades, there has been tremendous change in the media scenario in India due to launching of dozens of news channels in English, Hindi, Urdu and various other Indian languages. It has increased the competition and resulted in the requirement of skilled and innovative news presenters. A good anchor must possess the following qualities:

10.3.1 Knowledge of Different Fields

Knowledge of different fields is an essential requirement for a successful news anchor. A good understanding of different issues and the ability to organize and retain new information is the critical aspect of anchoring a news bulletin. A news anchor must have insight into current national and international issues. S/he should have sufficient knowledge of what s/he is sharing with the viewers. At times the producer of news bulletin may make some errors in the spellings or names. In such cases, if the anchor is ignorant of basic facts and figures, s/he will not be able to correct the information. An anchor must be well versed in current affairs, politics, geography, history, other related areas, and should have the ability to put all information in the required perspective for viewers.

10.3.2 Ability of Multitasking

An anchor must have the ability to multi task or handle multiple activities at the same time. You can understand the engagements of a News Presenter with the help of following image:



The ability to take and follow the producer’s instructions via an earpiece while searching information from news websites and social media, listen to what other reporters are sharing and panelists are adding and monitor incoming video simultaneously is very important.

10.3.3 Objectivity

Ideally, a professional news anchor must take an unbiased or neutral stand on issues covered by the channel. S/he should be quite balanced and impartial in his/her approach towards them. An anchor should try to not come under any kind

of pressure or influence that can limit his/her professional autonomy. Moreover, s/he should not allow even his/her personal feelings of hatred or liking for anyone/ anything to be exhibited while anchoring.

10.3.4 Command over Language

A good command over language, proper pronunciation and neutralized accent are the basic pre-requisites to be an anchor. There are, however, different regional accents associated with Hindi and English languages in India. If you want to be an anchor, then it is necessary for you to be linguistically neutral and versatile.

10.3.5 Dressing Sense

Television news anchors have to carefully choose the kind of dresses, accessories and jewelry that they wear on screen because they are expected to look decent and presentable while anchoring in front of the camera. The camera tends to pick up some colors and patterns better than others. Therefore, for both men and women, knowing what not to wear is just as important as knowing what to wear. This is because most often, if you wear anything distracting or flashy on TV, people will remember only that and not what you say.

You should also be careful about the color of your outfit in front of the camera. Contrasting colour scheme and cool colours are considered more suitable. Anchors are generally advised to avoid bright white to the extent possible. Shirts in solid-colors like blue, beige, and off-white are considered as best options though. And if you wear a bright white shirt or blouse in front of the camera, then you can balance it by wearing a dark jacket over it. You should avoid fabrics with complicated patterns, checks and close stripes. However, pastel shirts work well on television. Very shiny or glossy fabrics that reflect light into the camera, should also be avoided.

Anchors generally prefer to wear clothes of natural fabrics that can breathe easily under the warm studio lights. While one may also love wearing loose clothes, but wearing them on air can make it more difficult for the microphone to stay in place, and it is bothersome to constantly adjust it. On the other hand, anything too tight can look inappropriate. Anchors are also expected to avoid jewelry that sparkles, shines or dangles in the light or those that rattle such as multiple bracelets or long necklaces as they tend to causing distracting noise while brushing against the microphone. News anchors are expected to use accessories with subtle patterns. Male anchors are also expected to avoid neckties with tightly designed patterns and shiny fabrics as they are not suitable in front of the camera.

10.3.6 Capability of Sight Reading

Sight reading is when you do not have the time to read or rehearse the script. As an anchor, you must get used to sudden changes in the rundown and breaking news. This is not what most people feel comfortable with doing but anchors have to face this situation regularly. Sight reading is about two things only: confidence and the ability to pick up lines quickly. Sight reading tests the anchor's ability to grasp the script and his/her improvisation skills. It also tests how well an anchor performs under pressure. A good sight reader is able to communicate with fluency and clarity without any rehearsal. The following tips may help you in sight reading:

- Scan Ahead - take a few seconds to look through the text silently and judge the length of the sentences.

- Slow down- do not read too fast and use pauses. Look ahead and know what is coming without losing the moment of thought.
- Update yourself - there is a common misconception that it is impossible to prepare for a sight read. You can keep yourself updated about current affairs.
- Be adaptable- just learn to adapt to whatever new content is being added.

10.3.7 Skills to Use Teleprompter

The teleprompter plays an important role in reducing the stress associated with anchoring. The main advantage of using the teleprompter is that it allows you to look directly into the camera lens while reading the script. The script is reflected on a monitor and that monitor is placed directly in front of the camera lens. It allows an anchor to be comfortable in front of the camera. However, you have to keep the following things in mind while using a teleprompter:

- Speed of the text that is scrolling down is controlled by the teleprompter operator. So, you do not have to worry that you will run out of words. But nowadays, the teleprompter is operated by the news anchors in most of the news channels. Therefore, you should learn to maintain a proper speed of your text on teleprompter.
- You are advised to keep the current read words in the middle of the teleprompter screen.
- You should try to read the script at least once before the bulletin or show.
- You need to practice pacing with the teleprompter.
- Use conversational tone and talk to the camera as if you are talking to your viewers.
- Try to keep your body posture relaxed because if it is in a rigid position and only your eyes are moving to read the text, your viewers will come to know about it and it reduces your credibility. Do not slouch but be relaxed.
- You should set the font size according to your comfort. Remember that if the font is bigger, the number of words on the TP screen will be fewer and you will not be able to look at the whole /or a large part of the sentence.

10.3.8 Voice Modulation

Voice Modulation is done to change the different properties of your voice to make the presentation more effective. It is change in stress, pitch, loudness and an inflection of the voice which gives your voice mood, meaning and makes it sound more attractive. The most important responsibility of an anchor is to avoid monotonous pace in order to make every news story sound different. Pauses at right intervals and adding expression to every sentence prevent a monotone. Also, an anchor must change the tone of his/her voice before moving on to the next story.

Important Components of Voice Modulation: If you want to be a good television news anchor, you should practice modulating your voice to make your presentation more attractive and effective. The different components of voice

modulation are given below, and you should take care of these components during voice modulation practices:

- **Pace:** Pace or speed of speaking or reading the news is an important factor that an anchor must take into consideration while anchoring. You must maintain the pace at which audience can understand you properly. If an anchor maintains a slow speed while anchoring, viewers may switch the channel out of boredom. If the speed is too fast, viewers may have a hard time understanding what the anchor is saying.
- **Pitch and depth of voice:** Pitch or frequency of human voice refers to the rate of vibration of our vocal folds. Higher rate of vibration means higher pitch and lower rate of vibration means lower pitch or deeper voice. Keep the pitch at a level that is comfortable for you.
- **Pause:** An anchor should give pauses at required intervals especially where there is punctuation. It is given for emphasis and to let the audience absorb your information.
- **Power:** An anchor has to create power in voice and make it more commanding by generating intensity in his/her voice. In order to make voice more intense, an anchor should not speak from mouth but from inside the abdomen.
- **Volume:** You should not strain your voice to the point of discomfort. Maintain your volume according to the comfort level.
- **Emphasis:** Put emphasis by focusing on the key words in order to bring out their desired meaning.

10.3.9 Acquaintance with Journalistic Ethics and Laws

An anchor is obliged to follow a code of journalistic ethics. Ethical responsibility demands that inaccurate information, information that endangers public safety, words that can create panic and traumatize the victims should be avoided. It also requires an anchor to be free from any sort of inclinations or associations that instigate him/her to compromise on honesty and thus eventually affecting reliability. Ethical challenges have been heightened by the 24×7 news scenario. News channels get considerably less time to verify or cross check the information. Hence, under the pressure to boast being the first channel to give particular breaking news to viewers, sometimes anchors are asked to go on air with unconfirmed information which may be misleading and inaccurate. Anchors must also be aware of the consequences and legal implications which may generate trouble for them as well as their channels.

After knowing the essential qualities of a television news anchor, you can practice in different ways to improve your capabilities. As a student, reading the news stories aloud from a newspaper can be the first step towards practicing. Aspiring anchors can practice by recording their voice on various applications available on phone. You should work on your reading style to make it more conversational.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: Use the space provided below for your answers.

Compare your answers with those given at the end of this Unit.

1. List any five essential qualities of a good television news anchor.

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2. What is voice modulation ?

.....

10.4 ANCHORING FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF PROGRAMMES

Format and subject of the programme influence anchoring style. In this section, we shall discuss the suitable presentation styles in different types of television news programmes.

10.4.1 Common Formats of News and Role of the Anchor

Some of the common news story formats are as follows:

- **Live** - It is when the reporter goes 'live' from the location and a camera is set up to show events as they are unfolding. Usually live news is done for more important stories. The news anchor raises questions about updates which are answered by the reporter.
- **Package** - A news package is an audio-visual form of news that has voice overs, sound bytes, visuals and PTC. The news anchor reads an introduction and then a prerecorded package is shown. Usually a package is made for the important stories but it can also be used in combination with a 'live' report.
- **Phono** – It is usually used for a breaking news or some important update. It is a 'live' report filed in by reporter from scene of the story. Here, the anchor asks questions and reporter replies on phone.
- **Reader** – Here, the news anchor reads a story 'on air' with no audio or video elements to support it. Generally, it is used for the less important stories or for 'breaking news' being reported at the last minute.
- **Anchor-Byte** – In this format, the anchor reads the news and bytes of the concerned person/s are included.
- **Anchor-Visual** - This format contains anchor link and visuals. Anchor reads the news and visuals of that story are played. Generally, this format is used for small stories. You can find this format commonly used in speed/fast news bulletins.
- **Anchor-Graphics** - This is similar to Anchor-Visual but here graphics are used in place of video footages. When visuals are not available, this format is used. Here, the anchor reads the news and graphics are shown.

10.4.2 Presentation of Special Bulletins and Shows

Nowadays it is often observed that we have special news bulletins to cater to viewers with specific set of interests. The nature of the programme determines the conduct of its anchor. In the case of special bulletins, an anchor must possess proper knowledge about that specific field. The presentation style varies with the

subject of the special bulletin. The list of some categories of special bulletin is as follows:

Sports: This category attracts different age groups of viewers. Knowledge, presence of mind and spontaneity are the most important criteria to become a successful sports anchor in India. For example- for a cricket lover, what matters is the way an anchor is able to steer arguments in the show and the input s/he gives to the show.

Crime: You would have come across crime shows or bulletins on television news channels. The show may be totally based on one crime or it may be presented like crime bulletin containing many crime stories. Sometimes crime shows recreate the incident with the help of actors and actresses. This type of show demands a different presentation style other than simple anchoring. Anchors are expected to create suspense and excitement.

Business: Some special bulletins or shows focus on news related to stock exchange, industries and other business-related fields. Anchors of these bulletins should have a sound understanding of dynamics of the share market, market economy and other associated areas.

Agriculture: This category focuses on the farmers and their major issues like seeds, livestock, pesticides, fertilizers, new agriculture techniques, weather etc. In these shows, anchors should have the capability to connect with farmers and rural folk so that they can communicate the desired messages to them effectively.

Fashion and showbiz: More and more people are becoming interested in the lives of film or TV artists, new fashion trends, new make-up related techniques, etc. So, the news channels have also begun to address these fashion and showbiz categories through special shows. Such shows require a different type of anchoring. Here, anchors must act as light hearted and humorous persons. They are also expected to don many fashionable and trendy dresses.

Educational and career-based shows: Some news channels have career and education-oriented shows where experts guide the students and job seekers.

Religious: A few news channels allocate separate time slots for religious shows especially during festival seasons. While presenting a religious show, the anchors should consciously use appropriate language and dresses.

Health: A few special shows or bulletins are based on health related information. They focus on different ailments, their treatments, misconceptions related to different diseases, precautionary measures, fitness issues, etc. At times, you can see the anchor of a Yoga show wearing yoga costumes and even performing yogasanas to attract the viewers attention.

Apart from the above-mentioned categories, you may see some other special shows related to Science and Technology, Automobiles, Film reviews, Travel, etc. Finally, you should understand that the subject of the content decides the presentation style.

10.4.3 Presentation of Talk Shows, Panel Discussions and Debates

Many programmes such as talk shows, panel discussions and news debates require anchors to be fluent, eloquent and spontaneous speakers. For such programmes, while an anchor must have expansive vocabulary, research is also equally important. They must carry out research on the subject of the show beforehand as the anchor is expected to lead the debate or panel discussion. The anchor must have a good command over language. The anchors in talk shows,

panel discussions and debates are required to have good observation power and presence of mind to observe and interpret the body language and responses of panelists and experts. Talking to oneself in front of the mirror and describing the points which have to be discussed during the show, can be helpful.

Such extempore programmes usually run for a fixed period of time and the anchor who is leading such a show must have a good sense of time as s/he needs to round up the discussion and draw a sensible conclusion within the stipulated time. The anchor is expected to strictly adhere to the directions given pertaining to the duration that has been set for each segment and commercial breaks. One of the main mistakes evident in the debates and discussions conducted by a novice anchor is the repetition of certain words again and again. Some anchors tend to use interjections at the start of their sentence because they are still thinking about the next sentence they will speak and have not formulated the ideas or questions that they want to ask.

Generally, talk shows, discussions and debates are never rehearsed before telecast. During such shows, an anchor has to make use of the good judgment in selection of questions. Before such shows, anchors are expected to sit down with the guest, experts or panelists, to make them comfortable and also ascertain their attitude towards different issues.

10.4.4 Presentation of Interviews

A news anchor should be able to think on his/her feet. While conducting an interview, knowledge and spontaneity play a very important role. Those who are really good at asking questions and interviewing, make it look like they are winging it, but it is the prior preparation that makes it look so smooth and easy. It takes a lot of preparation and persistence to conduct a good interview as an anchor. If you want to conduct a good interview for television news channels, keep the following things in your mind:

- **Make the interviewee comfortable:** establishing a rapport /connection with the interviewee will put him/her at ease before the actual interview.
- **Do your homework:** while heading towards a discussion with tough questions, a proper research into the issue can be of great help.
- **Listen carefully to the answers** as it will help in asking follow up questions.
- **Try to stay away from close ended questions.** For Example - if you are interviewing survivor of a natural disaster, you can ask open ended questions along these lines: what were you doing when it happened? How did you save yourself?
- **Be persistent:** You have to dig for information by rephrasing the same question again and again until you get the answer.
- **Control your emotions:** Some interviews may move you to tears or make you angry. But you should learn to hold yourself together and exhibit professionalism.
- **Closing comment:** The best way to end an interview is to ask if the interviewee has anything else to add. A new angle may exist that no one else may have thought about.

10.4.5 Presentation of Live and Multi-Anchor Shows

During live shows, an anchor is expected to maintain a link and co-ordination between different participants of the show and the PCR. Live shows and bulletins are more deadline oriented and the anchors must to have a good sense of timing. You may find few shows with more than one anchor. If it is a dual anchor show,

then both the anchors are expected to co-ordinate with each other and also with the panelists, experts or participants while receiving instructions from PCR via earpiece. Few channels experiment with more than two anchors also, for example - 'Panchnama' on ABP news. This show is presented by five anchors. Coordination and maintaining the natural flow of the show are main concerns in multi anchor shows.

10.5 WRITING ANCHOR SCRIPT

Once a rundown has been completed or sometimes even before that, the news bulletin producer can start writing anchor scripts of individual news stories. It is also known as anchor link or "The Readers". It is like intro of the report and presented by anchor. You should not squeeze too much information into one or two sentences if it is an anchor link of a news package. If you are writing an anchor link, keep the following things in your mind:

- **You should keep sentences simple and short** as it is easier to digest and share idea of the story by using simple and clear information. Difficult words should be written phonetically, and producers should ensure that they point them out in advance.
- **You should be careful with numbers.** It is ideal to take big numbers and write them in words to make it easier for anchors to read them in a flow. For example, instead of "the government promises to generate 800000 employment opportunities in next five years," the anchor script should be written, "the government promises to generate 8 lakh employment opportunities in next five years."
- **You should avoid passive voice sentences and use conversational tone.** Anchor script should be written in active voice and should appear as if the anchor is speaking to the viewers. Using conversational tone is very important to establish connect with the viewers. It should not appear as if the anchor is just reading from the teleprompter.
- **You should try to use compelling words in anchor links.** The viewers should be hooked to watch the whole report or segment after hearing the anchor link.
- **Share main idea of the news report.** Try to identify specific W questions that you should provide answers to in the readers/anchor links.
- **Try to introduce the name of the reporter** while writing anchor link of a news report. If s/he is reporting live in an area, recognize that so and so is reporting live and specify name in the script as well if it is an exclusive report as the reporter deserves the credit.

10.6 CHALLENGES FOR A TV NEWS ANCHOR

The challenges faced by news anchors have increased because of the 24-hour news cycle. This news scenario leads to rushed stories, inaccurate reports, incomplete information and sometimes even misleading content. Hence, the anchors have to go straight on air with information that may not be accurate and which may make them more susceptible to action under libel laws. Some other challenges faced by news anchors on a day-to-day basis are as follows:-

- **Learn to maintain composure under crisis:** Anchors have to keep calm during a time of crisis. Sometimes the crisis may be due to a bad and horrible news story or at other times, it may involve some on-air technical problem.

- **Last minute changes:** Anchors are always required to be ready for a complete change in rundown and script at a moment's notice. If a breaking news story comes during the on-air bulletin, the producer may take the decision to make sudden changes in the rundown and insert it into news bulletin.
- **Long work hours:** a news anchor can not afford to have a regular 9 to 5 type of job. Plans have to be canceled on a moment's notice if suddenly a big breaking news comes along during a bulletin. Their working hours and timings are fixed as per the requirement of the news channel they are working for.
- **Public criticism:** A television news anchor has to develop a thick skin to realize that you can not please everybody. Some viewers may criticize the anchors for their hair, dresses, style of speaking, having political bias, or being too aggressive. News anchors have to accept it as a part of their job.
- **Artificial Intelligence supported robot anchors:** AI (Artificial Intelligence) supported robot news anchors have been experimented in few countries. Like many other fields, artificial intelligence may pose new challenges to the human news anchors. So, in future, anchors need to be more creative and continuous innovations will be required to keep human anchors relevant for the television news industry.

Activity 1

Write down the script of Anchor Links of five news stories and record it with the help of a smartphone. Play the recording and analyze your performance.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: Use the space provided below for your answers.

Compare your answers with those given at the end of this Unit.

1. Write down five points which need to be kept in mind while anchoring the interview based shows.

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2. What are the important points one should keep in mind while writing script for anchors?

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10.7 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we have discussed various aspects of television news anchoring. It is hoped that this discussion will help aspiring anchors in understanding the dynamics of anchoring and will also help them to hone their anchoring skills. Television news anchoring demands a lot of hard work, sincerity, perseverance and knowledge. Knowledge about different fields and current affairs, command over language, ability of multitasking, knowledge of journalistic ethics and laws, voice modulation and skill to handle teleprompter are a few essential qualities required for a good television news presenter.

The format and content of the programme influence the style of anchoring. In this Unit, we also discussed the anchoring styles for different programme formats as well as for the special bulletins based on different subjects like sports, business, crime, etc. Writing for anchor scripts has also been discussed. A good anchor script helps in better anchoring.

10.8 FURTHER READINGS

Kalra, R.(2012), The ABC of News Anchoring, Noida, Pearson education India.

Reardon N. (2006), On Camera: how to report anchor and interview, London, Focal Press.

Robert T. and Cindy Malone, (2004), Broadcast journalism handbook: A television news survival guide, Lanham, Rowman and Littlefield

10.9 KEY WORDS

PCR : PCR stands for Production Control Room. It is also called SCR (Studio Control Room). It is a place in any television channel from where the live programmes are controlled. Generally, producer of the programme sits in PCR to monitor the whole show and to give instructions related to the programme. Anchors sitting in the studio are connected to the PCR. Generally PCR has video monitors, vision mixer, audio mixer, etc.

Teleprompter : Teleprompter is a display device which plays an important role in television news anchoring. The script is reflected on a monitor and that monitor is placed directly in front of the camera lens. It allows an anchor to be comfortable in front of the camera. The main advantage of using the teleprompter is that it allows you to look directly into the camera lens while reading the script.

News Package : A news package is an audio-visual form of news that generally has anchor link, voice-over, sound bites, visuals and PTC. Usually a package is produced for more important stories.

10.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

1. Knowledge of different fields, ability of multitasking, command over language, capability of Sight Reading and skill to use teleprompter
2. Voice Modulation is to change the different properties of your voice to make the presentation more effective. It is change in stress, pitch, loudness and an inflection of the voice which gives your voice mood meaning and makes it sound more attractive.

Check Your Progress 2

1. Five following points which need to be kept in mind while anchoring the interviews:
 - Be persistent

Television Journalism

- Pay attention to the answers
 - Ask open-ended questions
 - Make the interviewee comfortable
 - Keep tabs on your own emotions
2. The following points should be kept in mind while writing the anchor's script:
- Keep sentences short
 - Write big numbers in words
 - Use conversational language
 - Cover only the gist of the report
 - Try to introduce the name of the reporter

