



Indira Gandhi National Open University  
School of Journalism and New Media Studies

**MDC-003**

**MEDIA IN DEVELOPMENT  
COMMUNICATION**

**MEDIA IN DEVELOPMENT  
COMMUNICATION**



**School of Journalism and New Media Studies  
Indira Gandhi National Open University  
Maidan Garhi, New Delhi-110068**

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## PRINT PRODUCTION

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## **MDC-003 INTRODUCTION TO COURSE: MEDIA IN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION**

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**Block No. 1: ‘Print Journalism: Writing Skills’** consists of four units, these are Skills of Media Writing, Writing for Different Media, Feature Writing and Opinion Writing.

**Unit 1: Skills of Media Writing**, focuses on fundamentals basic writing skills, in which unit 1 introduces you to basics of writing that covers various forms of writing techniques, while it takes you to the next level of effective writing skills for media.

**Unit 2: Writing for Different Media** acquaints you with writing for print, radio, television and digital/ online media. The journalistic writing principles for all media are basically the traditional news writing style that you have been following from the beginning of this course. However, the nitty gritty of content writing of the specific medium differs in crafting and presentation techniques. In this unit you will learn about the similarities and differences in the writing styles of all media.

**Unit 3: Feature Writing**, This Unit while listing the important ingredients of feature articles explains the difference between this form and news as well as other journalistic writings. The different categories of features such as news features, special events, personality interviews, how-to, background, investigative, colour, adventure, opinion, human interest, development features are explained briefly. Also how to write a feature article has been explained step-by-step. At the end, aspects pertaining to freelancing of features like studying the market for selling the features and tips for contacting the editors has been given.

**Unit 4: Opinion Writing**, This Unit begins with defining and listing the important components of an opinion writing piece. It then dwells on the difference between this form of writing and others such as editorial, feature, special write –ups and middles. The author then covers the universe of opinion writing ranging from issues of politics, ideology, social issues, public policy, culture and education. Characteristics of an opinion piece such as timeliness, subject knowledge, expertise, clarity of view point, unique/ uncommon opinion, and bearing the audience in mind are briefly touched upon in this Unit. Also how to plan and write an opinion piece has been explained. The Unit ends with a brief on the scope of opinion writing.

**Block No. 2: ‘Radio and TV Journalism’** comprises four units, Writing for Radio, Writing for TV, Content Production for Radio & TV and Presentation Techniques for Radio & TV.

**Unit 5: Writing for Radio**, introduces students to the basic concept of the language used for radio programmes as distinct from the language used for print media. The unit points out that while writing a script for a radio programme, it is essential to consciously adopt the elements of spoken language and avoid the style of written/ printed communication. Different elements of script writing for radio programmes are described. The theme is further developed by analysing

separately the characteristics of language suitable for different radio formats. Importance of identifying the listeners for a particular programme is also underlined. It explains the importance of a good beginning and natural flow in a script.

**Unit 6: Writing for TV**, focuses on the writing for television news. Television is an audio-visual medium and it tells the story with the help of visuals and sound. The nature of medium influences the writing, so television requires a different type of writing. This unit talks about how to write effective scripts for television news programmes.

**Unit 7: Content Production for Radio & TV**, focuses on aspects of news production process. After discussing definition and different elements of news, it talks about various formats employed in news production such as bulletins, talks, news reel, documentaries etc. The most popular and well known format news bulletin is dealt with greater detail emphasizing on the application of basic principles of Radio & TV writing. The processes of news editing and preparing newcasts are discussed, including details about the parts of the bulletin. News bulletins of languages other than English and Hindi are touched upon with the salient features of news bulletins for external broadcast.

**Unit 8: Presentation Techniques for Radio & TV**, discusses about the importance of good radio & TV presentation. It talks about various categories of presenters and also enumerates the do's and don'ts of presentation. It underlines the importance of some very trivial things which we tend to overlook but which affects the overall quality of presentation. The unit also underlines the importance of being natural and to develop your own style of presentation without imitating anyone else.

**Block No. 3: 'Online Journalism'** There are five Units in this Block covering the overall scenario of online journalism both from the theory and practice perspectives. Due to greater penetration of internet access and mobiles devices in India, the number of online users is the third largest in the world in 2019 after China and USA can you quite the source. News production and consumption through online media grown at a significant pace, due to the social media is playing a crucial role in it. All the four Units deal with the understanding the new online media, writing for online media and how a news website is maintained.

**Unit 9: Basics Elements of Online Journalism**, describes the nature of online journalism field, its characteristics and the growth of this medium over a period of time. This Unit takes you through various style of reporting techniques for online journalism, and describes the professional profile of online journalists. It also focuses on the latest trends and developments in this field from a global perspective as well as the Indian context in particular.

**Unit 10: Writing for Online Media**, takes you beyond the basics of online journalism into more depth e.g. writing methods and styles for online and digital media. Unlike other mainstream news media, the online news writing requires special skills to know about utilising one or more media elements - text, picture, graphics, audio and video. As a online journalist, you need to master the skills to combine various media elements to tell your news story and precisely this Unit is giving more details on that. Besides that, this Unit discusses the methods of writing which is compatible to various search engines, and more importantly about dealing with the disinformation (fake news).

**Unit 11: Online Newsroom Setup**, gives you an overview of lifecycle of a news story within a news website system. This Unit gives full picture of the backend operations of handling of various news stories by different teams of a news website. These teams work in an organized manner in order to maintain a quality output. This Unit also gives you full details on newsroom setup of a website and its structure and functions.

**Unit 12: Content Production: Online Media**, deals with the practical dimensions of publishing your news story with a combination of various media elements. In this Unit you will learn about the navigation and website design techniques, creating and maintaining your personal blogs, producing audio and video content for digital platforms and about creating interactive multimedia news content (flash journalism).

**Unit 13: Production of News Website**, specifically focuses on how to combine all media elements in single compatible platform interlinking different pages and stories within your website or with outside content. This Unit describes various methods of producing a news website - primarily through HTML coding. Subsequently you will be learning the use of alternative ways to create a website.

**Block No. 4: 'Media Ethics'** consists of five units, these are Principles of Media Ethics, Media Laws: Theory and Practice, Gender and Media, Media and Human Rights and Media and Children.

**Unit 14: Principles of Media Ethics**, outlines the theories of ethics such as, Utilitarianism, Deontology and ethical relativism employed to determine media behaviour. It explains the authoritarian and libertarian models and outlines some breaches of ethics by media.

**Unit 15: Media Laws: Theory and Practice**, in this unit centring on Media Laws: Theory and Practice, we will discuss the relevance of Media laws from the theoretical as well as practical side. You have come to understand that the role of the media is very important and it in fact is considered to be the fourth pillar of every democracy. The role of the media is crucial in initiating and measuring a democratic culture that goes beyond the other systems of governance such as Executive, legislature and Judiciary and becomes engraved in the public consciences over time.

**Unit 16: Gender and Media**, focuses on the relationship of gender with media and the implications of this relationship for media producers and members of society. It examines the issues of stereotyping, portrayal, representation, omissions and commission of women, men and third gender in media which may lead to distorted socialisation, visibility or invisibility about them in society.

**Unit 17: Media and Human Rights**, delineates the historical, theoretical and constitutional aspects of human rights in global and Indian perspectives. It explains that the human rights of individuals/communities remain contextual due to cultural and social diversity. Hence, it is important to understand the varied media processes operating in diverse contexts for a better understanding of human rights, media and society.

**Unit 18: Media and Children,**

We hope that the above analysis will help you appreciate the crucial role media plays in projecting these contemporary issues and equip you with critical theoretical perspectives.





**Block**

**1**

**PRINT JOURNALISM: WRITING SKILLS**

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**UNIT 1**

**Skills of Media Writing**

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**UNIT 2**

**Writing for Different Media**

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**UNIT 3**

**Feature Writing**

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**UNIT 4**

**Opinion Writing**

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# UNIT 1 SKILLS OF MEDIA WRITING

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## Structure

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 Methods of Writing
  - 1.3.1 Identifying Your Subject
  - 1.3.2 Gathering Information
  - 1.3.3 Purpose
  - 1.3.4 Knowing Your Reader
  - 1.3.5 Managing the Writer's Block
- 1.4 Organising your Writing
  - 1.4.1 Expository Discourse
  - 1.4.2 Narrative Discourse
  - 1.4.3 Descriptive Discourse
  - 1.4.4 Argumentative Discourse
- 1.5 The Writing Process
- 1.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.7 References and Further Readings
- 1.8 Check Your Progress: Possible Answers

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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As a student of Development communication, one of the important tasks you will have to perform is that of writing. In fact, for many of you it is a task you must perform spontaneously, effectively and with accuracy. Writing, unlike speaking, is a more complex process and competent writing even for native speakers, is a difficult skill to be acquired. Few people can write spontaneously and fewer people are comfortable writing in formal contexts, keeping closely to word limits and formats – an essential requirement in journalistic writing. It is important that whatever you see and observe, you write about that in a meaningful way so that

In this unit, we shall discuss in detail the writing process. We will discuss the methods of writing which involve identifying the topic, gathering information on it, the purpose of writing, and the writer's block. When we begin writing, it is important to start with a thesis statement, followed by an essay map, adequate paragraphing and effective introductions and conclusions. We also must be aware of the various discourse types involved in organising your writing: expository, descriptive, narrative or argumentative. Finally, we shall delineate the process of writing the drafts, reviewing, editing and proofreading.

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## 1.2 LEARNING OUTCOMES

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After reading through this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss the methods of writing;
- organise your writing; and

- explain the basics of the writing process.

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## 1.3 METHODS OF WRITING

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You must realise that writing is not a gift but is a skill that anyone can pick up, by focusing not only on what you have to say and how to say it, but also by concentrating on those methods that are most likely to help you write successfully. Now let's see what a few experienced writers have to say about what leads to good writing:

- Experienced writers spend 50-80 per cent of their time planning before they attempt the first draft.
- They spend a considerable amount of their time thinking about their readers.
- They explore and thoroughly understand their subject.
- They consider their first draft to be their discovery draft.
- They thoroughly revise their draft. Sometimes, completely rethinking and restructuring their first draft.

Of course, not all writers follow the same method and a particular writer may use different methods at different times. But the methods suggested here are generally tried and tested. In short, the steps you can follow are:

- planning
- considering your reader
- thoroughly investigating your subject/topic
- organising
- writing a full draft
- revising and refining it.

It is not necessary to go through these stages in the sequence in which they are listed. When you write, many things happen at the same time. As you plan, you may find that you are thinking of facts and ideas that you may want to include in your draft. As you organise, you may find that you are once again exploring your topic. The steps that we have suggested are guidelines, not rigid rules. You may feel free to adapt them to suit your situation.

Writing is commonly seen as a three way process, **pre-writing**, **writing** and **re-writing**. This division might be an over-simplification but it is a useful one to understand and practice. When we write it is a good idea to think about three key elements:

- 1) Purpose
- 2) Subject matter
- 3) Reader/ audience You need to ask yourself:
  - Why am I writing this piece?
  - Whom am I writing for?
  - where do I source the material for it?

### 1.3.1 Identifying Your Subject

Many of the topics you write about in the course of your job will be assigned to you probably by your editor. Some editors will give you a detailed brief; others will give you a broad topic and leave you to fend for yourself.

Most topics are like interesting landscapes that could tempt you to move in many directions all at once and this is precisely what you need to avoid. You must learn to focus on that part which caters to the brief of your editor, your readers' interest and context of the situation. This will prevent you from researching in all directions and wasting time and effort.

It is also important to know why you are writing about a particular subject. Does the situation demand it, or is it something that your editor asked you to do, or is it something you have a deep desire to write on?

Knowing why you are writing will help you formulate a goal, do your research and organise your material. For example, supposing you want to write about **English as a global language** for an Indian audience, you need to be sure what aspect you are trying to concentrate on. Are you going to concentrate on the business benefits of knowing English or are you going to focus on how Indians can work towards making their English more acceptable internationally? You need to identify and state your purpose clearly, because only then:

- will your audience understand what you are writing about and why it is important to you and to them;
- you can identify and gather the information that is most relevant to your readers and your goal; otherwise you are likely to collect any and all information that is available.

For example, when you look at the above topic, if you are looking at the business benefits of knowing English you are likely to give figures which substantiate the amount of English that is used for trade. You could give the example of China which is rapidly trying to learn English. On the other hand, if you turn to features that could enable Indian English to be acceptable and intelligible globally, you would dwell on the phonological, morphological and syntactic features which differentiate Indian English from international English and you could talk about ways of bringing Indian English closer to accepted standards.

### 1.3.2 Gathering Information

You must make sure that before you write, you have all your matter in one place. While researching read quickly through your material and use **highlighters** to indicate the material that you think you can use in your writing. You could use one colour highlighter for ideas, another for evidence and another for arguments. (Hamp-lyons and Heasley, 2006)

You could also **make notes** as you go along. Keeping notes will enable you to be specific and keep track of and manipulate what you have read. It is a good idea to concentrate on purely gathering information; wait until later to decide whether the information is valuable and important.

**Brainstorming** is also another well-known and productive method of generating ideas, facts and opinions very quickly. Again, not all the ideas will be of equal

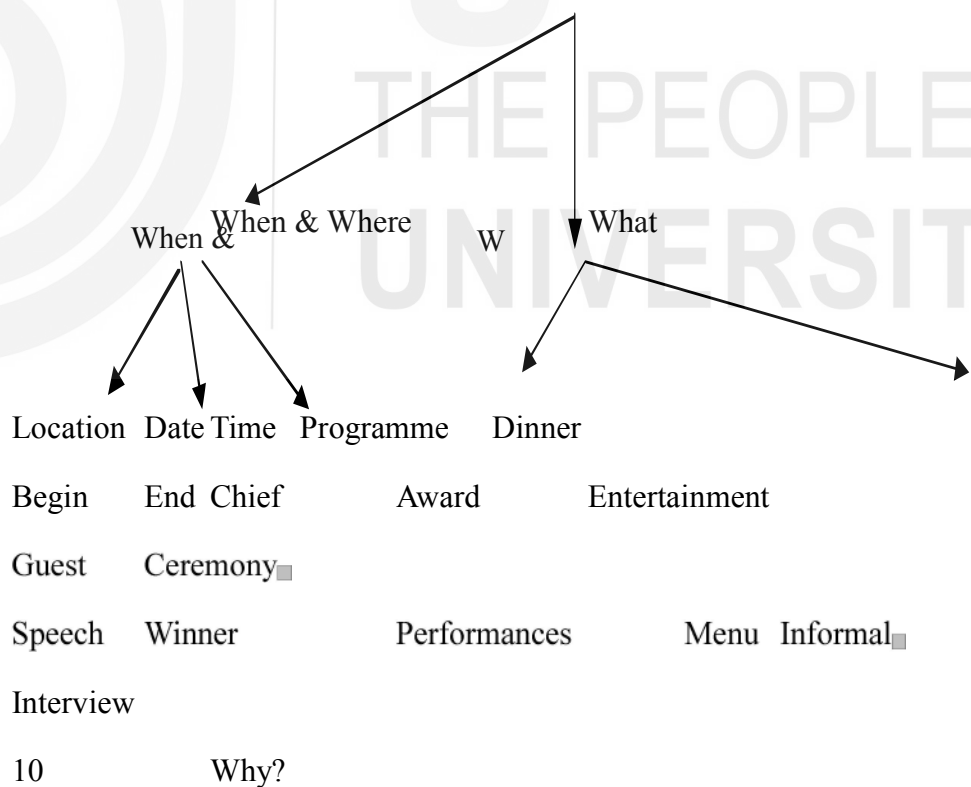
quality or usefulness, but you can evaluate that later. Of course, brainstorming need not always be with others; it can also be an activity which you perform by yourself.

Working by yourself is a little different from brainstorming in a group. You will need to motivate yourself to generate the same energy that usually accompanies a group activity. You can do this best by reviewing your materials and notes before you begin brainstorming. In fact, this session can be termed as a **planning session** so it is important to keep track of ideas and information that you generate by yourself by making a list or speaking into a tape recorder. There is no need to write and speak in complete and connected sentences. Your goal is to generate as many ideas as you can through rapid thinking and free association - you can evaluate the ideas at a later stage.

Another technique that you can use to help you recall ideas, information and arguments is to build an **issue tree** or a **mind map**. Brainstorming and note taking is a verbal technique that requires you to record your ideas in words. Issue trees and mind maps, however, are primarily visual. That is, as you think of ideas and information, you construct the visual display that arranges your information in a hierarchical structure. In this way, you can see each idea's relative importance and its relationship to other ideas.

The Issue Tree

The Annual Award Ceremony

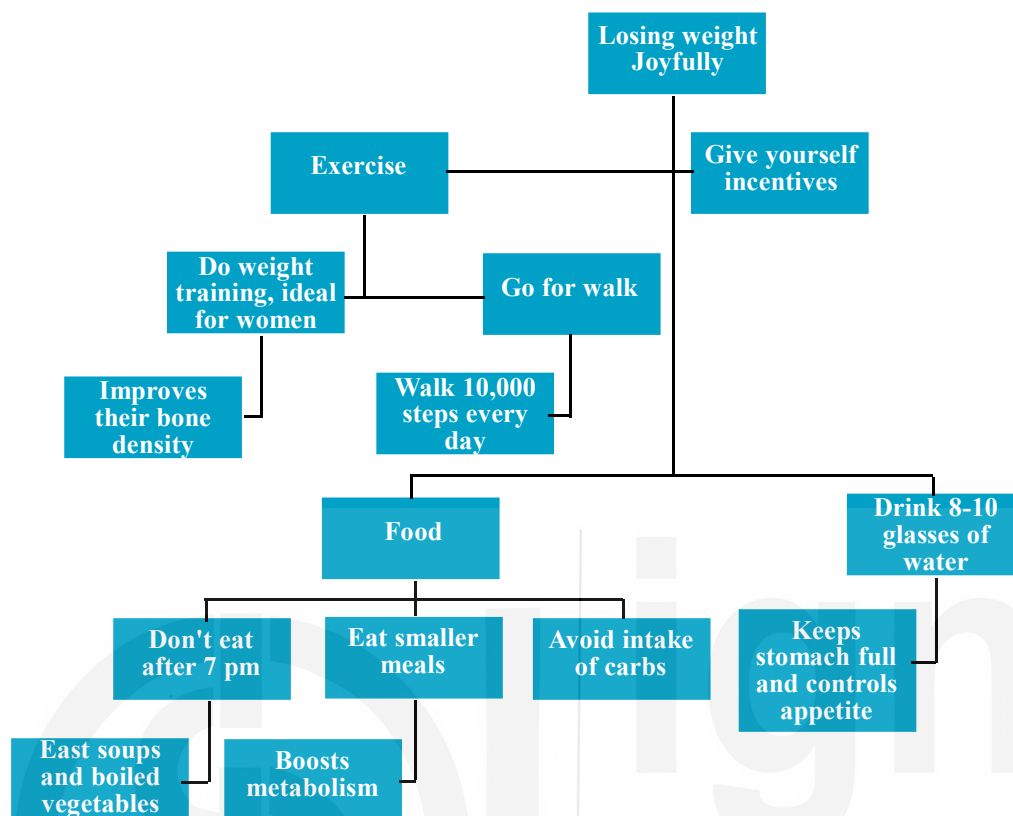


1.3.3 Purpose

You must be very clear about what your text is going to be used for, for example, are you expected to write a report, a feature or a persuasive piece.

Having a clearly stated purpose is like having a destination when you take a trip.

Once you have decided on a destination, you can make the arrangements to reach it. So without a goal, your writing project will be a meandering collection of miscellaneous facts, with no focus or point. An explicit purpose statement will help you:



- identify the steps that you must take to reach your goal;
- concentrate your search for information/ ideas on what is related to your purpose.

### 1.3.4 Knowing Your Reader

Once you know your subject/topic, the next most important question to ask yourself is who the reader is. The answer to this question will affect how and what you write. For example, if you are writing for experts and specialists you could perhaps use some technical jargon and pitch your language and subject matter to a higher level.

You also need to think about what the reader already knows and what s/he needs to know. You do not want to tell the reader what s/he already knows although you may refer to shared information from time to time. If you are giving information that is completely new, this information must be stated and explained with great clarity. It is a good idea to know the attitude of the readers as well. Are they likely to be provoked by the topic? If so, it is better to use more tactful language. In brief, you could ask yourself these questions about the reader:

Is the reader an expert or a general reader?

What does the reader already know about the topic?

What background information might they need to know to understand the current situation?

What does s/he need to know?

What action do you want them to take?

What is their attitude? Are they biased or do they have positive associations with your subject?

### Managing the Writer's Block

As mentioned earlier, there could be days when we face what is known as the writer's block, when we find it difficult to generate ideas or find anything to say. Free writing is a technique that one could use on such a day. This is a technique where you write even when you have nothing to say. The object of free writing is to help you to recall and write about whatever is in your mind on the subject without editing, evaluating, or rejecting it. Free writing works this way: begin by setting a time limit and start writing. Keep writing, no matter what happens - keep your pen moving across the page. There is no need to edit, cross out or stop to think of a word or a sentence. Keep the words flowing and keep your mind and imagination moving. Some useful things would begin to happen once the words begin to flow. Solution and new ideas that are lurking in your sub-conscious will surprisingly appear. Whatever you do, don't stop writing until your time is up. You will be surprised to see that this exercise might produce highly relevant and useful ideas and information. Moreover, since you are less preoccupied about writing correctly, you have allowed yourself to be more fluent with words.

### 1.3.5 Managing the Writer's Block

As mentioned earlier, there could be days when we face what is known as the **writer's block**, when we find it difficult to generate ideas or find anything to say. Free writing is a technique that one could use on such a day. This is a technique where you write even when you have nothing to say. The object of free writing is to help you to recall and write about whatever is in your mind on the subject without editing, evaluating, or rejecting it. Free writing works this way: begin by setting a time limit and start writing. Keep writing, no matter what happens - keep your pen moving across the page. There is no need to edit, cross out or stop to think of a word or a sentence. Keep the words flowing and keep your mind and imagination moving. Some useful things would begin to happen once the words begin to flow. Solution and new ideas that are lurking in your sub-conscious will surprisingly appear. Whatever you do, don't stop writing until your time is up. You will be surprised to see that this exercise might produce highly relevant and useful ideas and information. Moreover, since you are less preoccupied about writing correctly, you have allowed yourself to be more fluent with words.

### Beginning To Write

It is important to begin writing with more information than you think you will need. The greater your choice, the more likely it is that you will be able to select the ideas, facts and arguments that will help you accomplish your purpose. If you begin with only five or seven facts or examples to support your main idea, you are likely to use all of them regardless of their quality. But if you gather, say, ten to fifteen facts or examples, you have a choice that will effectively help you accomplish your job. As a result, there will be fewer gaps in your presentation and your reader is less likely to raise questions and objections.



However, at the same time do not invest too much time on your research as you have deadlines to meet.

### Activity - 1

Make an issue tree or a mind map on any one of following topics:

- i) Why stress hurts?
- ii) English as a global language

## 1.4 ORGANISING YOUR WRITING

One of the important skills that a journalist requires is a quick way of organising their material. From a writer's point of view, organising involves searching for a pattern of a sequence that is appropriate to your information, your goals, your readers' needs and your editor's brief. Your readers expect that you will create a pattern that will make what you say easy to read, understand, remember and be useful. Once you have determined the relationship among the concepts and data you have gathered, you still have to decide how you will present these to your readers. There are four basic discourse strategies that you could use or adapt to your needs. Remember, while we are discussing them as separate types of discourse, in a single piece of writing you are likely to use more than one type.

### Forms of Discourse

Generally exposition, narration, description and argumentation are considered to be the basic forms of discourse. When a writer is concerned with setting forth facts then the form is known as exposition, when s/he presents them in terms of temporal action then the form is narration, and in terms of space it is description, and when s/he intends to resolve conflict of facts then it is known as argumentation. These forms do not exist as pure forms; they, in fact, are intermixed and one can only talk about a dominant form. Let us look at the dominant forms separately.

#### 1.4.1 Expository Discourse

Expository writing is probably the most common form of writing. Expository writing has the overall purpose of explaining. Central to expository writing is grouping, classification and definition. While grouping involves selection, classification involves breaking down a broad topic into parts. In contrast to these, definition sets limits or boundaries, or points out the characteristics that distinguish the thing under discussion from others. Definitions are one of the purest forms of exposition because their purpose is to explain. They answer the basic question.

“What is it?” or “What does it mean?”

#### 1.4.2 Narrative Discourse

Narration depends chiefly on temporal order, i.e., upon actions in a chronological order at the level of time. The chronological order involves a sequencing of events or actions from beginning to end. A skilled narrator is able to arrange the details in such a way so that a reader's interest rises to a climax at some point in the narration. The narration, in turn, can range from storytelling, as in novels and short stories, to anecdotes used for illustration, explanation or support.

Sometimes, for special effects, etc. an author may begin his narration from the end and then through a process of flashback may return to the beginning and then give the full events till the end. The author may also begin in the middle of a chronological sequence, narrate events leading up to the point of narration and then proceed to complete the narration of events. The way of beginning in the middle of a sequence of events is called *Medias res*. Both the above kinds of presentation of events can generally be found in novels and films.

**Where to look for ideas:**

You can only write about what you have experienced, observed, imagined, and thought about. Although we discuss the experiences and thoughts of others, they do not become our own. Borrowed ideas like borrowed clothes do not fit, and writing is not so much a matter of ideas or phrases as of how we present them. The most interesting story or narration is the one you have experienced and thought about in your own individual fashion. A narrative in order to be interesting must be original. The sources for your narratives are:

**Your memories:** What places or persons do you recall clearly? What days do you remember vividly? What was the happiest day you recall? What was the most painful time you remember?

**Your friends and favorite places:** Who is the most peaceful person you know? Who is the most amusing person you know? Which is the place you would like to go back to?

**Basics of Writing:**

**Events and Participants:** What events in your life did you find most moving?

What was the greatest satisfaction or disappointment that you experienced? What people in your life did you consider powerful, good or beautiful? Do you still admire them? What events would you like to wipe out from your memory?

What events would you like to remember and relive?

**Imagination and wishes:** if you had your choice, which country would you like to live in? What persons would you like to meet? What country would you choose as your own?

You can devise your plan by asking the following four basic questions:

What is special or typical about my narrative?

Why am I telling the story?

What kind of readers am I writing for?

How will my reader best understand my plan and purpose?

You may find you have three more questions:

How long does my narrative have to be?

Do I know enough about what I am writing?

Where can I get more information about it?

In writing narrations, one of the skills to be cultivated is style. The question that arises is how you can improve your narrative style. You can consider the following stylistic features:

- a) Simplicity

- b) Direct conversational style
- c) Individuality
- d) Concreteness

### 1.4.3 Descriptive Discourse

Description also involves narration, but of a different kind. It is a kind of picture-making, indicating what someone, something, or some place, etc. looks like.

All descriptions involve spatial dimensions.

Any description would involve one of the two possibilities: either the description would proceed from a particular to the general or, from the general to the particular. For example, a description of a painting could begin with a central focus on a particular detail and then proceed to other things that relate to it, thereby, giving a general picture. Or one could also describe the picture in general terms and then focus on particular items within it. However, what is common to any kind of description is the spatial arrangement, i.e., the way things appear and the way they are arranged. It is analogous to the long shot, with diminishing distance leading to close-ups from various angles, and vice-versa, by a film camera. Note that a description can be of people, places and processes.

#### Basics of Writing:

### 1.4.4 Argumentative Discourse

In argumentative discourse the writer argues a case, or expresses an opinion, by looking at a problem from both the sides. Any structure representing argumentation must take into account the pro-and-con nature of the argument.

Argumentation can be done in three different ways. First, one can give one's own arguments by taking an affirmative position. Second, one can give further evidence to counter-balance the arguments of an opponent. And, third, one can point out the fallacies in one's opponents' arguments in order to discredit them. Strong argumentation, therefore, demands perceptive reasoning and careful perusal of evidence in order to present one's own arguments or in order to belittle the opponent's arguments. However, this kind of writing becomes interesting when the writer has something to say. Your opinion is still not worth expressing until you have thought about the subject.

The structure of an argument is shaped by the nature of reasoning. Reasoning here, simply means moving from the basic propositions, through evidence, to a conclusion. There are two main directions of reasoning: induction and deduction. It should be noted that each of these approaches is usually used in combination with the strategies of narrating and explaining.

#### a) Inductive Reasoning

Inductive reasoning is a way of enabling us to make general statements from particular examples and evidence. It is therefore both a way of discovering and explaining. For example, if a teacher says "No one in my English class has failed" – the generalisation can be accepted to be true since it is based on the observation of all possible examples. Even the generalisations based on a high degree of probability are true; thus doctors

prescribe medicines on the basis of high probability, etc. When you use this pattern you are taking your readers step by step through a carefully designed sequence or facts or ideas or a reasoning process, so that you can bring them to a conclusion that you have already reached.

**b) Deductive Reasoning**

When you use a deductive pattern you can begin with the general concept and then proceed to sub concepts or other specific details. This pattern is especially useful when you want to announce your conclusions or recommendations quickly. Then you can go on to provide necessary and detailed explanations. Doing this calls immediate attention to your most immediate point of concept which is then followed by illustration or proof. It is rare that you will use one of these organising patterns to the exclusion of others. It is possible that you will combine them in your piece of writing.

**Activity 2**

You have been asked by a Tourist/Travel Magazine to introduce your City/Town/Village to foreign visitors. Write a physical description, including the location, layout, geographical and architectural features. Some reference to history may be appropriate. Your description must make your area sound interesting and attractive as a tourist destination. Write in 200 words.

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## **1.5 THE WRITING PROCESS**

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So far we have been discussing some of the ways to organise our ideas. But sitting down to write a first draft is much more formal and intimidating than the writing you did while you were planning. Drafts require that you write in complete sentences and paragraphs, and that you pay some attention to the format and the organisation you want the finished product to have. At this stage, you will be coping with questions of length, format, word choice, coherence, sentence structure, cohesion, paragraphing and format. The best way to tackle this is to understand how this process works.

### **Writing/Handling the First Draft**

Your first draft is an experiment, a test, to find out what you have to say. It is an attempt to build a rough frame work of content, meaning, and form which you will improve on later. It is provisional writing. It encourages you to write quickly in an attempt to delineate the general meaning, content, and organisation of your draft. When you finish you will not have spent so much time and effort that you will be unwilling to change or discard part or all of what you have written.

### **Revising the First Draft**

Revising begins with a careful review of your first draft to find out if you have actually done what you set out to do. As a review, you will check how close you have come to achieving your original intention and where and how far you have fallen short of it. You are therefore concerned with:

- what you left out?
- what you have included that you do not need?
- whether you can make this draft achieve your goals?

Remember that revision is a thinking process that occurs throughout the writing process. It means looking at your writing with a ‘fresh eye’ i.e. looking at your writing in ways that will make you make more effective choices. As you write, new ideas emerge prompting you to revise what you have planned or have just written. Sometimes, new ideas will encourage you to begin an entirely new draft with a different focus or approach. Remember that revision occurs throughout the writing process.

### Refining

Once you have settled on the major concepts you wish to include in your first draft and the way you would organise them, you can shift your attention to the next level. Look at your examples, illustrations and evidence. Do these support the main ideas? Do the sub-sections follow each other logically? Do your examples really exemplify and explain? This is a good time to look for gaps in your writing. Is there anything missing? Now is the time to add explanations and details without having to rewrite the whole draft.

### Editing

Editing is a careful reading of the draft to ensure that everything is the way you wanted to be and there is no mistake to embarrass you. Editing will be easier if you know how to go about it and what to look for. Let’s concentrate on what you should look for.

i) **Looking at Paragraphs:** This is the time we ask the following questions:

- is the paragraphing logical and visually appropriate?
- is there a topic sentence which stakes the main idea of the paragraph?
- are the sentences related to each other?

By this time you have probably stopped adding new material. You are now trying to make your writing concise and clear sentence by sentence.

ii) **Sentences:** You need to read your text-sentence by sentence. Are the sentences related to each other? Are the tenses correct? Is the pronoun referencing correct? Are there any dangling modifiers?

iii) **Vocabulary:** It is a good idea to focus at this stage on the words that you used. Do the words mean what you want them to mean? Will your readers understand what you wish to state? Does your vocabulary have a vast range? For example, do you use words precisely and is there variation in your word choice. Example:

iv) **Precise words:** gaze, glance, stare, glare, and peep

v) **Variation:** car..... Maruti Zen..... Vehicle.....  
As well as ..... also..... what is more .....

vi) **Format:** The headings should be consistent throughout the draft. That is, all main headings should have the same typography, spacing and placing.

All sub-heading should also be alike.

Indentation should be consistent throughout the draft.

vii) **Visual Aids:** Take a close look at all the visual aids including: graphs, charts, tables and drawings. See that they are at appropriate places in the text. Be sure each visual aid has a title that explains what it is.

**viii) Proofreading:** Proofreading is more than re-reading. It is a careful word by word or line by line review of your first draft to make sure that everything is as it should be.

We give you some tips and techniques to make your proofreading sessions more effective.

**ix) Concentration:** When you proofread, you need to concentrate. This means getting rid of distraction and potential interruptions. Don't rely entirely on spelling or grammar checkers on the computer. These programmes work with a limited number of rules, so they cannot identify every error.

Read slowly and read every word.

Check the punctuation

Pay attention to capitalisation, missing or extra commas, colons and semi-colons used incorrectly.

**x) Numbers:** If you are using numbers check them. We often make a mistake by omitting or adding a zero.

Finally get somebody else to proofread it once because after a few readings we become blind to our errors.

**Check Your Progress 1**

**Note:** 1) Use the space below for your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) How is Narrative Discourse different from Descriptive Discourse?

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2) Explain in brief the steps of the writing process.

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**1.6 LET US SUM UP**

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In this unit, we have introduced you to the techniques of good writing. This will stand you in good stead no matter what particular aspect of media you get employment in, since writing is an essential part of a journalist's job. We have discussed in some detail the methods of writing, overcoming the writer's block, writing a thesis statement, elaborating on it and writing effective introductions and conclusions. We have also introduced you to the various discourse types:

expository, descriptive, narrative and argumentative. Finally, we have taken you through the process of writing drafts, refining them, editing and proofreading them. We hope you find the unit useful and interesting.

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## 1.7 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

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Jean Wyrick (1990), *Steps to Writing Well with Additional Readings* (6th edition), Thomson Wadsworth, Boston, USA

Liz Hamp-Lyons and Ben Heasley (2006), *Study Writing, Second Edition* Cambridge University Press

Richard P. Battager (1985), *Business Writing, Process and Forms*; Wadsworth Publishing Company, Belmont, California

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## 1.8 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Before beginning the writing process, it is important to identify the topic and gather as much useful information on the subject as possible. It is sometimes a good idea to make a mind map or issue map of the topic.

Knowing your audience and having a clear purpose is also important.

- 2) A thesis statement identifies the main point or controlling idea of your writing.

It is the first thing a writer should pen down after identifying the topic.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) A Narrative Discourse involves the sequencing of events in a chronological order. On the other hand a Descriptive Discourse is more like picture making, wherein a writer describes a person, place or process.
- 2) The writing process involves the following steps:
  - a) Writing the first draft
  - b) Editing the first draft
  - c) Refining
  - d) Editing
  - e) Proofreading

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## UNIT 2 WRITING FOR DIFFERENT MEDIA

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### Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Learning Outcomes
- 2.2 Writing for Print
  - 2.2.1 Techniques of Writing
  - 2.2.2 Some Points to Remember
- 2.3 Writing for Radio
  - 2.3.1 Techniques of Writing a Radio Script
  - 2.3.2 Some Points to Remember
- 2.4 Writing for Television
  - 2.4.1 Techniques of Writing
  - 2.4.2 Some Points to Remember
- 2.5 Writing for Digital/Online Media
  - 2.5.1 Techniques for Writing
  - 2.5.2 Some Points to Remember
- 2.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.7 Keywords
- 2.8 References and Further Readings
- 2.9 Check Your Progress: Possible Answers

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### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

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‘Media’ is a combination of all the four major components - print, radio, television and digital. They all form the core of mass media/ communication. They seem to be interlinked, but one cannot ignore the fact that all the four possess different set of characteristics and style. While the main objective of any piece of writing centers around the readers/ viewers/ listeners to make them understand the message well, all the genres consist of distinctive qualities that a student of journalism and mass communication must imbibe fully. These skills are the basic tools for strengthening the news writing techniques.

In this unit, we shall discuss different sets of writing skills required for each medium and outline the differences and similarities of writing amongst them. It is important to learn these in detail because it will help you to explore the convergence trends, and decipher the growing tones and tenor in media.

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### 2.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

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After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- outline the basic rules of writing for print, radio, television and online media;
- differentiate between writing for each medium;
- write a variety of story genres for all the four media; and
- develop your own writing style and communicate effectively



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## 2.2 WRITING FOR PRINT

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Print media- newspapers, magazines and journals are the oldest forms of communication. Many readers start associating themselves to a particular newspaper/ magazine/journal. The beauty of the newspaper is that it becomes an inseparable member of the family that no one wants to replace. In a multilingual country like India, both the regional and the English press, have grown immensely. But, it is also important to understand that writing for print media requires a set of special skills to reach the audience efficiently and directly.

Print journalism represents a very strong form of news writing wherein the account is narrated in a linear fashion. The purpose is to provide the reader with the most important information in simple words. With the advent of television and eventually the new media, the availability of news is constant, and that has transformed the entire approach towards consuming the news.

The introductory paragraph of a news story is called a lead. The main objective of the lead is to make the readers inquisitive about the story, to motivate them to read the story and to state the most crucial facts, logically and carefully. There are various forms of opening paragraph, such as:

- Announcement: Starts directly with the most crucial information.
- Riddle: Starts with a riddle and forces the reader to find the correct answer.
- Bold and challenging statement/ punch line.
- Quotation lead: Begins with a quote.
- Question lead: Begins with a question to make the reader curious about the answer.

### 2.2.1 Techniques of Writing

**Ability to Read, Research and Develop Expertise:** Keep your eyes and ears open, read everything, gather story ideas and think of the focal point. It is also important to research on the subjects of interest and develop expertise.

**Narrative Structure:** To keep the news writing component intact, the account is generally narrated in a linear fashion. The objective is to disseminate the most crucial portion of the information, and give the readers a deeper understanding of the subject.

**Inverted Pyramid Style of Writing:** Since print media offers limited space, it follows the inverted pyramid model. This means that the most crucial information is placed at the top of the article / news item / news story while the less important is placed after that. The purpose behind this style of writing is to provide the most engaging or important information immediately to the readers. This style is common in straight news stories. However, it is not necessary to maintain the same rhythm and style in a feature article. Feature stories are accorded ample freedom, allowing for greater use of creativity and experimentation so that one can hold the readers' attention for a longer duration.

**Style of Writing:** Unlike radio or television reporting, print media can experiment with varied styles of writing and can also include numerous word choices. Writing for the print is generally formal in nature, keeping in mind the target audience

and the subject; one can make several changes in the style of writing. But whatever style one adopts, the article or the story must have the ability to grab the readers' attention and keep them hooked to it. A journalist is required to focus on the main point while writing for news, feature writing can adopt different ways of conveying the message. While news is factual, the feature can be creative, but for both, one must keep in mind the readers who will be reading that piece.

**Five W's and one H:** Who, what, where, when, why and how- are the most basic questions that must be answered in a report. For example, a news story on the UPSC's civil services examination topper must provide information about his/her personal and academic background, and how did s/he crack the examination, etc. It is not necessary that every story answers all five Ws and one H, but if any of them is crucial and unavoidable, then it must be answered and everything should flow smoothly in the story.

**Target Audience:** Since the print media deals with mass audience, it is important to understand that the readers have varied literacy levels. Every story that appears in a newspaper should be written in simple language so that the core of the story conveniently reaches the reader. Similarly, if the newspaper or the magazine is for a niche audience, then the vocabulary should include appropriate terms and expressions.

### 2.2.2 Some points to remember

- Understand the difference between hard news, soft news and features
- Write your piece keeping in view the level of the target audiences
- Make optimum use of the space/word-limit allotted
- Use formal language
- Do not use any slang/ colloquial words
- Do not use phrases unfamiliar to the target audience
- Do not write to impress the readers
- Stick to facts, especially in hard news
- Don't over-analyse or jump to conclusion
- Do not plagiarise
- Develop your expertise slowly and consistently.

**Activity-1** Go to a book fair or an exhibition and write a news story for a print medium and then compare the story you have written with the one published in newspapers. What difference do you find?

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## 2.3 WRITING FOR RADIO

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Radio is one of the oldest medium of mass communication. It appeals to different age-groups and overcomes the barrier of literacy levels. The basic elements of radio are word, music, and sound effects - these are all sounds carried on the air waves to the listener. All these sounds must be pleasant and expressive for the ears. They must be artistically integrated or mixed to provoke the imagination of the listener. The listener creates his/her own pictures with the help of these elements.

While it may appear that writing for radio is simple, one cannot do it without acquiring certain skills. Anyone interested to write for radio should be aware of the fundamental essence of writing for the ear. Since radio is an audio medium, it is connected to our aural sense and every word and the sound linked to it must attract our ears. Writing for radio requires a proper organisation of one's thoughts, thorough understanding of the subject, and excellent command of language that the listeners find attractive and worth paying attention to.

### 2.3.1 Techniques of Writing a Radio Script

**Different Formats have Different Styles:** Writing for different formats such as radio documentary or feature is very different from writing for radio news. Similarly, writing for a radio advertisement or a radio drama would be different from writing for the radio news. In these formats, the duration, style, language and the pace would require different treatment. While the message on radio advertisement has to be conveyed more quickly and imaginatively, radio news being serious in content can take a little slow delivery of speech so that the essence of the message is fully absorbed by the listener. You will have to keep in mind these basic points before finalising the script. Radio jingle, documentary or drama can incorporate many shades of voices and add imagination and creativity to the broadcast, but radio news will have to follow the simplest possible style of communication so that the crux of the news does not get diluted by the incorporating any external element. A radio talk show or an interview allows the panelist/s to freely express their opinion.

**Conversational:** Radio is personal in nature and thus it is very important to give the listener the feeling as if the anchor/speaker is individually conversing with him/her. This means that while writing for radio, one should be mindful of the distinct beauty of an intimate conversation between two people.

**Intimacy:** It is important to remember that people may be doing many things while listening to radio. They may be driving, working at home or doing household chores while listening. That is why the script should be interesting enough to attract and hold the audiences' attention and keep them hooked.

**Writing for the Ear:** Radio has the potential to engage the human mind to think visually and also create images while listening to the voice. This is the reason that the radio is also called the 'Theatre of the Mind'. For example, if you're writing a feature on a railway station then the script must capture the essence of the atmosphere prevailing at the railway station. This can be done by using the announcements of train schedules, hustle and bustle on the platforms, passengers' noise, sound of the railways train engines, etc.

**Clarity of Thoughts:** Writing for radio also requires clarity of thoughts so that the talks or the stories or narration is written in a simple and effective manner. The script for the radio must be concisely written and display personal warmth while narrating it on the air.

Ephemeral in nature, radio does not permit the audiences to go back to the same content. Hence, it is important to keep the sentences short so that the words are easy on ear and reach to the listeners' mind. One must also avoid the use of difficult expressions and jargons as it may confuse the listeners. For example, instead of using the word baffled, you can use the word confused. Similarly, demolish can be replaced with destroy. Rhyming or similar sounding words such as scream, cream, screen, should also be used very carefully.

**Activity-1**  
Write a radio news story on any current issue and compare it with the regular news bulletin being put out on AIR. Identify the missing links in your story.

**2.3.2 Some Points to Remember**

- Grab the audience’s attention
- Write for the ear
- Be mindful of 3Cs: Clear, Crisp and Concise
- Use present tense
- Use Active Voice
- Be selective
- Avoid information overload
- Avoid jargons
- Read our the script and revise it before going on air
- Speak clearly
- Maintain audio quality
- Modulate your voice
- Avoid sarcasm and poor jokes
- Adhere to the time-limit.

**Check Your Progress: 1**

**Note:** 1) Use the space below for writing your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) List three points that you will keep in mind while writing for the radio.

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2) For writing a one-minute story on a busy market spot what kinds of audio you will use to add the feel of the location in your narration?

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## 2.4 WRITING FOR TELEVISION

Since television is an audio-visual medium, both words and visuals go hand-in-hand. While radio creates images in the mind, television creates the magic by having both of them together, thus, increasing the impact of the telecast. However, as in the case of radio, television also requires certain special skills so that the words and the visuals together fully convey the message. It is a craft which can be developed by anyone with regular observation and practice.

### 2.4.1 Techniques of Writing

A student of journalism must be aware that writing for television requires the skill to create a balance between the pictures and the words. Depending upon the format one has to work upon, the style and the needs of the script are decided before hand. In the case of a soap opera, the script is finalised word-to-word before the shoot, whereas in TV news, the script is written after the shoot. For example, script for a soap opera will have dialogues etc. almost fully pre-decided and finalised. However, for a TV news script, you have to keep in view the news elements and the message that has to be conveyed.

**Log the Bytes:** Before putting your words on paper, see the shots first and log the bytes so that you know exactly what and where you need to use them. Logging means watching the entire recorded content and taking exact notes of the sentences. This helps in deciding the duration of the story and makes the editing accurate and contributes during post production in locating shots and sentences. Logging is also linked to proper storage and labeling of the video. Since TV newsrooms now operate digitally, logging also helps in keeping the exact words in the memory box.

#### Activity-2

Watch a television news bulletin. Compare and contrast the style of the language used on television with a newspaper of your choice?

**Writing to Pictures:** Write the script according to the pictures available - both shots and the words should go together. The purpose behind this is to avoid the obvious. For example, if the shot has a person holding a cup of tea then you need not write that the person is having tea because that is already visible. Instead, you can use that space and airtime for conveying something which is more important.

**Know your Duration:** You should know the time allotted to that particular story so that the script is written accordingly. There is no point in writing a three-minute story if the allotted time is only one minute. Since every second counts in television, one has to stick to the time limit assigned by the news editor.

**Language:** ‘One Sentence, one Idea’ is a common practice in TV journalism. Since different news programmes have different sets of target audiences, appropriate style, form and language should be used. For example, a news programme for a wider, mass audience should be simple and easy to understand while the programmes meant specifically for a niche audience like doctors, etc. can employ technical jargons.

**Use Present Tense:** TV news is instant. The language of the script must keep in mind the basic characteristic of TV news, i.e., keeping it alive and fresh. Use Active voice and Present tense which carry an air of urgency. Hence say, ‘Wife murders her drunk husband’ instead of ‘Wife murdered her drunk husband’. TV newsrooms now offer 24x7 news bulletins hence the pace and style must convey the sense of immediacy.

**Dealing with Numbers:** It is difficult to remember exact numbers on TV. However, this does not mean that numbers are avoided altogether but presented in the easiest possible manner. This can be done by rounding off the figures so that it is easier for the audiences to understand and absorb them. For example, instead of saying that Indian Railways currently operates 1,4,298 trains daily, one can say that the Indian Railways currently operates nearly 14,300 trains daily. If it is very important to use the exact numbers, then one can make use of graphics or pie charts so that the numbers are supported by a diagram and are easily understood.

### Activity-3

Select any feature story published in an online platform and count the words. Rewrite the same for television in 100 words.

**Be Factual and Original:** Every part of the story must be based on facts. Doubts should be clarified, or else taken out of the script - working on the dictum, ‘When in doubt leave out’.

**Breathing Space:** The viewer must be allowed a few seconds of orientation before s/he is prepared to absorb a series of hard facts.

**Write Stories for the People:** You should not merely present information instead transform the information into something of consequence for the viewers watching the programme. They need to feel that your stories are meant for them and are relevant for them. For example, a strike by industrial workers might not directly affect the viewers. But, if the news says that the strike can cause delay in a particular area and affects them directly, they may find it relevant for them.

**Read and Re-read Before Finalising It:** No script is ever perfect, but one must attempt to reach at least near perfection. Read your script aloud and review if there are possibilities of improvement. Ensure that words have a conversational ring and are easy to understand, the sentences are short and simple and the flow of the story conveys the message.

### Activity-4

Identify one topic for audio and video, keeping in view the strengths and limitations of each medium. Write them in your own words.

## 2.4.2 Some Points to Remember

- Use short sentences
- Be careful about punctuations - an inappropriate punctuation can make or mar the story.
- Bytes should be logged accurately

- Use Present tense
- Add breathing spaces
- Don't exaggerate
- Avoid obvious statements - if the rose is red and the shot is already explaining that, then the script need not mention it.

**Check Your Progress: 2**

**Note:** 1) Use the space below for writing your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) Enlist some skills required to write a script for TV news.

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2) Why is the concept of 'Writing to Picture' important for Television?

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**2.5 WRITING FOR DIGITAL/ONLINE MEDIA**

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Digital / Online media being recent forms of mass communication are constantly evolving and have completely changed the way people consume various forms of media. The digital media have their own dynamics, techniques and concepts and have developed their distinct styles of writing. Print or TV writing is very different from that of the one written for the screen. Similarly, the pace, approach and time for consumption of web content is also different. The web content has greater ability to engage the younger generation. Therefore, writing for the online media calls for understanding the needs and preferences of the online users.

Online media offers ample space for publishing a story and thus empowers the consumers / readers. On online media, one has the freedom to experiment to make the story look better. It presents opportunities of getting your work published on various platforms, such as the Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, as well as blogs.

It is also important to note that newsrooms across the globe look for people who possess the skills to work in different mass media efficiently. With a constantly growing demand for multitasking and integration of different modes of communication in the form of convergence, knowledge and expertise over all of them, would be highly beneficial and rewarding.

## 2.5.1 Techniques of Writing

**Say More with Less:** Do not use long expressions nor repeat them. Don't overload the concepts or expressions with too many words - the shorter, the better.

**Language:** Use familiar meaningful, yet simple words. Write in active voice since such sentences tend to be short and to the point. Make your language credible.

**Title:** A catchy title is essential for any piece of writing; it must have all the requisite information as the readers notice the title first. It must not exceed 90 – 100 characters; always write in Title Case.

**Availability of Space and Length:** Though writing for online media does not generally confine the length of the article, it is important that the articles are kept short and smart. The reader does not visit the online media platform to read a very lengthy piece. Rather, s/he is interested in going through the material quickly and efficiently

**Readability:** Consumers of the online media are exposed to different sets of media platforms as compared to those who depend on print or electronic media, particularly television. The readers can scan and search for topics or areas of their choice at a very fast pace. They look at bullet points and spend minimal time on reading news. Hence those writing for online media must organise the entire information precisely which the readers can absorb quickly and move forward. It is helpful to have bullet points, bold face phrases, sub-headings, shorter paragraphs and links to make the readability process simpler, smarter and attractive.

**Navigability:** Navigation design is a process in which all the information is segregated thematically in a website and is interlinked with each other logically for better user experience. Since online writing is frequently associated with web links and other directional resources, one must learn how to write about the data that would be consumed while navigating.

**Reader's Attention:** Online articles have to constantly strive for attention. You start writing with the most important aspect of the story first to grab readers' attention and direct it towards your content and encourage them to stick to the story or the page. With immense competition in the cyber space and constant innovation in the field, it is imperative that the reader's attention gets drawn to the story and stays with it.

**Persuasion:** One should develop content that creates interest in the target audience. Since most consumers of online media are youth, researching the emerging recent trends in varied areas could be of great value to them. Infotainment is the buzzword in the world of digital media.

**Developing Visual Sense:** Always remember that rich and attractive graphics can grab reader's attention. Visuals can also enhance the flavour of the story and support in building your narrative immensely. Therefore, make use of powerful visuals to give your readers thoughts to ponder over and increase their eagerness to go through the content.



**Appropriate Captions:** Prepare a draft of relevant captions, catchy words and phrases at the first place to increase the power of the story. Use every possible and relevant hashtag like #mediafightback, #communityradio, etc.

**Look and Feel of the Page:** Remember that your script should take into account every element of the page, starting from the headline to the opening visual, the copy, quotes and blurbs. All of them together will make or mar the story's intended impact. Thus, some special aspects/ elements of your script should be kept aside to decorate the blank spaces of the page to make it more appealing to the eye.

**Power of Headlines:** Since the consumers of online media are loaded with multiple options for news and views, every word and image should have the power to captivate their attention. This target can be achieved by working diligently on writing and drafting powerful headlines. Your headlines should clearly reflect what your article is all about.

**Bullet-Points:** While radio and television do not permit to have a voiceover in a bullet format, this formula will work well in the digital media. With lesser attention span, bullet-style format allows more information in lesser time. It permits the essential break up of the texts and keeps the plot flowing to hold the reader's interest. Thus, it facilitates the reader to absorb the subject matter quickly. Such short snippets are more eye-catching as well as convenient to read.

**Search Engine Optimisation (SEO):** Try to learn about the tools for increasing visibility of your story or the website so that it reaches out to a wider audience.

**Quality Control:** It is useful to work in a team that is entrusted with the responsibility to fine tune the content for quality control. This will ensure credibility for both, you as a journalist and also for the site/online platform you are engaged with.

**Fake News:** Always crosscheck the facts before putting a story online. Ensure that it is not 'fake news'.

#### Activity-5

Collect any two news stories from online media. Analyse how these can be written for both television and radio.

### 2.5.2 Some Points to Remember

- Pick up topics which attract users' attention and interest
- Make the first sentence impactful and attractive
- Provide new perspectives to your arguments
- Use Meta Keywords, title and description so that your writings attract large audiences via Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)
- When writing listicles (X Books to read or X things to eat in CP), always write the number first i.e, 5 books to read, 7 places to visit, etc. That makes it more pointed and easy to remember
- Know that you are writing for people with short attention span
- Expect people to arrive anywhere on your website therefore, every page

should be easy to scan and tell what your site is about

- Each page should have a call to action, telling people where to go next
- Don't overuse terms as repetition makes your piece boring
- Use Hyperlinks wisely: include links to relevant pages related to what your article is about.
- Cross-check facts to avoid fake news, which will impact the credibility of your website
- Keep updating your post.

**Check Your Progress: 3**

**Note:** 1) Use the space below for writing your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

- 1) Why should one organise information-based story in a bullet form while writing for online media?

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- 2) What is navigation?

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**Activity-6**  
Pick up any news story from a newspaper. Re-write the same for radio, television and for the online media keeping the points discussed in this unit.

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## 2.6 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit, we have discussed various skills required for writing for different forms of media. Print media is meant for the literate/ educated audiences while television and radio cater to everyone irrespective of their educational background. Similarly, the biggest consumers of online media are youth and thus, writing for the new media requires an in-depth understanding of the requirements of the younger generation.

It was further discussed that in this age of multi-tasking, it will be useful for you to develop writing skills in different forms of media. Re-drafting and editing your own script helps to refine your work and in turn develop requisite confidence

to build your base in journalism. So, always be mindful of the techniques of writing for media while you consume it so that this practice becomes a habit. You should critically watch, read, listen, review and learn and keep improvising your skills and competence.

After going through the unit it would be clear that each form of communication has its own beauty and requirements. Writing for any media platform requires regular practice, improvement and introspection. You should keep reading the writings of senior journalists on the latest trends in writing for media and updating your tools and professional attributes. The more you compare your script with the scripts written by your competitors, the more you will learn and improve your skills. This will keep adding to the process of your learning, and enable you to reach greater heights in your career.

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## 2.7 KEYWORDS

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**Inverted Pyramid Structure:** Because of the low attention span, more details need to be given at the very beginning to capture readers' attention.

**Air Time:** Time during which a broadcast is transmitted.

**Sound Effects:** Sound other than speech or music made artificially for use in a play, film, or other broadcast production.

**Breathing space:** Giving a short gap generally at the beginning of a TV story so that there is some space between the anchor and the beginning of the story. This gives the viewer the freedom to absorb the essence more comfortably.

**SEO Techniques:** Search Engine Optimisation. It involves using and repeating hyperlinks, key words, relevant to basic content of the written piece.

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## 2.8 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

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## 2.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

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### Check Your Progress: 1

- 1) While writing for radio, I shall use simple, conversational words and keep it simple, short and clear. My script will have a 'personal' touch.

- 2) For the feel of location I shall use audios of announcements, hustle- bustle of people, sounds occurring on the event spots, voices of people on the spot, etc.

**Check Your Progress: 2**

- 1) Some skills required to write a script for TV news are: understanding the basics of writing to the picture concept, ability to write in smaller sentences and avoiding the obvious – what is visible on the screen.
- 2) The concept of ‘Writing to Picture’ is important on Television because the story is conveyed through pictures in this medium, the narration flows with the pictures. The script should have the capability to enhance the power of the pictures and use them effectively to narrate the story.

**Check Your Progress: 3**

- 1) One should organise the information-based story in a bullet form while writing for the online media because Bullets are:
  - Easy to read
  - Easy to understand and absorb the essence of the story
  - Provide clarity
  - Enable the reader to remember the crucial points
  - Look attractive
  - Less time consuming.
- 2) Navigation is a process in which all the information is segregated thematically in a website and is interlinked with each other logically for better user experience. Since online writing is frequently associated with web links and other directional resources, one must learn how to write about the data that would be consumed while navigating.

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## UNIT 3 FEATURE WRITING

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### Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Learning Outcomes
- 3.2 Definition
  - 3.2.1 Important Ingredients of Feature Articles
  - 3.2.2 Difference Between News Writing and Feature Writing
  - 3.2.3 Feature Writing and Other Journalistic Writings
- 3.3 Kinds/Types/Forms/Categories of Features
- 3.4 How to Write a Feature Article
  - 3.4.1 Choosing a Topic
  - 3.4.2 Preparations Needed
  - 3.4.3 Tapping Sources for Material
  - 3.4.4 Researching the Topic
- 3.5 Freelancing Features
  - 3.5.1 Studying Market for Selling Features
  - 3.5.2 Addressing/Contacting Editors
- 3.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.7 References and Further Readings
- 3.8 Check Your Progress: Possible Answers

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### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

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As a student of journalism, you would have realized by now that these days no aspect of human life is untouched or unaffected by mass media's 24x7x365 hectic operations. Besides, as you know, the print and electronic media- newspapers, magazines and journals, television, radio and Internet churn out all kinds of news, views, and hugely multifarious variety of other printed stuff from every nook and corner of the globe. Daily newspaper only adds to normally what we already know by the time it is delivered at our doorstep in the morning.

However, there is one specific area of print journalism relating to various aspects of human endeavor, which though covered very well by print media, but which is not adequately attended to by the electronic media. Yet, the readers avidly look forward to it day- in and day-out. This crucial area of print journalism is called 'feature article'.

And why is this so? Because what the newspapers accomplish with features, it is believed, is difficult for other media to achieve. A short perusal of any daily newspaper will prove this point. The feature article has in recent times, therefore, come to acquire a prominent place in our daily dose of reading- be it the daily newspaper, magazines, newsletters weekly, fortnightly, monthly, or of any other periodicity.

Thus, with a view to telling you as to how this can be done, in this Unit, we will discuss at length: what is a feature article, what are the various kinds of features,

how are features written, and how you can sell your feature article and make money from this genre of popular journalistic writing.

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### 3.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

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After you have gone through this Unit, it is hoped that you will be able to:

- comprehend as to what a feature article is;
- understand the difference between a ‘news story’ and a ‘feature’, an ‘editorial’ and a ‘feature’, a ‘backgrounder’ and a ‘feature’;
- recognise the difference between a feature article and various other journalistic writings;
- learn about the various kinds / types / categories of features; actually write a feature article;
- and, finally, understand how to make money by writing features

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### 3.2 DEFINITION

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What is a feature? The briefest answer is: ‘anything that is not news’. However, simply and crisply stated, a feature article is also a type of journalistic writing that ‘entertains and informs.’

Described precisely and in other words, a feature article is a piece written with a view to elaborate about an exclusive or a particular characteristic distinct, special, marked, specific designated information or details of an issue, knowledge or guidance on a given event or an happening, subject or a place. It is not a news story.

Currently, since the print media, particularly the daily newspapers, news magazines, and newsletters carrying news reports are experiencing tough times due to declining circulation, and huge financial downturn, feature articles and feature stories are getting increased attention for attracting higher readerships and beefing up their presence in the marketplace. This is particularly so because features are written in simple, casual, and popular language, and are easily digested by the reader. These writings are of lasting value with a longer shelf life and are not perishable like a news item.

Also, more readers want to read features because these are hugely instrumental in informing them on issues they are ignorant about and places they will never visit. As stated by Sharon Wheeler, a noted British journalism teacher, who adds further that ‘they (readers) want to be given an insight into a famous person’s life and what makes them tick... want to be outraged when a miscarriage of justice is revealed... a complicated issue to be broken down into layperson’s terms... want an armchair view of the gig we couldn’t attend.’

This is exactly what today’s features in newspapers is and news magazines are expected to achieve. But the news stories can’t.

#### 3.2.1 Important Ingredients of Feature Articles

To be able to write a good feature article, one needs to possess ‘gift of the gab’ and a superb command on the language. In addition, the writer needs to be talented

enough and equipped with thinking skills to approach the subject from multiple ways. Here are some important and crucial elements and ingredients that can make your feature an attractive read and for you to be hailed as a good feature writer:

- **Immaculate Language:** Flawless, racy, grammatically infallible, and simple language will quickly win and retain the reader for all times to come. Use difficult words rarely; avoid unfamiliar jargons; abhor intricate ideas; resist verbose phrases and heavily loaded sentences.
- **Express your own views on the topic frankly, unreservedly:** Readers are interested in knowing what you as a writer think about the issue you are dwelling on. Develop your own thoughts in a logical, cogent, chronological and engaging style. Let the readers have dig into your mind. It will make the reader support you and be your fan, if you are successful in earning his loyalty by offering what ordinarily most readers are looking for.
- **Be Personal:** The trick is to instantly involve the reader on what you are drumming about. Give your own colour, innate description, try and gauge, solicit the spectator's mood, facial expressions, his personal views, quote his/her words verbatim, colour of his shirt / saree / jean / hairstyle / age / looks- whatever, howsoever you can do it. Don't hesitate; the readers love it. They will always follow your writings.
- **Interview/Converse/Dialogue:** As stated earlier, quoting the people on-the-spot adds profuse authenticity and value to your writings / views. Always be on the look out for an opportunity to pick up and quote key, punchy words from the conversation, or dialogue you are having with any interviewee.
- **Features are Longer Than News Stories:** In order to provide abundant and self-contained information, by a feature, it has often to be longer than a news item. The news story merely offers snippets, but a feature is more than that. Generally acceptable length of a feature is between 1,000 and 1,200 words for a daily newspaper, and between 1,500 and 2,000 words for a magazine. Magazines usually have longer shelf life and retentional value than a daily newspaper.
- **Pictures, Pictures, and more Pictures:** Remember, no good feature will look attractive enough or be acceptable for publication without at least a couple of good pictures on the most discussed aspect of the feature article. A pretty face, latest saree design, a beautiful figure always attract a discriminating, discerning, intelligent reader. Don't forget that a crisply done feature on an up-to-date, hot, burning, highly debated issue or topic is perhaps the best marketing prank to allure the clientele to your publication, and make it sell.
- **Finally, Look Ahead:** Plan a feature for the forthcoming occasions. Be imaginative, think ahead of others. Many new things are going to happen in the not too distant future. Local, regional, national events are planned much ahead. Be knowledgeable about such events; collect materials and relevant information about such forthcoming events much in advance and be ready with your piece at least three-four weeks in advance. Festivals, for

example— Diwali, Eid, Republic Day, Christmas, New Year ... the list is endless. Just think! This will enable publications in accepting and scheduling the publication of your feature on the dot—on the very day the event is due.

You will win accolades from the readers, appreciation from your fans. And, some good money for yourself too!

Here's the list of language do's and don'ts: Choose the precise word; be simple and concise; prefer a familiar word to the unfamiliar; use the concrete rather than the abstract; avoid clichés; be positive and honest; try to write as you speak; and, vary your pace and rhythm. (Brendan Hennessy: Writing Feature Articles, 2006.)

### 3.2.2 Difference between News Writing and Feature Writing

By now you may surely know what is 'news', and how it is written: A news story has to be objective, topical, fresh, bare facts, generally fitted in a strait-jacket frame to meet the text-book discipline, i.e., 5 Ws and 1 H. But a feature article is not necessarily written in that formulaic manner.

As you know well, writing a news story has to be done within a tight deadline after which the story loses its worth. A feature article can, however, be written in a comparatively somewhat relaxed, easy timeline. There is plenty of scope for packing multiple viewpoints in a feature, yet that may not be feasible or necessary in all features.

However, a news story is usually done in the pyramid style i.e., facts are presented from the top to bottom in a structured manner. News items are written in an impersonalised manner; often the reporter's view has no place in the body of the news story.. Quotes have to be ascribed to the sources, crucial people on the spot, whose views are vital and added to the facts pertaining to the story and written within inverted commas (“ ”), also called Quotes.

In order to be effective, news stories have to be short, sharp, to the point, crisp, packing maximum information in fewest words to save valuable newspaper space, and also the harassed reader's time. But in order to be read and to retain the reader's attention for longer period, a feature has to offer much more details, be presented in a refined prose, and the language bedecked with lots of 'blossoms and flowers', to be an attractive experience, and to leave a lasting impression on the reader.

A news story, on the other hand, need not or may not be required to be accompanied by a picture at all. All news stories don't need to be illustrated with photographs. Besides, there is no space in the body of a newspaper for that.

Finally, since newspapers and magazines meet varied needs, and cater to diversified interests, the topics that suit newspaper features and magazine features will also thus essentially have to be varied. For example, while, magazines can, and actually many do, specialise in subjects such as the human interest issues, controversial national and international matters, social, cultural, religious, political problems, and so on, newspapers rarely follow that line.



### 3.2.3 Feature Writing and Other Journalistic Writings

As we have stated earlier, there is a vast difference between writing features for newspapers and magazines. Similarly, features also differ from other journalistic genres of writings.

While, there are really no hard and fast rules and regulations for defining or dividing these journalistic writings, these genres vary from newspaper to newspaper. In any case, a feature article is not hard news; it is not review; it is not a column; it is not an essay; it is not an editorial; it is not a filler; and it is not an advertorial.

But despite all that, there is a lot of commonalities amongst newspaper editorial contents all over the world. For example, most newspapers regularly carry editorial and op-ed pages; these news pages are designated as district/local; regional / state; national/news from capital; international/ foreign / world.

Sports/specific sports- IPL, ICL, hockey, football, cricket, kabaddi, kho-kho, wrestling, athletics, tennis, badminton, table tennis, shooting, swimming championships, etc. competitive sports, such as World/Asian/African/Twenty-Twenty/Commonwealth Cups and so on.

**Other editorial content pages include:** commerce/business/economy- stock exchanges-local, national, international; commodities, bullion rates; property, real estate etc. Entertainment forms an important aspect of any newspaper's content these days: review pages on cinema, films, CDs, television, music, theatre, radio, arts, books, etc. are usually found.

Then there are columns on motoring, gardening, public grievances, comic strips, cartoons, restaurants and hotels, food/recipes, wines/drinks/ladies wear/ men's clothes, footwear -for men, women and children.

**The editorial and op-ed pages generally comprise:** opinion, commentary, views, interviews, news analysis, backgrounders, rejoinders, obituaries and so on. Some newspapers also carry specially commissioned columns, extended write-ups on individual religions e.g. commentary from the Bhagwad Gita, Mahabharata, Quran, Bible, and other religious scriptures.

It may, however, be pointed out that though all these genres of writings are not journalistic, strictly speaking, but since these are published day- in and day- out, these have become part of the regular editorial content in most newspapers.

#### Check Your Progress: 1

**Note:** 1) Use the space below for writing your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) What do you understand by a feature article?

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2) Differentiate between an article and a feature article.

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### 3.3 KINDS/TYPES/FORMS/CATEGORIES OF FEATURES

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Actually, there are no rigidly set up kinds or categories of features. However, eight categories of features have been recognized by many western- particularly British and American- professional journalists and noted journalism academicians.

These include:

**News Features:** Such features originate from and are based on important news happenings, involving VIPs or notorious criminals or influential personalities. The Indian Express, Delhi, specializes in such features - its recent news features on noted criminal, Yasin Bhatkhal and his associates, who are now in prison; Uttarakhand floods that caused huge damage to lives and property; jailing of Bihar’s former chief minister, other state politicians and former IAS officers in the aftermath of the recent Supreme Court judgment on convicted politicians are some examples.

**Special Event Features:** India holding Commonwealth Games, Delhi University organizing Annual Session of the 90th Indian Science Congress, India hosting the UNESCO Annual Meet or Delhi being the venue of Commonwealth Heads of Government Conference (CHOGM) etc. would all be deemed as special events. Everything connected with these events would form excellent theme for a feature.

**Personality Feature :** Doing a personal profile of the United Nations General Secretary, Ban ki-Moon, visiting India for the first time after his appointment; or writing about the former US President’s wife, Michelle Obama’s, journey to the American White House could be good subjects under this head.

**Interview Feature:** Talking to maestro singer Lata Mangeshkar, after she was awarded the Bharat Ratna about her life story, and her life-long achievements as a musician: tracing her early career years can be an ideal topic for an interview feature. Also stories like speaking to the 70-year-old Japanese who scaled the Mount Everest without oxygen would also be an excellent idea for such a story.

**How-to Features:** Such features are written for guiding users on how to operate or handle sensitive, costly equipment, doing hazardous experiments or executing dangerous jobs. The purpose is to instruct the user step –by- step, operation by operation, for performing the activity, or accomplishing a tedious job expected from the gadget or equipment. This helps the user to avoid accidents.

**Background Features:** Doing a report on an incident that may be connected with an old, historical or ancient event. When the Clock Tower in Delhi’s Chandani

Chowk fell down several years ago, many newspapers wrote detailed pieces on its background. Similarly, when the Indian Science Congress holds its Annual session readers would like to learn about its history, functions, achievements, etc. These tit-bits can form highly readable background features.

**Investigative Features:** Investigating the criminal career of the Bhatkhal brothers and their associates can be an investigative feature. Probing the causes of communal flare-ups in different part of the country would be good subjects for investigative features.

**Colour Features:** These features are generally written on the subjects of which the authors have deep knowledge and thorough understanding, besides adequate command of the language. Often, these topics tend to be light, more descriptive, with frequent creative play on the words, capturing the moods of a special occasion such as a fair, holiday season with happiness and mirth flirting all around.

**Adventure Features:** Remember the young Kolkata girl, Bachandri Pal, the first Indian woman to have climbed the Mount Everest. Hers was a unique feat, and that formed a subject for an adventure feature. In this category also included are first time travels to tough, highly hazardous, frightening regions of Asia, Africa, Antarctica, etc.

**Opinion Features:** Such pieces are usually based on expertise or research and with the single aim of expressing personal views on a crucial subject. That person's findings should, however, weigh heavily in the concerned circles. Historian Irfan Habib on Nehru-Jinnah connections, India's former foreign Secretary's view on Sino-Indian border dispute, or US role in the Middle East, or Chinese activities in the South-East Asia, US's former Secretary of State advocating a permanent membership for India in the UN Security Council come under this category.

**Human Interest Features:** A young boy who lost both his hands in a rail accident, and paints beautiful sceneries with a paint brush tucked under his teeth, or the brush held in his feet or a high school passout government clerk winning Rs. 5-crore in the television shows "Kaun Banega Crorepati" show would be most readable feature stories.

**Development Features:** As you would have understood, development communication is an integral part of modern day media research and education. Development stories from remote, far flung areas could present fascinating account and be interesting feature reflecting the progress ordinary people there have made.

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### 3.4 HOW TO WRITE A FEATURE ARTICLE?

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As we have seen, there are subjects galore for writing feature articles. All one needs to be able to write good features are skill and perception to recognize the subjects that one wishes to write on. However, before undertaking to do so, it would be prudent to learn more about the art and craft of writing a feature article.

The first and the foremost consideration should be to make sure that one has adequate ability and competence to accomplish the task to the satisfaction of the Editor. And it would be appropriate to consider adopting the following steps for writing the piece.

As you know, every good piece of writing has to have a beginning, a middle, and an end. While one may have some hazy idea of how the piece will look like, but it is always prudent to draw a plan.

Therefore, a feature should have the LEAD, or the opening paragraph. But, this first para will have to be structured differently than the one in case of a new story. The first para of a feature article should attract, arrest, and hold the attention of the reader and make him read it. If that happens instantly, the writer should be deemed to have well succeeded in his /her object. However, this lead para could be an abrupt, curt statement, an anecdote, or a description of a set scene. A dialogue could also be used as a lead.

After the lead, the second stage is TRANSITION, addressed to the reader explaining in a capsule form your reason in attempting to write this piece. This part should further sharpen the inquisitiveness of the reader and propel him/her to continue reading till the end

The third stage of the feature is termed DEVELOPMENT. In this section, the theme / issue / subject of the feature should be developed further. This portion of the feature is the heart and soul of the feature. It should be elaborated logically, chronologically, systematically, and carefully keeping in mind that the reader has been fully engaged, and that his/her interest in the piece is not wearing thin. The paras should be interconnected, moving step-by-step, point-by-point, doling out information one after the other; making sure that each point supplements the other.

Finally, the feature should end in a manner that the reader is amply satisfied. And, he / she should be made to realize that he/she has had an interesting, amusing, exciting, enjoyable and pleasing experience reading your piece. The conclusion could be in the form of another short anecdote (based on theme of the feature only), another terse, quip, gibe or a joke; leaving the reader smiling and with remarks like an ah, ooh, well done!

While these points are no rigid formula, but if the writer pursues these suggestions, the feature should be able to leave an impressionable dent on the reader's mind. And if the writer has collected sufficient material, organized it well and presented it cogently, the piece will shape effectively. And it should be an enjoyable treat.

### **3.4.1 Choosing a Topic**

If you have been reading your newspaper / magazine with all your senses wide open and alert, you would have found that all kinds of themes make excellent topics or subjects for features. Perhaps the best suggestion in this regard would be that whenever and wherever you are roaming about, just look around with keen eyes, sharp attentive inquisitive mind and there will be a feature right in front of you. If you are young, sports, pop stars, music, films, fashion, adventure, travel, motoring, food, science & technology, computers and cybernetics, meeting foreigners visiting your town should interest you as also the readers. And if you are middle aged, politics and politicians, finance, health, and health system such as gyms and spa, spiritual leaders/ godmen, career men and women, gardening, environment, food, law and order, legal system, defence and security paraphernalia would make some good topics for writing features. The list is endless; subjects umpteen; topics galore.

### 3.4.2 Preparations Needed

Once you have identified a topic to write a feature on, it is important that you are also fully equipped to write it well, and complete it on time. Meanwhile, as you sit at your computer, all your materials should be readily available to you so that your thought stream is uninterrupted.

The following professional writing tools are helpful and necessary and will assist you to do your job well: a rough draft, a tentative structure of the feature article; your notes; research and reference material you have gathered on the topic; list of printed sources, and newspaper/magazine clippings; promotional literature-posters, pamphlets, brochures, leaflets; good dictionary; Roget's Thesaurus; telephone directory; book of quotations; emails received; web sites; blogs; suitable pictures to go with the feature to highlight the main thrust of the article, etc.

This is only a suggestive list; of course, you will have your own material to consult and use for the article.

While you are preparing to write a feature for a particular newspaper, magazine or publication, it would be advisable for you to be aware of their editorial policy, main economic and political programmes and general and social reputation. Your piece has necessarily to be in total consonance and in complete agreement with the views of the management and the editor. In the absence of these requirements, your piece has lesser chances of being accepted for use in that newspaper or magazine.

### 3.4.3 Tapping Sources for Material

To do full justice to the theme of a feature article, the writer has to go about collecting material from several sources. While there are numerous sources to be tapped from, the writer has to know which source to tap, and what information to seek. For example, if the feature article is to be on delinquent children, or children addicted to certain drugs, the best sources will be the local government's department of welfare office for children, office of the drugs controller, local police department in charge of apprehending addicted children and reforming them. There will also be many non-governmental bodies involved in such tasks that can be contacted.

Similarly, there are many local, state, regional, national, and international organizations; voluntary associations; civic bodies; state and central government offices that provide key information and useful details on many subjects on which feature articles are written. These sources need to be tapped for the latest and accurate information. Materials procured from these organisations constitute integral part of features on the relevant topics, and can lend authenticity to features.

### 3.4.4 Researching the Topic

Most often, features have to be packed with facts, figures, statistics and happenings from the past - generally history. The feature writer's most important responsibility is to make sure that whatever details are provided in the features are accurate to the extent possible. In order to assure this, the writer has to do adequate research on the topic that is under treatment.

Thus, researching for the feature is an essential part of good writing. Moreover, a good feature has to reflect on all possible aspects of the topic. Therefore, consulting authoritative sources is imperative. Even editors using your feature will like this done as fully as possible. For, it will be the Editor who will have to bear the brunt in the event of inaccurate information found in the feature.

So, what is research? How is research done? Which and where are the sources for research? Consult your Editor. The Editor is the best person to tell you what exactly is required and what aspects of the feature are necessary and critical, and require latest thinking.

In any case, some of the following research sources are quite reliable: your office morgue -the clippings library that is maintained in every office. Newspaper cuttings, old magazine articles, notes and archives, reference materials -yearbooks, annuals, subject special handbooks- PR literature and publicity brochures, handouts, etc., also contain a variety of allied and useful information on your feature topic. Your colleagues in the publication across all its sections / divisions too can pitch in many useful suggestions, ideas. web sites, portals, blogs, news groups, facebook and several other social media discussions, university/public libraries too help a lot.

In addition, there are NGOs, voluntary, autonomous and government bodies, consumer and special groups, independent experts, academic researchers, social workers, private and commercial organisations, reports from government departments. And, finally, seek out the RTI for more.

**Check Your Progress: 2**

**Note:** 1) Use the space below for writing your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) If you are required to do a feature article on incidence of AIDS in your town, what sources would you tap?

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2) What criteria would adopt in choosing a subject for daily newspaper which is meant for young adults and another one for adults?

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3) What are the reference sources a feature writer should use?

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### **3.5 FREELANCING FEATURES**

If you are a prolific writer, there is a plenty of scope for freelancing your features, and making some money too. While many newspapers and magazines do maintain their own regular Features Department, often replete with competent and experienced feature writers, but novel ideas for features are always acceptable and welcome. Even reputed and established publications are open to fresh, timeless, and off beat features. However, it is also important to know which newspaper or magazine wants what type of features, and when.

Usually, there are two ways of marketing features: features can be sold to ‘Feature Syndicates’ also. You can do it on your own: offer the same feature to local newspapers, regional papers and even foreign publications by personally contacting the editors. Some overseas publications will entertain features of interest only to sophisticated, knowledgeable sections of their society.

#### **3.5.1 Studying Market for Selling Features**

As stated above, the feature market is vast and operates at various levels: local, regional, national and worldwide. But, the moot question is: how to know who wants what, when, how much and how often?

There are two ways of knowing all these points: by personal contacts; and/or by being intimately familiar with the contents of publications, their policies, their political affiliations and financial standing, besides their general outlook such as circulations, interests of their readers whether they accept contributions from freelancers.

In addition, as freelance contributor, it would be profitable for you to know the nature of the contents of the publication you are aiming to send you feature to. As you know, almost every publication has its areas of interests laid down. One needs to know this. This can be gauged from the contents of a few of their issues. Besides the newspapers, specialized magazines’ needs are obvious from their titles: Femina, Sports Star, Businessworld, Screen, Outlook, Filmfare, etc. There is no point in contacting them for contributing features if it is not in their forte.

#### **3.5.2 Addressing/Contacting Editors**

Perhaps you would know, it is the Editor of a publication who lays down rules and regulations on all crucial editorial matters. But, after once laying down general guidelines of the magazine/newspaper, he can not be expected to attend to every matter. Commissioning or accepting features articles are generally the responsibility of the News Editor/Features Editor or an Assistant Editor.

So, in such a situation, a feature journalist will do well to get in touch with the relevant person nominated for the job. While, it is convenient and possible to contact on telephone, but it is advisable to use email or personal written correspondence for eliciting information regarding. The nature of features acceptable, word limit, pictures deadlines, monthly, fortnightly, weekly of such requirement. An informal / personal response confirming the arrangement will seal the matter.

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### **3.6 LET US SUM UP**

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In this Unit, our endeavour has been to familiarise you with almost all aspect of feature writing. With this end in view, this unit provided you the definition of a feature; listed the essential ingredients of a feature article; differentiated between a feature and other journalistic and media writings. We also detailed the various kinds/categories and types of features, and enlightened you about what goes in each type; then, we told you how to write a feature; how to choose topic for writing a feature; the kind of preparation you need to do to write the feature; how and what sources to tap and research to do for procuring adequate material to do the feature article. And, finally, we told you in detail how to freelance your features and contact editors for using your articles so that you can earn some money from your features.

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### **3.7 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS**

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- 1) Features for Flair, Press Institute of India, Chennai, India
- 2) Writing Feature Articles by Brendan Hennessy, Focal Press, Boston, USA
- 3) Feature Writing for Journalists by Sharon Wheeler, Routledge, New York, USA
- 4) The Essential Feature Writing for Magazines and Newspapers by Vicky Hay, Columbia University Press, New York, USA
- 5) Feature Writing for Newspapers and Magazines by Edward Jay Friedlander and John Lee, Pearson Press, Boston, USA. The Indian Express, New Delhi, carries at least two – three feature articles everyday. This paper publishes extended features almost daily. This paper's Sunday magazine, The Eye, also publishes two-three features every Sunday. A regular perusal of this magazine can help feature writers and would be feature journalists in brushing their skills further. You can also pursue other regional and national newspapers such as the the Telegraph, Kolkata; The Hindu, Chennai; The Tribune, Chandigarh; The Times of India, Mumbai. Notable magazines: India Today, Tehelka, Savvy, Celebrity, Open

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### **3.8 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS**

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#### **Check Your Progress: 1**

- 1) A feature article is a piece written with a view to elaborate about an exclusive or a particular characteristic distinct, special, marked, specific designated information or details of an issue, knowledge or guidance on a given event or an happening, subject or a place. It is not a news story.



- 2) A news story has to be objective, topical, fresh, bare facts, generally fitted in a strait-jacket frame to meet the text-book discipline, i.e., 5 Ws and 1 H. But a feature article is not necessarily written in that formulaic manner.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) There are innumerable local, state, regional, national, and international organisations; voluntary associations; civic bodies; state and central government offices that provide key information and useful details on many subjects on which feature articles are written.
- 2) For young adults - sports, pop stars, music, films, fashion, adventure, travel, motoring, food, science & technology, computers and cybernetics. And for middle aged reader, politics and politicians, finance, health, and health system such as gyms and spa, spiritual leaders/ godmen, career men and women, gardening, environment, food, law and order, legal system, defence and security paraphernalia.
- 3) Newspaper office morgue - the news slip library with PR literature and publicity brochures, handouts, Web sites, portals, blogs, news groups, Facebook and several other social media discussions, and university/public libraries.



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## UNIT 4 OPINION WRITING

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### Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Learning Outcomes
- 4.2 Definition
  - 4.2.1 Important Components of an Opinion Writing Piece
- 4.3 Difference between Opinion Writing and Other Forms of Journalistic Expression
  - 4.3.1 Editorial Writing and Opinion Writing
  - 4.3.2 Features and Opinion Writing
  - 4.3.3 Special Write-ups and Opinion Writing
  - 4.3.4 Middles and Opinion Writing
- 4.4 Universe of Opinion Writing
  - 4.4.1 Issues of Politics and Ideology
  - 4.4.2 Social Issues
  - 4.4.3 Issues of Public Policy
  - 4.4.4 Issues of Culture and Education
- 4.5 Characteristics of an Opinion Piece
  - 4.5.1 Timeliness
  - 4.5.2 Subject Knowledge, Expertise
  - 4.5.3 Clarity of Viewpoint
  - 4.5.4 Unique/ Uncommon Opinion
  - 4.5.5 Keep Audience in Mind
  - 4.5.6 Avoid Conflicts
- 4.6 How to Plan an Opinion Piece
  - 4.6.1 Think of a Topic
  - 4.6.2 Assess the Eco-system
  - 4.6.3 Collect Material
  - 4.6.4 Draw an Outline/Define Parameters
  - 4.6.5 Think of the Market
- 4.7 How to Write an Opinion Piece
  - 4.7.1 Importance of Intro
  - 4.7.2 Catchy Headlines
  - 4.7.3 The Structure of Opinion Piece
  - 4.7.4 Language and Style
  - 4.7.5 Choice of Words
  - 4.7.6 Editing
  - 4.7.7 Conclusion
- 4.8 Scope of Opinion Writing
- 4.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.10 References and Further Readings
- 4.11 Check Your Progress: Possible Answers

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## 4.0 INTRODUCTION

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Opinion writing is fast gaining currency and acceptance as a form of media writing. By its very name the term opinion writing suggests that the expression of such views by the writers are personal and subjective on a topic that is of considerable interest to media audiences. Contrary to other heads under which media writing is done like – news stories, news features, interviews, editorials and even interpretative or investigative reporting, opinion writing makes no claims to objectivity. Readers look forward to the know the opinion or views of certain person(s), whether it may be a journalist or non-journalist, on a particular subject of interest to them and not necessarily to know the truth or facts.

Opinion writing is a unique form of mass media because even before the communication starts, the recipients have an idea of the message they will get. This cannot be said of any other form of message in media communication.

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## 4.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

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After going through this Unit, the students will come to know about:

- opinion writing and its importance;
- how opinion writing is different from other form of media writing such as news stories, features, editorials, interviews and research based write-ups;
- all those who can do opinion writing;
- the special features of opinion writing;
- what the readers expect in an opinion piece;
- how to market your opinion pieces

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## 4.2 DEFINITION

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In opinion writing, the writer expresses his/ her opinion on a particular current issue or topic. Though there is no claim of it being objective or balanced, good opinion writers choose appropriate evidence to support and substantiate the opinion expressed. This may be in the form of research based data, opinion expressed by other experts on the subject or through citations and references for further reading.

An opinion writing piece basically contains viewpoint of a person, journalist or non-journalist subject expert on a topic of considerable readership interest. The topic has to be related to some current development that is the theme of public discourse. The subject should be of wide interest to arouse curiosity among people who want to know more about it.

### 4.2.1 Important Components of an Opinion Writing Piece

- A good opinion piece should have the following attributes: a good catchy headline to attract the audiences of print, broadcast or social media alike;
- a topic of current interest to the audience or we may say a topic, that is of general discussion among people;
- thematic unity which can cater to the satisfaction of the audience; and
- a rational and well-arranged case presented in an analytical form of writing.

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## 4.3 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OPINION WRITING AND OTHER FORMS OF JOURNALISTIC EXPRESSION

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The traditional way of categorization of contents of newspaper is to segregate all non-advertising matter into two heads news and views. It has been said with great conviction that while news is sacred views can be personal. This was the dictum of British press of the victorian era on which newspapers in India tailored their contents for more than a century from the mid 19th century to the second half of the 20th century.

However, as the U.S. influence on Indian intelligentsia grew, especially after the information and communications technology (ICT) revolution and globalisation, lobby journalism and advocacy journalism started gaining respectability in India. This was the origin and source of opinion writing in Indian media. It is, however, now fast emerging as a distinct format of media expression termed as opinion journalism.

Opinion writing is different from other forms of media writing in several ways and this is what you need to understand. Now let us see how it differs from the other forms of journalistic expression.

### 4.3.1 Editorial Writing and Opinion Writing

Editorials, as leaders are generally called, denote broader philosophy of a newspaper or journal and its outlook on various socio-political and economic issues. Leaders, therefore, express the consensus of the entire editorial team as well as management of a media organization. Compared with this, an opinion piece is expression of an individual writer and his/her viewpoint. You must have many times come across journals and websites put out a disclaimer at the end of a piece that the views contained therein are the personal views of a writer and these may or may not be the views of the journal or website or news portal as the case may be.

Moreover, leaders are generally balanced and sober, which may not be the case with opinion writing. In a leader the editorial writer tries to take into consideration all sides of an issue and then argue in favor of their editorial line. An opinion writer has no such compulsions.

### 4.3.2 Features and Opinion Writing

Features can broadly be divided into two categories – news features and non-news features. Features can broadly be divided into two categories – news features and non-news features. Opinion writing can also be on something which is currently in news or something which is not making news. Like opinion writing, features also convey the views of a writer on a subject. Yet, features are different from opinion writing. The essential difference is in language, style and presentation. While good features have flowery, twisted and even idiomatic language, opinion pieces are straight and bold. While features are meant for leisure reading in a relaxed mood, opinion pieces force you to commit yourself to a certain viewpoint. Features do not put any demand on you to change your media behavior, thinking, attitude and psyche by persuading and convincing you but opinion pieces try to convert you to the writer's viewpoint.

### 4.3.3 Special Write-ups and Opinion Writing

Every good news media outlet invites subject specialists to write on complex and complicated issues which crop up in the public domain. These issues mostly pertain to defence, scientific research, health, environment, economic and fiscal policies which impact our lives.

However, most of us lack expertise to understand and analyse the implications of such issues. Special articles help us in developing our comprehension and to understand such complicated issues.

Special write-ups of course need handling of a topic or subject by a single person. However, these are different from a piece of opinion writing. The clear demarking line is that special articles contain the wide and accumulated knowledge of the writer much more than merely his/her opinion. While special write-up are rich in facts, figures and researched data and seek to appeal to the minds of readers, it is the opinion writings which appeal more to the hearts of the readers. The content of such pieces is many times sketchy but appeals to the emotions and sentiments of the readers.

### 4.3.4 Middles and Opinion Writing

Middles are small pieces meant for light reading containing humor and satire. These pieces are called middles as these are generally placed at the centre of the editorial page. The conventional wisdom tells us that middles are placed to provide comic relief to an otherwise heavy reading of the editorial page containing leaders, special articles by subject specialists and comments by senior writers.

Like opinion pieces middles are also an expression of an individual writer's creativity. However middles do not have the conviction, sharpness and straight and sometimes aggressive approach of an opinion piece.

Barring some honorable exceptions like Busy Bee, middles are often read and forgotten and leave no image of the writer on a reader's mind. As opposed to this an opinion piece defines its writer.

#### Check Your Progress: 1

**Note:** 1) Use the space below for writing your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) What is opinion writing?

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- 2) What is the difference between opinion writing and leader (editorial) writing while both contain the viewpoint of those who write them?

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## 4.4 UNIVERSE OF OPINION WRITING

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An opinion piece can be on any subject or any area in which media readers are interested or can be made to take interest. However, opinion writing is generally done on some subject or topic that is current and in public domain. As you know any writing for media is done while keeping the readers in mind. That is why a journalist or subject expert writes an opinion piece with an eye on the number of readers who will be interested in the opinion piece written and published. Therefore, areas of common interest and general liking are the preferred areas of opinion writing.

It is often said that the present day journalism is focused on four Cs – crime, cinema, celebrities and cricket. A lot of opinion writing is being done in these areas. However, other areas like politics, economic affairs, international affairs and social issues which see a wide divergence of viewpoints, clash of interests and controversy do find a much higher place on the list of preferred areas of interest of opinion writers.

### 4.4.1 Issues of Politics and Ideology

India is a country which is home to people of different creeds, castes and communities who are represented in our system by different political parties, religions and cultural groups. These groups profess different ideologies and they often come into clash with each other.

The political and ideological differences of these groups influence opinion writing in a big way. The issues of political and differing ideologies offer a big scope for opinion writing.

### 4.4.2 Social Issues

Our society is, however, passing through a process of rapid social transformation. The social and personal relations are no more being governed by age old traditions. The changing face of society is being viewed from different angles by different people. The clash between tradition and modernisation is a fertile area of study and research for our social scientist. This is also an interest area for media which is a mirror to society.

Social issues invoke different reactions from different people, including those who write for media. Issues like caste-based job reservations, woman empowerment, relief and welfare measures for disadvantaged sections of society also provide a big scope for opinion writing.

### 4.4.3 Issues of Public Policy

Since liberalisation of our economy in the last decade of the twentieth century, the debate on public policy has been revolving around the theme of development and improvement in the living standards of the masses. Since this is a major challenge comprising many aspects of public policy, there is a big debate in the country on what is the right package to reach out economic justice to the people who need it most. The debate is complex as it is multi-dimensional. A lot many aspects of this on-going debate provide good themes and sub-themes for opinion writing.

### 4.4.4 Issues of Culture and Education

The debate on culture which had been on the back burner because of our preoccupation with economic development in the years since independence in 1947 and it has surfaced in the recent past. The issue of culture invites contradictory and even conflicting viewpoints and there is a marked divergence of opinion on the subject. For opinion writing, culture is a rich and fertile ground. Along with culture education also finds a place in the universe of opinion writing.

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## 4.5 CHARACTERISTICS OF AN OPINION PIECE

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Opinion writing in media, both news media as well as non-news media, should have the following characteristics:

### 4.5.1 Timeliness

The topic chosen and ideas expressed should correspond to the need and requirement of the time. The right time for media writing, as you know will be based on the interest of the audience and their desire to know more on a subject that is currently occupying their interest.

Initiated by the broadcast media and then followed by the social media the need for timeliness of opinion pieces has become even more pronounced. Now audiences want to know about various aspects of a development or happening as quickly as possible. As legendary editor R. Madhvan Nair used to say “anyone writing for media must have the capacity for quick reaction.”

### 4.5.2 Subject Knowledge, Expertise

The wider your knowledge of men and matters, the more successful you will be as an opinion writer. You can acquire such knowledge mostly by reading and looking out for reading materials on the subject of your interest from all possible sources. Only reading will give you new angles on the issues on which you want to do opinion writing.

In an era of information explosion media audiences are much better informed than the audiences of pre-internet generation. Therefore, present day audiences want to have the content that gives them an insight into the subject of their liking. Therefore, only such opinion pieces find audience approval which have been written by those with deep knowledge of the subject. This is the reason why more and more non-journalists are now writing columns in the journals. Media is also seeking reactions of experts on subjects about which editorial staff cannot speak with authority.

The subject knowledge of an opinion writer has to be based on an understanding of the background and historical interpretation of the topic on which the opinion piece is being written. While one need not give any historical evidence or trace background in an opinion piece, the writer's knowledge of this must reflect in his piece.

### **4.5.3 Clarity of Viewpoint**

An opinion piece, unlike an editorial or even a feature, has no compulsion to cover all aspects of the subject. The opinion writer should have clarity of mind and a well-defined view on the topic. Media readers appreciate straight and forthright approach of an opinion piece as it helps them in making up their minds.

### **4.5.4 Unique/ Uncommon Opinion**

By instinct, media audiences always look for something new and unique in the content offered to them. Hackneyed style and conventional approach, howsoever well it may be presented, never finds favor with readers, especially among the young and aspiring. Therefore, a good opinion piece must present a unique and uncommon view before the readers.

### **4.5.5 Keep Audience in Mind**

Unlike other formats of writing, opinion writing is a highly personalised and subjective style of writing. While all other writing is done with the view in mind that the reader is the king (on the pattern of the marketing slogan that consumer is the king), an opinion writer does not believe in the dictum that is the reader is the king. The opinion writer rather tries to impose his viewpoint on the audience and expects the audience to follow him. Many a times the audience does follow.

However, a column writer has to keep in mind all the intellectual and emotional dimensions of the audiences. He has to have a very good idea of the audience psyche and should know the limits up to which audience will walk with him. One prerequisite of this is that besides being straight and forthright, the opinion writer should keep his piece simple and sweet. Complex and involved writing will chase away the readers.

### **4.5.6 Avoid Conflicts**

To put across the viewpoint in a straight forward manner is all right for an opinion writer. But he/she should avoid clash with those holding opposing viewpoints. The guiding philosophy of column writing should be rational and logical presentation of a definite viewpoint and not a running down of the opposing viewpoint. A sharp, aggressive and attacking posture does not earn lasting respect for an opinion writer.

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## **4.6 HOW TO PLAN AN OPINION PIECE**

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While writing an opinion piece may appear simple, but it is not. You have to make good preparations for writing a piece that will sell. Your piece must impress and attract the readers for whom it is written.



### 4.6.1 Think of a Topic

You have to think of a topic which is a topical and you have the core knowledge to handle it. Your mere interest in a topic should not be the sole reason for writing an opinion piece.

You should not start writing before you know what you are aiming at. Otherwise, you will confuse yourself and your readers who will not know what they are supposed to do with your writing. Think hard before deciding on the topic.

### 4.6.2 Assess the Eco-system

You have to look to the media environment if you want to successfully market your opinion piece. If you write on the democratic ethos of Holi festival when Diwali is approaching or about the significance of Good Friday when New Year celebrations are about to start nobody will bother to read your piece. Elections in general, IPL or World Cup Cricket or death of a big and popular leader or a major terrorist attack are highly preoccupying events and most of the readers do not want to read anything other than what relates to these events.

In the year 2009, the death of Prime Minister V.P. Singh almost got blacked out from media because of the dastardly terrorist attack in Mumbai which shocked the world and claimed close to 200 lives. V.P. Singh was a highly controversial political leader and but for the terrorist attack his death would have found very good coverage in the media.

While sudden and unexpected developments like terrorist attack or a natural calamity cannot be anticipated, an opinion writer can certainly take care to avoid a clash with something that can be foreseen to time his/her opinion piece.

### 4.6.3 Collect Material

All good media or non-media writing requires a good study and research by the writer. Opinion writing needs it more as an opinion writer has to take firm and formidable line in support of his/her viewpoint. A good opinion piece, therefore, requires good preparation which can be possible only by reading good literature on the topic. Therefore, collecting good material on the topic is a necessary pre requisite for opinion writing.

### 4.6.4 Draw an Outline/Define Parameters

To be effective no opinion piece should focus on more than one aspect of a subject. If you are expressing your views on a certain scheme designed for the benefit of small and landless farmers you should not discuss hybrid varieties of seeds and the status of canal irrigation. Before writing you have to set your limits. You must decide what points are to be included in the piece and how it has to move in a direction desired by you.

### 4.6.5 Think of the Market

Most people will be interested in a piece, even though not very well written, if it is written on what has now come to be known as four “C” – crime, cricket, cinema and celebrity. However, to pick up a topic belonging to this broad area you must look at it well in order to discover a so far untouched area or angle that will impress your readers.

Some newspapers or journals have what is called human angle others have literary angle but all have news angle or the topical touch as we may call it. Keep this in mind while looking to market your product.

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## **4.7 HOW TO WRITE AN OPINION PIECE**

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Having done proper planning you have to keep the following points in mind while writing in opinion piece.

### **4.7.1 Importance of Intro**

Introduction or intro as it is called in newsroom is to a write-up what face is to human body. It is the first introduction of what you are.

You should remember a good opening paragraph wins half the battle. The life of your piece is in the opening paragraph. If it is sharp in focus and opening in nature it makes an instant impact on the mind of the editor. Otherwise, it leaves no impression. Let us also remember most editors do not read a piece beyond the first two paragraphs before deciding to use it in their journal or return it with regards.

### **4.7.2 Catchy Headlines**

Opinion writers are usually not expected to give headlines to the pieces they write as it is the job of the editors who finally clear a piece for publishing. However, headline given by an opinion writer on his/her piece can help editors understand the mind and thrust of the writer. Since a headline is a very brief summary and indicator of what all a writer wants to convey and has tried to convey, it is easy for those whose job it is to assess the news value of the opinion piece and to take a decision.

Writing a headline brings out the best in you as a creative writer. That is why good headlines are often remembered long after the newspaper/journal is forgotten. Headlines are important because a good headline is like a pretty face which instantly attracts you.

### **4.7.3 The Structure of an Opinion Piece**

When we build a house, we first ask an architect to visualize and draw a blueprint and only then allow the mason to touch the building materials. Similarly before taking a pen and paper or opening your laptop, you have to think of all the pieces you have and in what order. It will be better if you write it point-wise.

Intro is of course important but then you have to move quickly to the main body, add descriptive details and then go on to the concluding paragraph. What is important is that you set a word limit and divide it into four basic components of your write-up-intro, body (in which you spell out your main idea in detail), description (where you elaborate on what you have been trying to convey) and finally the conclusion.

Besides this, also please take care of the format. You should have short paragraphs (no paragraph should have more than two or a maximum of three sentences) and the sentences should be short and straight.

#### 4.7.4 Language and Style

The language of a piece should be simple plain and straight. It should not be a burden on the reader's mind. Just compare the two descriptions of a scene first: A tall, narrow-chested, middle-aged man, with graying beard, sat on the green grass trampled down by pedestrians; he sat down quietly, timidly, nervously looking around.

Second: a middle-aged man was sitting on the grass in a public lawn.

The language should be comfortable in tone and non-aggressive in temper. It should never make the reader uneasy or anxious. It is not good if your language has undertones of alarm, irritation and confrontation.

You should write well so that you can connect yourself with the readers, open up their minds and achieve your aim. Language creates a strong impression, good or bad, and exposes the personality of the writer.

**Bryon A Garner**, author of the best-selling reference work  *Garner's Modern American Usage*, says that to express yourself clearly you need to:

- understand that your readers have no time to waste. Therefore, get to the point quickly and clearly.
- use a tone appropriate to your audience (readers).
- emphasize the point most important to your readers. If they feel your message is relevant to them they will read and respond.
- choose an intelligent, non-specialist person among your readers and think that you are writing for that person. Your message will be more appealing and persuasive.

#### 4.7.5 Choice of Words

Words in a sentence or paragraph are like pearls in a necklace. A necklace looks attractive only when all pearls shine. Even one bad pearl compromises the quality of a necklace. Similarly, while writing an opinion piece be careful about every word that you use.

H.W. Flower in his book, "The Kings English", has laid down some rules for the choice of right words while writing. These are:

- 1) prefer the familiar word to the far-fetched.
- 2) prefer the concrete word to the abstract.
- 3) prefer the single word to the circum location.
- 4) prefer the short word to the long.

#### 4.7.6 Editing

Once you have written your piece, you have to do two things – first revise it and then edit it. Revising should be done to ensure that your editorial is giving the message, which you wanted to give to your readers. You can still think of a change in the basic argument put forth by you if you think it is needed.

While revising the draft of your editorial you have to ask yourself the following questions:

- Have I been utterly truthful?
- Have I said all that I needed to say?
- Have I been appropriate, diplomatic and fair?
- Do I have three parts to the piece-an opener, a middle, and a closing?
- In my opener, have I made my points quickly and clearly? And concretely? Have I avoided a slow wind-up that unnecessarily postpones the message? In the middle, have I proved my points with specifics?
- Is the structure immediately apparent to my readers? Have I used informative headings?

Is my closing consistent with the rest, yet expressed freshly? Have I avoided unnecessary repetition?

Editing is needed to remove any mistakes of spelling or grammar and to time your language. But revision and editing should be done with a cool mind.

Editing is a different art but you need to be careful with your language. You need to check your draft on the following counts.

- Can I save some words here?
- Is there a better way of phrasing this idea? Is my meaning unmistakable?
- Is the expression relaxed but refined?
- Does one sentence glide into the next, without discontinuities?

#### **4.7.7 Conclusion**

The concluding paragraph of your opinion piece will have to leave your readers happy and satisfied. Therefore, you have to be very careful while writing the last paragraph of your opinion piece to ensure that the last paragraph is good and leaves a lasting impression on the mind of the readers. You have to examine the entire write-up like a judge. Be totally dispassionate while examining all aspects of your piece to ensure its quality. Judge it for language, facts and presentation before you hand it over to the editors for publication

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### **4.8 SCOPE OF OPINION WRITING**

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There is hardly a subject nowadays from astrology to nudism that does not have periodical journals devoted to them. A lot of journals, websites and news portals exists on a wide variety of subjects which are always in need of good editorial content. Those who run these smaller news units need content that promotes their chosen area of interest be it political, social or economic. Media organisations seeking to promote the interests of caste and community associations, regional aspirations, furthering interests of professional groups like teachers, lawyers, government servants, small business and NGOs always look for well informed editorial content to promote their case.

Such small news organizations have less resources to be able to employ editorial staff to generate content. They prefer freelancers for the job. And that is your opportunity. However, you will have to work hard to avail yourself of such

opportunities. Hard-work involves locating such organizations, understanding their requirements, contacting their editors and then writing to meet their expectations. The challenge is formidable but then scope is also limitless.

**Check Your Progress: 2**

**Note:** 1) Use the space below for writing your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) What are the salient points to be kept in mind while writing a piece on opinion writing?

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2) What care should you take while writing a good opinion piece?

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3) What is the scope of marketing opinion writing in the present day world of journalism?

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**4.9 LET US SUM UP**

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In this Unit we have learnt as to what is an opinion piece and how it is different from other forms of media writing such as news stories – straight or interpretative, interviews, features, special articles, middles and editorials.

We have also learnt about the characteristics of a good opinion piece and how it is written. We also learnt as to where it can be marketed and who can be potential buyers.

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## 4.11 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

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### Check Your Progress: 1

- 1) In opinion writing, the writer expresses his/ her opinion on a particular current issue or topic. The topic has to be related to some current development that is the theme of public discourse. The subject should be of wide interest and able to arouse curiosity among people who want to know more about it.
- 2) Editorials, as leaders generally denote broader philosophy of a newspaper or journal and its outlook on various socio-politics and economic issues. Leaders express the consensus of the entire editorial team as well as management of a media organization. As against this, an opinion piece is expression of an individual writer's viewpoint.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Opinion writing in media, both news media as well as non-news media, should have the following characteristics: Timeliness, Subject Knowledge, Expertise, Clarity of Viewpoint, Unique/ Uncommon Opinion, Audience in Mind and Avoid Conflicts
- 2) While writing a good opinion piece, you should give special importance for the following components besides the subject areas - headline, intro, structure of the opinion piece, clarity of your language and style in which you are presenting your views.
- 3) Big news organisations can afford to have multiple columnists on diverse subjects, but small news organisations have less resources to be able to employ editorial staff to generate content. They prefer freelancers for the job. And that is your opportunity.